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VIZ.

GOD'S PRESCIENCE OF THE SINS OF MEN:

THE

VANITY OF THIS MORTAL LIFE:

AND THE

REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, M. A.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THOMAS TAYLOR,

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF COWPER," AND "MEMOIRS OF BISHOP HEBER."

LONDON:

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MDCCCXXXV.

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

JOHN HOWE was born at Loughborough, on the 17th of May, 1630. His father was then resident incumbent of that parish, to which living he had been presented by archbishop Laud, who highly esteemed him for his extensive learning and unblemished integrity. But between Howe's father and his patron much difference existed in the liberality of their views, of which that prelate was evidently not aware, for on learning that Howe took the side of the nonconformists, he revoked the gift he had bestowed. Deprived thus suddenly of support for his family, and in danger of becoming still more the victim of ecclesiastical rigour, he fled to Ireland. Scarcely was he settled here before persecution broke out with extreme violence; and he narrowly escaped destruction in the general massacre of the Protestants at the commencement of the rebellion. So imminent was his

danger on this occasion, that his escape seemed little less than miraculous. He returned with his family to England, and settled in the county of Lancaster, where his son, the subject of this memoir, received the elements of his education.

Howe's father was a man of sterling piety and distinguished talents, and he probably devoted his time principally to the improvement of his son's mind. His mother was a pious lady, of an amiable disposition and a richly cultivated taste. To the early education of her son she paid the greatest attention; exciting and encouraging in him a spirit of inquiry, prompting him to diligence in his studies, teaching him to expect, but always to surmount difficulties, and diligently endeavouring to expand the powers of his young mind; not forgetting at the same time to explain to him the nature, and to show him the importance of religion. The lessons taught by a mother are not soon forgotten: their power over the mind, when it is first opening, and when perhaps its susceptibilities are the most vigorous, if not the most acute, is great and lasting. Happy is it when the influence which nature gives them is well directed! To the exertions of their mothers many of the most distinguished individuals have been indebted, in no small degree, for their subsequent elevation; and there is little doubt that such was the case with Howe.

Whether young Howe was sent to any school

previously to his entrance at College cannot be ascertained. Probably his early education was strictly private, his only preceptors, till his sixteenth year, being his two excellent parents. That his progress was alike honourable to tutors and pupil, was evident by his subsequent success. He was sent to Cambridge, and entered a student of Christ's College in his sixteenth year. Dr. Henry More and Dr. Cudworth were then at the University, between whom and Howe an intimacy was soon formed, which continued with unabated affection through life. He remained at Cambridge till he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts, when he removed to Brazen-Nose College, Oxford. This was in 1648, in his eighteenth year; a proof that at this period he was a diligent and an indefatigable student.

Early in the ensuing year he took his Bachelor's degree at Oxford: and such was his intense application, that he had then, though only in his nineteenth year, gone through a complete course of philosophical studies, had read critically nearly all the heathen moralists, besides having acquired an extensive acquaintance with the writings of schoolmen and the Christian reformers. After studying many systems of theology, he wisely determined to examine the Scriptures, carefully and critically, to form a system satisfactory to his mind, and drawn immediately from this only authentic source. This

was of considerable importance to him ever afterwards; and so well had he considered the subject in all its bearings, that he scarcely found it necessary, on any future occasion, to alter those sentiments he had thus deliberately formed. The benefit of a plan like this to the theologian must be incalculable; infinitely less tedious than the vexatious and often profitless drudgery of learning the system of another, however excellent.

Howe had not been long at Oxford before he was elected a Fellow of Magdalen College. His talents, his amiable disposition, his persevering diligence, and his ardent piety procured him the esteem of the most distinguished among his fellow collegians. With Dr. Thomas Goodwin, president of the College, he was on terms of the closest intimacy; and at his solicitation he united himself with a select society of the most pious and intelligent students in the university, formed for the purpose of mutual improvement, of which the worthy doctor was the founder. But before he consented to join this society, suspecting that it was formed upon principles more rigorous than he could approve, he candidly stated that he could only consent to be admitted on catholic terms; for as he could freely give to others the liberty to think for themselves, without censuring them, so he claimed to himself the same right.

With such diligence and success did Howe still

pursue his studies, that on the 9th of July, 1652, in his 22nd year, he took his degree of Master of Arts, and shortly afterwards quitted the university, much to the regret of all in his own College, as well as of many others, by whom he was beloved and respected.

His parents were still living in Lancaster, whither he repaired. His intention was to enter, with as little delay as possible, on his public ministry; and he was accordingly ordained, a few weeks afterwards, in the parish church of Winwick, Lancashire, by the Rev. Charles Herle, a man of sound learning and eminent piety, who at the death of Dr. Twisse became prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Several ministers of high reputation were present on the occasion; and subsequently, when Howe referred to the event, he was accustomed to say, that "he believed few persons in modern times had received an ordination so truly primitive as his."

Howe did not remain many months disengaged, before he was called to a scene of labour suited to the full developement of his powers. He was requested by the parishioners of Great Torrington, in Devon, to become their minister. This weighty charge, after much deliberation, he consented to undertake. He entered upon it with a deep sense of his inefficiency, and with much earnest prayer, that success might follow his efforts. With un-

wearied activity and persevering diligence he discharged his pastoral duties. He contented not himself with a cold and negligent performance of public worship ; but with a holy earnestness commended himself to the consciences of his hearers, as in the sight of God. The result was, that he had a large and flourishing charge. Young and old looked up to him with respect: many who had hitherto neglected religion, became awakened to a sense of its importance ; the ignorant were instructed, the dormant energies of the inactive were aroused into exercise, inquirers after truth and happiness were directed, the mourners in Zion were comforted, the faith of established Christians was confirmed, and there seemed no probability but that he would continue their faithful pastor to the close of life.

The extraordinary diligence with which he now discharged his ministerial duties required more physical strength, as well as mental vigour, than most men possess. On public fast days, which were then much more frequently observed, he commenced Divine service at nine in the morning. He first offered up an extempore prayer, supplicating the Divine presence during the day: he then read and expounded a psalm, or a chapter ; and afterwards offered up another very solemn prayer, entering particularly, and with singular propriety, into the causes of their meeting. Next

followed a sermon, the delivery of which took more than an hour; then he again prayed: after this a psalm was sung, suited to the occasion, during which he retired to take some slight refreshment. At the close of the singing, he again entered the pulpit, prayed with great earnestness for a considerable time, and then preached another excellent discourse, concluding the service about four in the afternoon, by a solemn prayer and benediction. Few would have had strength sufficient to go through a service like this, and fewer still mental vigour enough to have made it otherwise than tedious to their hearers; but Howe kept up the attention of his auditory to the last and was listened to with as much interest at the close as at the commencement of these services. Protracting public worship, however, to so many hours, is by no means to be commended. Short sermons and short prayers are much more interesting, and generally prove much more profitable than long ones. The mind sympathizes with the body, and becomes fatigued, when required to exert itself beyond a certain point; and when mental lassitude commences, all moral and religious benefit ends. It has been well remarked, that all the prayers in the Scripture are short, as if they had all been composed with an especial regard to the Saviour's command: "Use not vain repetitions, as

do the heathen, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

Howe's distinguished piety, amiable disposition, and catholic spirit, procured him the esteem of all the neighbouring ministers. His liberality prompted him to cultivate the society of the intelligent and pious among all classes, to whatever community they belonged. Among those with whom he was on terms of very close intimacy, was the Rev. George Hughes, then minister of Plymouth, a man of preeminent ability, and universally beloved. Howe's friendship with this highly-gifted minister led to the happiest results. Perceiving that Mr. Hughes's eldest daughter, who was an excellent and accomplished lady, was likely to make him a suitable companion for life, Howe made her an offer of marriage. The offer was accepted, and they were united on the 1st of March, 1654. This union became to Howe a source of much enjoyment throughout every subsequent period of his life.

The congeniality of disposition between Howe and his father-in-law induced them to keep up a regular weekly correspondence, which they carried on in Latin; and it is deeply to be regretted that these letters have not been preserved, as they must have been most interesting, and would probably have thrown much light on the events of Howe's life, at this and perhaps at an earlier period. An

incident on record respecting one of them, would lead to the inference that they were usually written in a strain of devout and mutual affection. By some means a fire happened in one part of Howe's dwelling-house, at Torrington, which had it not been for an unusually heavy rain that providentially fell at the time, must have been destroyed. On the very day this happened, Howe received a letter from Mr. Hughes, concluding with the very apposite petition: *Sit ros cali super habitaculum vestrum*—"Let the dew of heaven be upon your dwelling," Of the impending danger Mr. Hughes could have had no conception when he wrote the words; but so entirely was Howe's deliverance from this calamity owing to the rain that fell, that he could not fail to notice the very seasonable petition.

Howe became daily more affectionately attached to his people, and their regard for him was equally sincere and ardent. It was a subject of mutual satisfaction, that every thing indicated the probability of his continuance in his humble though most useful sphere of duty, to the close of life. But it was providentially determined otherwise. Usefully as he was now employed among them, he was soon to be removed to a station of much greater responsibility, by Him who marks the bounds of our habitation, and appoints the

particular sphere of ministerial labour. This event was as unexpected to himself as it was unlooked for by his people, but the manner in which it happened appeared to furnish unequivocal proof that it was opened entirely by the hand of Providence.

Having occasion to visit London, and being detained there longer than he expected, Howe went, the last Sunday he intended to remain in town, to the chapel at Whitehall, where Oliver Cromwell, then in the zenith of his power, was accustomed to attend. Howe's clerical appearance and prepossessing countenance soon attracted Cromwell's notice; and believing him to be a minister from the country, of more than common attainments, he sent a messenger to him, at the close of the service, to say that he wished to speak with him. With this request Howe immediately complied, though he could not imagine what it meant. Cromwell soon found that his conjectures were right; and without further ceremony or enquiry, he requested Howe to preach before him at Whitehall, the following Sunday. Surprised beyond measure at such a request, Howe respectfully and earnestly desired to be excused, alleging that he had nothing now to detain him longer in town, and that it would be a great inconvenience to himself, as well as to his people, if he did not imme-

diately return. But all the excuses Howe could urge, Cromwell overruled; stating that he would take no denial, but would see that a minister should be sent to Torrington, to supply Howe's place. Howe was thus reluctantly compelled to submit, and he preached at Whitehall on the following Sunday. After hearing one sermon, Cromwell pressed him for another, and then for a third; and at length, after much conversation with him in private, perceiving that his talents were of the first order, he told him plainly that he must quit Torrington, and become his domestic chaplain, at the seat of government. Howe earnestly begged to be excused; pleaded his incapacity to fill so important a station; mentioned the great regard he had for his people, and the equally sincere attachment they felt for him: but all was of no avail. He, whose words were like those of a king, armed with power, were not to be resisted. Cromwell overruled all his objections, and left him no alternative but to remove his family, with as little delay as possible, to Whitehall. He assured him, however, that a suitable successor should be sent to Torrington.

Finding himself thus suddenly and unexpectedly raised to a station of great responsibility, and no small difficulty, Howe resolved diligently and conscientiously to discharge its duties. On all occasions he prudently endeavoured to avoid

giving a single individual any just cause of complaint. Overlooking differences of religious sentiments, even in that age of bigotry and intolerance, he sought to advance the interests of the really meritorious among all classes. To the cause of religion he was devotedly attached. Every plan for its advancement, whether it originated with himself or with others, was sure to find in him a ready advocate. He lost no opportunity to make the best use of the advantages with which Providence had blessed him, for promoting its success. When employed, as he frequently was, in affairs of great secrecy and delicacy, in the management of which the utmost caution was requisite, such was his prudence, that, without in any degree incurring the charge of duplicity or servility, he almost invariably gave satisfaction to all parties.

Genuine merit, in friends or enemies, was sure of support from Howe: of this his conduct to Dr. Ward, afterwards bishop of Exeter, is an illustration. The doctor had recently become professor of astronomy at Oxford, and on the occurrence of a vacancy in the principalship of Jesus College, he became a candidate. So much was he esteemed by the fellows, that he was sure of a majority in his favour; but he had been informed that Cromwell had promised it to Mr. Howell. Aware that he stood no chance of success unless he could procure the Protector's interest, he applied to Mr.

Howe, who promptly offered him all the assistance in his power, and promised to introduce him to Cromwell at an early day. On introducing the doctor to the Protector he strongly recommended him as a man of great learning, respectfully intimating, at the same time, how improper it would be, were a person of the doctor's merit, supported as he was by the fellows, discountenanced. Cromwell replied, that he had promised the situation, and could not, under any consideration, alter his appointment. But perceiving it to be Howe's particular wish to serve the doctor, he withdrew with Howe into another room; and after a few minutes' conversation they returned to the doctor, whom Cromwell thus addressed: "Howe has spoken of your learning and integrity in the highest terms; and I find he is very desirous of serving you. How much do you think the principalship is worth?" On being told by the doctor what might fairly be considered its value, he generously assured him that the same sum should be allowed him annually. This was a most seasonable kindness, in the doctor's situation, and he ever afterwards expressed the grateful sense he entertained of both Howe's and Cromwell's generosity.

This was only one instance, out of many, in which Howe's conduct was equally kind to individuals, irrespective of party interests or religious sentiment. In all he did, however, he was per-

fectly disinterested: his own advancement he never made a subject of consideration. Surprised at this, Cromwell said to him, one day, after he had been soliciting a favour for some applicant, "You have asked, and I have granted you many favours for others, Howe; I wonder when you will ask any thing for yourself or your family." It is an honour to Howe, that at a crisis of our national history more than usually perilous, in a situation beset with temptations, he acted thus nobly. Few would have had firmness of mind, in circumstances of such difficulty, to resist its allurements, and, without the least compromise of principle, to maintain their integrity. Fewer still would have managed affairs of such delicacy as were often entrusted to him, without exciting the dissatisfaction of many, and creating a host of opponents. It was also a striking proof of Cromwell's discernment, to select an individual so perfectly qualified for this important station.

Howe's independence of mind was on some occasions put to the severest test; but it never failed him in his delicate and trying situation. His opinions, and those of his despotic master, varied much on some important points; but he was not the man to suppress truth that he conceived to be scriptural, or to conceal it by studied ambiguity, even though he knew it would be unwelcome to his superiors. He never imprudently obtruded on

his audience disputed points which he knew they would dislike, but treated them cautiously and dispassionately when they fell in his way; taking care not to conceal what he looked upon as truth by unmeaning generalities. In the pulpit he considered himself as amenable only to God. Preaching before Cromwell one Sunday, near the close of the Protector's life, he animadverted with some severity on the unwarrantable notion of particular faith in prayer,¹ which he was aware his master and many of the courtiers maintained; the pernicious effects of which he had often seen and deeply regretted. Cromwell heard him attentively, but with evident marks of disapprobation. After the sermon, one of the courtiers asked Howe if he knew what he had been doing; adding, that he feared Cromwell would be so much displeased with his sermon, as to make it difficult for him ever again to secure his favour. Howe replied, that he had conscientiously exposed a notion that he conceived to be dangerous, and he left the event to God. Cromwell's displeasure, though he evidently sought to conceal it, showed itself by a coolness to Howe, and some equivocal marks of disapprobation: but he retained his domestic chaplaincy till the death of his

¹ i. e. That the peculiar favourites of heaven had an assurance conveyed to them, by a special impression upon the mind, that the particular mercies sought would be granted, including even, in some cases, a previous intimation of the precise method of the fulfilment.

haughty patron, which happened shortly afterwards, when Howe had the same appointment under Cromwell's son.

The short continuance of Richard Cromwell's power soon occasioned Howe's removal from Whitehall. He was no sooner at liberty than he returned to Torrington. He found the people still unsettled, and at their unanimous request he again became their minister. The elevated station he had filled, with so much honour to himself and satisfaction to all parties, had in no degree unfitted him for the humbler office of a village pastor. He was neither less zealous nor less active than formerly. He seemed to feel more deeply the importance of religion, and the vanity of earthly distinctions. These sentiments he incessantly laboured to impress on the minds of his hearers; faithfully admonishing the thoughtless of their danger, and affectionately urging all to conduct themselves on Christian principles, to walk in love, and to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

At the restoration of the king, rigorous measures were taken to accuse, in order to punish those who had been in the Protector's service. A man of Howe's peaceable spirit, it might be supposed, would have escaped; but such was not the case. Accusations were brought against him by two individuals, without the slightest ground, for delivering treasonable sentiments from the pul-

pit, on two particular occasions. Had not the character of Howe stood very high, the consequences of this iniquitous information would have led to his ruin. As it was, he had to act with spirit and caution, to defeat the malice of his enemies.

On his first impeachment Howe's friends instantly came forward and gave bail for his appearance. He was accordingly liberated on the recognizances of himself and others. Previous to the day fixed for his trial, the magistrates received a communication from the lieutenants appoint to conduct it, stating, that as they could not attend the sessions at the time named, they wished them to be adjourned to a future day. Imagining that what they chiefly had in view was to keep him and his friends for a longer period in painful suspense, Howe, immediately on the adjournment being proposed, rose in court, and respectfully, but firmly demanded the benefit of the act, which allowed the accused party to acquit himself, by bringing more evidences than his informers. This being granted him, the mayor administered oaths to more than twenty most respectable individuals, who declared Howe to be innocent of the charge brought against him. He was accordingly discharged. The subsequent conduct of Howe's enemies too clearly proved that their real intentions were to have made him feel in some way the weight of their displeasure. They summoned the mayor

who had acquitted him to appear before them at Exeter;—committed him to the prison, and fined him several pounds for the course he had taken in the affair. When, however, the case came regularly under the notice of the judge, he dismissed it, pronouncing the accusation to be founded entirely in error. It is remarkable, that one of the men who informed against Howe shortly afterwards destroyed himself, and the other left the town, and was never heard of again. It is seldom safe to regard the calamities which may overtake even the most hardened, in the light of divine judgments; though in cases like this we can hardly fail to remark with what facility Providence can retaliate the injuries done to the righteous, by simply leaving them to the unchecked fury of their own passions!

Howe began now to prepare for a trial greater than any he had yet experienced. He saw that the spirit of the times would inevitably, in a very short time, lead to the separation of many excellent ministers from the church. With the deepest regret he witnessed the illiberal spirit of the most active among the dominant party. He watched their proceeding in passing the act of uniformity; and when at length that impolitic statute was passed, having previously, with calmness and moderation, examined all its enactments, he determined, after much deliberation and prayer, finding it impossible conscientiously to conform, to relin-

quish his charge, though he knew what grief would be occasioned by his separation from a people between whom and himself an attachment existed mutually strong.

On the 22d of August, 1662, the day on which the act passed into a law, Howe preached his farewell sermons to his beloved flock. The services of the day were solemn and impressive. His parting address was most affecting: not an individual in the crowded congregation was unmoved. Addressing them for the last time, on subjects of the deepest interest, he sought, in a strain of unaffected eloquence, to awaken the thoughtless to consideration, to rouse the indolent to activity, and to excite all, with more earnestness than ever, to labour after the attainment of that spirit of love and forbearance which our holy religion especially inculcates. Commending them affectionately to God, he thus took his leave of them as their pastor for ever; to the inexpressible regret of both minister and people, who mutually mourned that circumstances, over which they had no controul, should have occasioned their separation.

It was matter of deep regret to many excellent conformists, that an individual of Howe's catholic spirit should have taken this step. Bishop Wilson, a liberal and most useful prelate, once asked him to assign the true reason for resigning his charge; at the same time expressing surprise, that a person of

his acknowledged liberality should have so acted. "My liberality," said Howe, "forced me to dissent; for how could I remain in a church imposing terms of communion more strict than the Scriptures impose?" No individual ever wished for union in the church more sincerely, or exerted himself more to promote it than himself. It was his desire that nothing should be essential to Christian communion, but what is essential to salvation. Union in the church he knew it was impossible to effect by legislative enactments: this could only be accomplished by the Divine Spirit. "When that is poured out," he says, "it will put into its place every dislocated joint in the church, giving to the body perfect symmetry and beauty: conquering private interests and inclinations; and overawing men's hearts by the authority of the divine law. Till then, Christianity will be among us a languishing, withering thing; and it matters but little which party is uppermost. When that season arrives there will be no parties."

Deprived not only of the means of supporting his increasing family, but of his opportunities for useful exertion, Howe knew not now what step to take. He had no misgivings as to his temporal supplies: in this respect he could cheerfully cast himself on the care of Providence; but he found it painful to be unemployed. Under these circumstances he occasionally preached in the houses of his friends

in different parts of the county : but even this indulgence exposed him to danger. Returning home from preaching one evening at a gentleman's house, he was informed that an officer from the ecclesiastical court had inquired for him, and had left word, that a citation was issued against both him and the gentleman at whose house he had been preaching. Instead of concealing himself, Howe determined to show his opponents that he had done nothing of which he was ashamed. He accordingly rode to Exeter the next morning, the very spot where they resided. On alighting at the inn, he met a clergyman belonging to the court whom he well knew, who said to him, with much surprise, "What can have brought you here, Mr. Howe?" "Pray, Sir, what have I done, that I may not be here?" was the reply. "Are you not aware," said the clergyman, "that a process is out against you? and that, being so well known here, you are liable very shortly to be taken up?" "I am," said Howe; "but I am anxious to show my opponents that I have done nothing which I wish to conceal." "Is it, then, your intention to wait on the bishop?" said the clergyman. "Not unless his lordship, on hearing that I am here, should send for me," said Howe. The clergyman kindly promised to inform the bishop of Howe's arrival, and to let him know the result. In a short time he brought a message from his lordship, that he wished to see Howe. On his in-

troduction the bishop received him very politely, and, after assuring him that he was much concerned at his nonconformity, he urged him to state some of the grounds on which he had been induced to resign his charge. Howe respectfully replied that he could not do this without trespassing too much on his lordship's patience. "Do me, then," said the bishop, "the favour to mention any one thing that you have thought particularly objectionable." On this, Howe mentioned the point of re-ordination. "Pray, Sir," said his lordship, "what hurt can there be in that?" "Hurt! my lord," replied Howe: "the thought to me is shocking; it hurts my understanding: it is an absurdity; for nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure I am a minister of Christ, and how can I again begin to be one?" This was spoken in a tone so serious, that all further conversation on the subject was declined; and his lordship intimated, that if Howe would resume his station in the church, he should be presented with some valuable preferment. Without taking any notice of the citation, the bishop dismissed Howe, with many friendly assurances of his regard; and he returned home unmolested, hearing nothing further from that time of the arrest.

Howe knew not what steps it was most advisable, under present circumstances, to pursue. To conform without violating his conscience was impos-

sible. He had so maturely considered the subject before his resignation, that no view he could take of it could alter his opinion. Had he been disposed so to do, such was the spirit of the most active conformists, and so intolerant were the measures they seemed determined to pursue, that the difficulties would have been insurmountable. Three years had now elapsed since the passing of the uniformity act, and the nonconformists were much harassed and perplexed in their proceedings. Not satisfied with having driven them from their livings, their opponents seemed resolved to treat them with increasing rigour. In 1665, the five-mile act was passed, imposing a severe penalty on every non-conforming teacher who should reside, or come, unless upon the road, within five miles of any corporate town, where he had officiated in that character, until he had taken an oath, before a magistrate, that it was illegal, under any pretence whatever, to take up arms against the king; and that he would never attempt to make any alteration in church or state. Much diversity of opinion prevailed respecting this oath; but Howe took the side of those who, after much consideration, consented to take it; which he did on grounds to himself perfectly justifiable.

About this time Howe visited his father-in-law, who was then imprisoned in the Isle of St. Nicholas. Howe had been there but a short time

before he too was arrested and cast into the same prison ; for what cause we cannot tell, but probably for conducting religious worship in some unauthorized place. He was confined here about two months. On his liberation he thus wrote to a near relative who had experienced a similar deliverance : “ Blessed be God, that we can each hear of our mutual occasions for thanksgiving, and may join praises and prayers, which I hope is done daily for each other. Nearer approaches to God, and constant adherence to him, with the improvement of our interest in each other’s heart, will, I hope, compensate abundantly for the unkindness of a surly, treacherous world ; which still retains its wayward temper, growing more peevish as it grows older, and more ingenious in inventing ways to torment whom it dislikes. It was not enough to kill us by one single death. When it had nearly done this, it gave us time to respire and live again, at least in hope, that it might enjoy the renewed pleasure of putting us to further pain and torture, in dying once more. Spite is natural to the world : all its kindness is an artificial disguise ; a device to promote and serve its purpose with more efficacious and piercing malignity. But patience will elude its design, and blunt its sharpest edge. It is perfectly defeated when nothing is expected from it but mischief ; because then the worst it can threaten finds us provided ; and the best it can

promise, incredulous and not easily imposed upon. This will make it at last despair and grow hopeless, when it finds that the more it goes about to mock and vex us, the more it teaches and instructs us; and that the more wicked it becomes, the wiser we are. If we cannot outwit it, God will, and carry us, I trust, safe through to a better world."

After Howe's liberation from imprisonment he returned to Devonshire. But such was the state of the times, that he could find no place in which to preach with safety. He sometimes ventured to do so in the houses of his friends, in different parts of the county, though at the risk of losing both his property and liberty, besides subjecting those whom he highly esteemed to the same evils. His family was now considerably increased; and as he had been long without any regular income, it became a matter of importance to inquire what steps he should take to avoid pecuniary embarrassment. To depend on Providence without taking precautionary steps, and vigorously exerting himself to the utmost of his power, he knew was presumption. He had already appeared as an author, having published, in 1660, an excellent discourse on Eccles. vii. 29, printed in the collection of sermons entitled "Morning Exercises;" partly to benefit himself in a pecuniary way, but chiefly to advance the interests of true religion. He now pub-

lished a work, entitled "The Blessedness of the Righteous," consisting of a series of discourses which he had preached at Torrington.

"An author's works," it has been well said, "will best show what is his spirit." Had Howe been chiefly anxious to produce a work that would have commanded an extensive sale, and had he participated at all in the disputatious spirit of the age, he would have selected some controverted point on which to employ his pen. That he acted otherwise, arose not from inability; for as a controversialist his powers were of the highest order; but his amiable and most peaceful spirit prompted him to choose a less thorny path, and one more profitable at least to the cause of true piety, though it might not procure him an equal degree of popularity. This however was not his object: his chief aim seems to have been to divert the attention of Christians from the vexatious and fruitless pursuits of contention, to a subject of acknowledged universal importance. The evils of disputation he most deeply deplored: in his epistle to the reader, he remarks, with as much propriety as beauty: "It is equally matter of complaint and wonder, that men, turning from such things, wherein there is much both of importance and pleasure, can find leisure for what one would think would have little temptation or allurements in it—contentions and vain jangling. It might

rather be thought the visible fruits and tendencies would render it the most dreadful thing to every serious beholder. What tragedies hath it wrought in the Christian church! Into how weak and languishing a condition hath it brought the religion of professed Christians! Hence have arisen the intemperate preternatural heats and angers, that have spent its strength and spirits, and made it look with so meagre and pale a face. We have a greater mind to dispute than to live; and to contend what we know not, than to practise the far greater things we know, and which more directly tend to nourish and maintain the divine life. If a man be called forth to defend an important truth against an injurious assault, it were treacherous self-love to purchase his own peace by declining it. When, however, contention becomes a man's element, and he cannot live out of that fire, but strains his wits and racks his invention to find matter of quarrel; is resolved nothing said or done by others shall please him, only because he means to please himself by dissenting; disputes only that he may dispute, and loves dissension for itself,—this is the unnatural humour that hath so unspeakably troubled the church, and dispirited religion, and filled men's souls with wind and vanity; yea, with fire and fury: this hath made Christians gladiators, and the Christian world a clamorous theatre.

Generally, by how much any thing is the more disputable, by so much it is the less conducive to the Christian life. God hath graciously provided that what we are to live by should not cost us so dear."

For profundity of thought, sublimity of sentiments, and depth of piety, the work which Howe now gave to the world has seldom been equalled, and never excelled. It established his reputation as a scholar and a theologian; while it showed how amiable and peaceful was his spirit, and how ardently he wished to promote the interests of true religion. The work met with an extensive sale, and brought him some seasonable pecuniary relief. This was however only temporary; and he still earnestly hoped that Providence would appear for him in some way, though there seemed but little prospect that such would be the case.

In the course of a few weeks, when his difficulties pressed heavily upon him, he received a pressing and very earnest invitation from a noble lord, to accompany him to Ireland, as his domestic chaplain; making him, at the same time, such generous offers as he could not but very gratefully accept. He accordingly embarked for Dublin early in the spring of 1672. A number of his friends accompanied him to Holyhead, to take their farewell of one to whom they were most affectionately attached. The wind becoming foul,

he was detained in the harbour over the ensuing Sunday. His friends now requested he would embrace this opportunity to favour them with another sermon, which he kindly promised to do, on their procuring a suitable place. There was in the village a large parish church, where prayers only were accustomed to be read. Howe's friends, while walking along the beach, in hope of meeting with a suitable spot, where to perform religious worship, met the parish clerk, then on his way to church. They enquired of him whether he could direct them to a house, or convenient place for the purpose, in the neighbourhood. He replied that he knew of none at all likely to be suitable; but, said he, "I have no doubt my master, the clergyman whom you see just before us, will lend the gentleman his pulpit, as he does not preach himself." Application was accordingly made to the clergyman, who very cheerfully consented, and Howe preached both parts of the day. Few were present in the morning, but in the afternoon a large congregation assembled. The discourses on both occasions were powerful and deeply affecting.

The wind remaining in the same quarter during the next week, detained Howe over the ensuing Sunday. The inhabitants observing that the vessel had not sailed, expected he would again preach; and on the clergyman's arrival he

found a more numerous congregation assembled than on the previous Sunday. He perceived that they expected a sermon, which he could not give them, having come totally unprepared. Unwilling to disappoint them, he dispatched a messenger to Howe, on board the vessel. Howe was in bed, and very unwell at the time; and it seemed probable, that if he consented to go, he should expose himself to a serious and dangerous illness. But after giving the subject a little consideration, he determined to accompany the messenger; not doubting that Providence, which had so plainly summoned him to the labour, would aid him to perform it, and protect him from every evil result. Arriving at the church just as the prayers were ended, he immediately entered the pulpit, and delivered, with great freedom and energy, an excellent discourse. The people listened with the deepest attention, and Howe was often heard to say, that he believed, if ever his preaching was the means of doing good, it was especially so on that occasion. He returned to the vessel much fatigued by the exertion; but happily no ill effects followed. The next day the wind became fair, and he had a pleasant passage to Dublin.

He now commenced, with his usual diligence, the discharge of his duties as chaplain to the Lord Massarene, in the parish of Antrim; and was shortly afterwards joined by Mrs. Howe and his family.

Howe was received here with the respect due to his character and talents. The station he now occupied, his solid and extensive learning, and his amiable spirit, procured him the esteem of both the bishop and archbishop. Liberty was given him to preach in the church every Sunday in the afternoon, without requiring from him any act of conformity. Such was the bishop's opinion of him, and so much did he admire his peaceable and Christian spirit, that he declared frankly, at a full meeting of the clergy, it was his wish that every pulpit over which he had any jurisdiction, should be open to him.

Howe had not been many months in Ireland, before tidings reached him of the melancholy and sudden death of his kinsman, John Upton, Esq. which happened under circumstances peculiarly distressing. Mr. Upton had been thirty years in Spain, where he had accumulated considerable property : he was about to return to his native country, to spend the evening of his life in peaceful retirement. His friends all most anxiously anticipated his arrival, fondly hoping to derive much pleasure from his society ; but these hopes were never realized. The vessel in which he embarked, instead of his animated body, brought only his lifeless corpse. He had been suddenly taken ill when near the end of the voyage, and snatched off by the violence of his disorder. So striking an instance of the frailty of life, and of

the vanity of all human expectations, Howe could not permit to pass unnoticed. He accordingly preached an eloquent sermon on the occasion, from Psalm lxxxix. 47, 48, which he afterwards published, at the earnest importunity of his friends in England, entitled “The Vanity of Man as Mortal.”

His design in this publication, as he states in his Dedicatory Epistle, was not to erect a monument to his deceased kinsman, but to induce those into whose hands it might fall, to consider the true end of their being ; to examine thoroughly what it can be supposed such creatures were made and placed on this earth for ; and that, when they have come to a settled apprehension of the important ends they are capable of attaining, and are evidently designed for, they may be seized with a noble disdain of living beneath themselves, and the bounty of their Creator. Never was there a discourse better adapted to answer this purpose ; never were the topics of human instability and vanity more strikingly contrasted with the dignity of man’s nature as an heir of immortality. The extreme absurdity, as well as guilt, of a merely sensual life, is demonstrated in a manner the most convincing. The end towards which intelligent beings like ourselves ought invariably to tend, is made clearly to appear, while the considerations by which we may be induced to keep it constantly in view, are

presented with a force and beauty almost inconceivable. It is impossible to rise from an attentive perusal of this masterly sermon unaffected.

This discourse was published in 1671. During the following year we hear nothing of Howe, except that he continued to prosecute his labours in Ireland with undiminished diligence. In 1674 he published an admirable treatise, entitled "Delighting in God," the substance of a series of discourses he had preached at Torrington. The subject he selected showed that he was still unaffected by the bitter and controversial spirit of the age. He seemed to breathe a freer and purer air than most of his contemporaries. To promote that practical religion which is founded on the pure principles of Christianity, was the object he ever kept in view. In an eloquent epistolary address, he dedicated the work to his former flock, in token of his affectionate remembrance of their kindness. This address was dated Antrim, Sept. 1, 1674. The following sentences will show by what spirit he was then actuated: "The matter here treated of is the very substance of religion; the root and the flower, the foundation and superstructure of practical godliness. I have the same end in view in this publication, as I had in my poor labours among you—the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known, and are the least liable to question. My design is not to engage

you for or against any party ; but to let you see that formality in religion, unaccompanied with life, than which there is nothing more empty and sapless, and void of profit and delight, will not serve your turn, as it will not any man's. I have reflected, with some satisfaction, that this hath been the temper of my mind among you. Great reason have I to repent that I have not with more earnestness pressed upon you the important things in which serious Christians do generally agree. But I repent not that I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of the age ; for as I pretend to have little light in these things, so I must profess I have little inclination for them. I most seriously think humility, charity, and patience would contribute more to the composing of these lesser differences, and to the good estate of the Christian interest, than the most fervent disputes and contentions. For this reason I have concerned myself but little in contending for one way or other, when I was among you, or in censuring such as might differ from me ; contenting myself to follow the course that, to my judgment, seemed best, without stepping out of the way to jostle others. But I cannot be so patient of the practical disagreement not only with all those serious Christians, but even with their own consciences, which those must have who take no delight in God, and have no pleasure in the very substance of

religion. These I cannot but admonish, that however this or that form of external worship may consist with their everlasting well-being, real ungodliness, and the denial of the power of religion, never can; which power stands in nothing more than in love to God and delight in him."

Such had ever been the high tone of Howe's piety, and such it still continued. In 1675 an event occurred which led to his return to England. By the death of Dr. Lazarus Seamen, an eminent independent minister, the church in London, over which he presided, was left without a pastor. A few of the members were for inviting Mr. Charnock, to be the doctor's successor; but the majority sent Howe a pressing invitation to accept the charge. This subject occasioned him many anxious and serious thoughts. Unwilling to decide hastily, and unable, at such a distance, to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion respecting the strength of the different parties, he determined, before he sent in his final reply, to pay them a visit. Such was the importance attached by Howe to this undertaking, that previous to his journey he committed to writing a paper, dated Antrim, 20th Dec. 1675, called "Considerations and Communings respecting my projected Journey;" in which he scrupulously inquired into the motives by which he was actuated in the affair. It is impos-

sible not to admire the ardent piety, and undissembled humility that runs through the whole of this production. He proposed to himself the four following queries: “1. Am I not influenced by undue self-respect? 2. Have I not a previous resolution to settle in London, before I go? 3. Am I not afraid that some danger will befall me in the journey? 4. Should such be the case, am I not too solicitous lest this should be adduced as a testimony against my present undertaking?”

In the answers he gives to these queries, it is difficult to know which most to admire,—his prudence, his piety, his humility, or his wisdom. Gladly would we record them at length, but they extend beyond our limits. In substance they may be thus briefly summed up.—To the first, after stating his convictions of the impiety of selfishness, and mentioning the ardent prayers he had offered up to be delivered from it, he remarks, “I have carefully examined what selfish respects I can have in this matter. Is it worldly emolument?—In this my heart acquits me in the sight of God. Is it that I am anxious to be popular, and to be applauded of men?—To this I can say, that I verily believe I shall be lower in the esteem of the people in London, when I come under their nearer view. I know myself to be incapable of pleasing their genius. I cannot endure to preach with elaborate artifice. They will soon be weary when they hear nothing

but plain sermons. They judge of me now by my writings; when I come to converse with them, they will find me slow to express my own apprehensions, unready, entangled, and often obscure in my thoughts and expressions, so that all will say, 'This is not the man we took him for.' This I hope I should digest well. I have found, blessed be God, that the applause some have imprudently given me, in letters, (and I have received many that no eye hath ever seen but my own,) have occasioned me deep humiliation. My own heart hath witnessed to me my miserable penury, and that I am thought to be what I am not. Of applause I have often found an inward abhorrence." To the second query he answers, "I am resolved to do what I conceive will best promote my subsequent usefulness; and if I find it is my duty to return, I shall do it cheerfully." In answer to the third, he remarks: "I bless God I have little fear of death. I need great forgiveness, for I am a miserable, sinful wretch. This I trust I have upon gospel terms. I hope I am in a state of favour and acceptance with God, through his infinite mercy, in the Redeemer's blood. It is hence pleasure to me to think of going into eternity, to be associated with those who are perfectly holy. Yet I bless God I am not weary of life, nor of his work in the world, if he shall yet please further to employ me here." As to the censure of others, referred to in his fourth

query, he remarks: "To determine the justice of a cause by its success, is inequitable: many a just business has miscarried. God will accept of my sincere intentions, though I effect nothing. The journey I am about to undertake is absolutely necessary, as without it I could come to no decision."

It is not improbable that Mrs. Howe had some misgivings respecting this journey. To console her mind, and in some degree prepare her for her worst anticipations, Howe drew up the following paper, illustrative both of the warmth of his affection and the depth of his piety. "We should consider that God hath determined all circumstances, when and where, and after what manner we shall die; and all wisely and well. Should it please him to remove me during this journey, why should you be grieved that he hath done well? Not only well in itself, but well for you, if you love him. You must ere long follow, and will not be always in this world without me. What there is of evil in this case admits of remedy. Draw so much nearer to God and cease from men. Mind heaven more and your loss is made up. I have, through grace, preached immortal truth, which will survive me, and may be to your advantage. As to your dependence on me for worldly concerns, I was never a good projector for the world, so the loss is not great. How many, dear to God, have been preserved in a worse condition! Forget not the

motto, " God will provide." He that feeds the ravens and takes care of the sparrows, will he not take care of you? Are you of his family, and will he not take care of his own? Instead of distrust and repining, give thanks. Bless him with all your soul that he hath revealed and given himself to you for an everlasting portion. Let it be some satisfaction to you that I go willingly, under no dread, with no regret, but with some comfortable knowledge of my way and end."

From some expressions in this paper, in which he adverts to the delicate state of his health, it appears probable that the hope of his deriving benefit in this respect, from the removal, had some weight in his determination. But his chief inducement was evidently the conviction, that he should be more extensively useful in promoting the advancement of religion. Actuated by motives thus pure, he embarked for Liverpool, early in January, 1676, where he shortly afterwards safely arrived. He proceeded thence without delay to London: and on enquiring into the circumstances of the case, after much deliberation, consented to accept the charge. Immediate steps were taken for the removal of his family, all of whom reached London safely, in due course.

Howe entered on his new sphere of labour with all his accustomed energy, influenced by the same peaceful spirit, and the same earnest desires to

promote the cultivation of practical piety. Making the best use of king Charles's indulgence, he preached as often as his strength would permit. His congregation was numerous and highly respectable; and not a few of his hearers were men of solid learning and eminent piety. He was soon universally beloved by his people. The Christian spirit he displayed towards those who had opposed his election to the pastoral office, speedily conciliated their regard. By all the ministers in his own denomination he was highly esteemed; and with many of the church he was on terms of the closest intimacy.

The increased exertions required in his new charge, Howe permitted not to interrupt his regular studies. The important station he now filled rather urged him to greater activity. No sooner was he settled in London than he published the first part of his "Living Temple:" a most elaborate work, which none but a master-mind could have conceived and executed. It was dedicated to the Lord Masarene, under whose hospitable roof it was principally composed. Howe's design, in this noble treatise, was to demonstrate (which he has done by arguments perfectly irresistible) the existence of God; to show what must necessarily be his character; to evince that in the creation of man his obvious intention was to make him a living temple, in which he might

dwell ; that owing to man's apostacy this temple was now in ruins ; that before it could become the residence of an indwelling Deity, its entire renovation was necessary ; that the grand constituents of this change are, love to God and to the whole human family ; that to produce this change is the leading design of the gospel ; that only in proportion as we are made the subjects of this change, becoming thus the workmanship of God, can we legitimately claim the character of Christians, and that our admission into heaven, in a future state, will be impossible, if we are not now the temples of an indwelling God.

Among the distinguished individuals with whom Howe was on terms of intimacy, was the Honourable Robert Boyle. That gentleman requested Howe to favour him with his thoughts on a controverted point in theology. To oblige his friend he entered the field of disputation, clad however with the armour of peace. In 1677 he published the product of his correspondence, in the form of a brief treatise, entitled the "Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the Wisdom and the Sincerity of his Counsels and Exhortations." 'This was a production full of profound thought, abounding with striking scriptural illustrations. By most of his friends it was deservedly admired, but some thought it too liberal. If in any part its reasoning appear inconclusive, it is less the result

of erroneous conceptions, than because the subject is too mighty for our limited mental powers. Every one perceived by this, and the previous productions of his pen, that Howe had all the requisites for an acute disputant, without any of that bitterness of spirit with which they are usually accompanied. The comprehensive grasp of his mind, and his extensive theological knowledge, enabled him to trace the subject he had under consideration, through all the mazy and intricate windings in which it had been involved by the subtlety of its enemies, or the not less dangerous ignorance of its friends. He knew there were depths which the human mind could never fathom; difficulties which were beyond its power ever to surmount, and which it was an act of daring presumption to attempt. This he had the humility to acknowledge, and the prudence invariably to observe.

On the first disclosure of the popish conspiracy, which spread consternation through the kingdom, Howe earnestly laboured to make the apprehensions which the people then felt, the means of exciting them to serious consideration. He inculcated on his own friends especially, and on those of the opposite party, the importance of cultivating a healing and catholic spirit; contending that the best and most effectual means to check the spread of popery, would be a well-consolidated union

among Protestants; and that if conformists and nonconformists could not merge their differences, they ought at least to abstain from open animosity towards each other.

An attempt was now made, by the friends of the dissenters, to make the terms of conformity less rigid, and thus to bring the more moderate among them within the pale of the church. To effect this, a bill was brought into the House of Lords, which unfortunately was soon afterwards thrown out. Anticipating the happiest results from such a measure, Howe earnestly hoped it would be successful. He was now invited, with Mr. Bates, to meet bishop Lloyd at the house of Dr. Tillotson. Here the bishop asked him what he thought would satisfy the greater part of the dissenters. Howe replied, that he could not positively say what would satisfy any but himself; every one, in these matters, having a right to enjoy his own opinion; but he conceived that a full liberty to promote parochial reformation, in any way that might be deemed advisable, would go far towards effecting it. In the propriety of this the bishop concurred, and another interview was agreed upon. The bishop however did not keep his appointment; and as the comprehension bill was thrown out of the House of Peers the same day on which the meeting was appointed, his lordship probably saw the impracticability of any further proceedings.

Unhappily at this period, instead of that liberal spirit which Howe had fondly hoped would have prevailed, a spirit directly the reverse seemed to predominate. Averse as he was to controversy, he was now impelled to it by the violent proceedings of his opponents. Dean Stillingfleet had recently published a sermon, entitled "The Mischief of Separation," which he had preached before the lord mayor. To this Howe replied in a calm and dignified style, without any of the bitterness common to the age. Dean Tillotson too, in his zeal for conformity, had inconsiderately preached and published a sermon, in which he maintained the strange notion, that no man is compelled to preach against the religion of a country were it ever so false. In a conversation with the dean, who was on the most friendly terms with Howe, and who always sent him a copy of all his publications, Howe exposed the fallacy of such a notion, showing that on this ground even the Reformation was indefensible. Tillotson felt the force of Howe's arguments, and acknowledged, with tears, that he had been carried away by the popular feelings of the day against popery. He had preached the sermon without due consideration, and was afterwards compelled to publish it by order of the king, who had slept during the time of its delivery, but who was desirous to see it, because of the extraordinary character given of it by his attendants.

In 1681, the breach between the conformists

and nonconformists became wider than ever. The more rigid among the former employed their utmost efforts to perplex and harass the dissenters. The severe laws made against them some years previously, which had been virtually repealed, were again rigorously enforced. The movements of all the ministers, and, among others, of Howe, were narrowly watched. It required consummate prudence to evade the zeal of the ecclesiastical courts. But this Howe effected without the least compromise of principle; and instead of making any attempt at retaliation, he employed his utmost efforts, in public as well as in private, to promote peace and mutual forbearance among all parties.

About this time he published his sermon entitled "Thoughtfulness for the Future," which he had composed at the request of lady Anne Wharton, to whom it was affectionately inscribed. The same spirit of ardent piety and noble comprehensive thought, which distinguishes all Howe's productions, runs through this excellent discourse. The inconsistency, impiety and absurdity of immoderate care are forcibly pointed out, and the advantages of trust in the Almighty powerfully enforced. Howe's next publication was his sermon on "Charity in respect to other Men's Sins." This was a subject entirely congenial to his catholic spirit, and he treated it with admirable skill; finely illustrating the benefits which would arise to the

world from the diffusion of universal charity. In the preface he remarks, “ We vainly expect from eloquence or disputation the good effects which charity alone (could it take place) would easily bring about. How laboriously do we beat our way in the dark! We grope for the wall, like the blind; and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; but the way of peace we have not known. Human wit is stretched to the uttermost: whenever it comes short, the rest is endeavoured to be supplied by anger; and all to bring us under one form; which either could not be, or, if it were, would be to little purpose; while, in the meantime, the more excellent way is forgotten, and we are far from it. How soon and how easily would a mutual, universal charity redress all! It would melt down men’s minds, mollify their rigours, make high things low, crooked things straight, and rough places plain; while it would certainly either dispose men to agree upon one common order, or make them feel very little inconvenience or cause of offence in some variety. But without it, how little would the most unexceptionable form contribute to the church’s welfare! No more than an elegant, well-shaped garment to the rest of a disjointed and diseased body. What piety is to our union with God, that is charity to our union with one another. But we are apt to expect from the outward form what only the living principle can give; fondly to covet the one

and deny the other. One common external form in the church, wherein all good men could agree, were a most amiable thing, very useful and comely. The want of it hath inferred, and doth threaten evils much to be deplored and deprecated. But the divine principle of charity is necessary to its very being."

During this year Howe published a funeral sermon on the decease of Mrs. Baxter, from 2 Cor. v. 8. He affectionately inscribed it to Mr. Baxter, at whose request it had been preached and published. In 1682 he published a masterly discourse on "the Right Use of the Name of God in Prayer;" another on "Self-dedication;" a funeral sermon for Mr. Fairclough, entitled "The Faithful Servant Rewarded," from Matt. xxv. 21; besides compiling "Annotations on the first, second, and third Epistles of St. John," published in the second volume of Pool's great work. Bitterly bewailing the spirit of intolerance which still continued to agitate the Christian church, Howe published, in the following year, a sermon on "Union among Protestants." His object was to enquire what might be done to allay animosities among Christians, that their division might not be their ruin. Never was a more seasonable discourse given to the world, or one better adapted to promote the peace and prosperity of the Christian world. After proving irresistibly, that the two grand expedients to promote union, were mutual love and a clear opera-

tive faith in the essential truths of Christianity, he thus affectingly deploras the prevalent spirit of the age: "We have great cause to lament the decay of both charity and faith, proofs of which are every where too visible. How destructive is it to the Christian interest. It was once the usual cognomen of our holy profession, 'See how these Christians love one another!' What are they now to be known by? May it not now be said, how do they hate each other, and are likely to die and perish by the hands of one another! And what a cloudy, wavering, uncertain, lank, spiritless thing is the faith of Christians become! How far are we from the riches of the full assurance of understanding! How little practical and governing is the faith of most! How little effectual is it! Let us endeavour the reverse of these principles. We need not the edicts of princes to be our warrant for this practice of loving one another, and cleaving with a more grounded faith to God and his Christ. Here is no place for scruple of conscience. If others will not do their part till all agree in the same thing, let us do ours, that we may be able to say, *Per me non stetit*, 'It was not my fault.' Had Christians been more combined, had they been more united to each other, and to God in Christ, and more thoroughly Christian in their deportment, Christianity would have been a more lively, powerful, awful, amiable thing than it now appears. If the Christian community moulder, de-

cay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, ruined in great part, let us each so act that the ruin may not rest with us."

On the execution of lord Russel, who was beheaded this year in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, so deeply did Howe feel for his widow, that he wrote her ladyship an admirable consolatory letter, full of the tenderest and most sympathetic expressions. This letter is much too long for our limited space, or we would give it entire: we cannot, however, forbear to extract some passages. After reminding her ladyship that joy in God is a Christian duty; and that hence, that sorrow which excludes it is a sin, he remarks, "The cause of your sorrow is exceeding great; but the causes of your joy are inexpressibly greater: you have infinitely more left than you have lost. Doth it need to be disputed whether God be better and greater than man? or more to be valued, loved, and delighted in? Was it not your constant sense, in your best outward state, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside, or in comparison of thee.' The state of your ladyship's case is still the same. The principal causes of your joy are immutable, such as no supervening thing can alter. You have lost a most pleasant earthly relative. Doth the blessed God hereby cease to be the best and most excellent good? Is his nature changed?—his everlasting covenant reversed and annulled? We are required, in reference to our

nearest relations, when we lose them, to weep as though we wept not, as well as when we enjoy them, to rejoice as though we rejoiced not; because our time here is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away. We are finite beings, and so are they: our passions, in reference to them, must not be infinite; whereas, in reference to the infinite, uncreated Good, there is no possibility of exceeding in our affection. Of so great concernment is it to us, that in the liberty we give our affections, we observe the just difference which ought to be in their exercise towards God and towards creatures.

“It is also to be considered that the great God is pleased so to condescend as himself to bear the name, and sustain the relation, the capacity of earthly relatives. I doubt not but your ladyship hath good right to apply to yourself the words of the prophet: ‘Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name.’ Whereupon, as he infinitely transcends all that is delectable in the most excellent earthly relation, it ought to be endeavoured that the affection placed in him should proportionably excel. That supremacy of affection which is due to the blessed God, cannot, without great injury, be placed any where else. As we are to have none other God before him; so him alone we are to serve with all our heart and soul, and might and mind; for whatever interest we have in the nearest earthly relative, the inte-

rest we have in him who made us is far superior. He made us primarily for himself, to serve great and important ends. Which consideration should prevent a practical mistake, too usual with pious, afflicted persons, who suppose that the chief intention of Providence, in depriving them of any near relative, is their punishment; when, perhaps, the only design was, as far as it concerned us, to take off our affections more from the world, and to draw them more entirely to himself. For were we ever so innocent, must therefore our relative have been immortal? The error lies here; not that our thoughts are exercised this way, but that they are exercised too much. We ought to consider, that as God did not create this or that excellent person principally to please us; so neither doth he take him away principally to displease or punish us, but for greater and nobler ends concerning him. Such as he hath pardoned, accepted, and prepared for himself, to serve and glorify him in a higher and more excellent capacity than ever they could in this wretched world of ours. When the blessed God has accomplished this end of his own boundless love, who are we that we should be displeased? Therefore, madam, whereas you cannot but have the removal of that incomparable person a great theme of your thoughts, I humbly propose to your honour, that you would not confine them to the sadder and darker part of that theme. It hath

also a bright side, and it equally belongs to it to consider whither he is gone, and to whom, and whence, and from whom. Let, I beseech you, your mind be more exercised in contemplating the glories of that place to which he is translated. This will mingle pleasure and sweetness with the bitterness of your afflicting loss, by giving you a daily intellectual participation, through the exercise of faith, in his enjoyments. He cannot descend to share with you in your sorrows, but you may thus every day ascend and partake with him in his joys. He is a pleasant subject to consider. A prepared spirit, made meet for an inheritance with them that are sanctified; connaturalized to heaven, united with the true centre; come home to the Father of Spirits. How joyful an entertainment has he met with above! If that faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, be much accustomed to its proper work, the daily delightful visiting and viewing the glorious invisible regions; if it be often conversant in those vast and spacious tracts of pure and brightest light, and among the holy inhabitants that replenish them; if it frequently employ itself in contemplating their comely order, perfect harmony, sublime wisdom, unspotted purity, most fervent mutual love, delicious conversation with one another, and perpetual pleasant consent in their adoration and observance of their eternal King, who is there who would not

rejoice in having dear friends and relatives among them? How can your ladyship's love to so deserving an object, but more fervently sparkle with joy for his sake, than dissolve in tears for your own! But let not such thoughts excite hasty and impatient desires to enter heaven; rather let them lead to endeavours to serve God more cheerfully on earth. You would be loath to do any thing unworthy of your family and parentage. Your highest alliance is to the family above, whose dignity and honour are, I doubt not, of the highest account with you. My heart bleeds to think of the case of those sweet babes, should they be bereaved of their other parent too. And even your continued dejection would be to them an unspeakable disadvantage. You will always naturally create in them a reverence for you; and I cannot but apprehend how the constant mien, aspect, and deportment of such a parent will insensibly influence the temper of dutiful children, depress their spirits, and blunt and take off the edge and quickness upon which their future usefulness and comfort will depend. Were it possible their now glorious father could visit and inspect you, would you not be troubled to behold a frown on that bright serene face? You have now to please a more penetrating eye, by putting on a temper and deportment suited to your weighty charge, and to the great purposes for which God continues you in the world, by giving over unnecessary solitude, which though it pleases

you is more than you can bear, and more than the rules of decency require. The God of heaven lift up the light of his countenance upon you, put gladness into your heart, and give you to apprehend him, saying, ‘ Arise and walk in the light of the Lord.’ ”

From motives of delicacy and prudence Howe declined putting his name to this letter, which was honourable alike to his feelings, his judgment, and his piety. But lady Russel soon discovered who was the author: the style and several other particulars proved it to be Howe’s. On making the discovery, her ladyship immediately wrote him a reply, informing him, that he must not expect to remain concealed, thanking him very kindly for his excellent advice, and assuring him, that it would ever be her endeavour to pursue the conduct he had so judiciously and kindly recommended. She accompanied her letter, as she did others to him on subsequent occasions, with some valuable tokens of her regard.

In 1684 Howe published his treatise, entitled “ The Redeemer’s Tears, wept over Lost Souls.” The text prefixed to the treatise, and which he designed principally to illustrate, was Luke, xix. 41, 42. His object evidently was to divert the attention of men as much as possible from contention about forms of worship, to the great essentials of practical religion. After showing what things ought to be known by those who are favoured by a

gospel ministry ; and proving that all who enjoy this favour have ample means afforded them of acquiring this knowledge, and are perfectly inexcusable if they make not the acquisition, he proceeds to point out, that the period allowed for its attainment has its limits ; and then to show that those who have unhappily survived this period are in a condition inconceivably awful. This difficult subject he treats in a manner the most judicious and affecting. A strain of powerful and most solemn appeal, affectionate and tender, runs through the whole discourse, so that the most thoughtless could scarcely rise from its perusal unbenefited.

Throughout the whole of this and the following year the laws against the dissenters were rigorously enforced. New ones were passed most vexatious and annoying. The bitterest animosity actuated the minds of men, from many of whom different dispositions might have been expected. The bishop of Lincoln, led away by the spirit of the age, unthinkingly published a letter much more likely to widen than to heal the breach. To this Howe sent his lordship an anonymous reply in a letter by post, in which he defended the cause of his party with his usual temper and dignity. In the course of it he remarks : “ My lord, I humbly offer to your consideration, whether some persons may not be found sound in the faith, as taught in the Scriptures, loyal, subject to the authority of their governors, pious, sober, peaceable, just,

of charitable dispositions and deportment, who, while they agree with your lordship, that the prince and all inferior rulers ought, in all lawful things, to be obeyed, have formed a fixed, conscientious judgment of the unlawfulness of some of the rites and modes of worship enjoined in this church. Is it impossible that a sincere, sober Christian may, with an honest heart, have an intellect so weak as not to be able to understand all the punctilios upon which a right judgment may depend? Is it not possible that there may be such a thing as a mental as well as a mere sensible antipathy? Is there no difference to be put between things essential to our religion, and things acknowledged indifferent?"

Affairs now wore a very serious and gloomy aspect in England. Men were afraid to vindicate their sentiments. Many were prosecuted with rigour, against whom only the most trivial accusations could be brought. At this trying season Howe providentially received an invitation from Lord Wharton to travel with him on the continent. Unwilling as he was to leave his people, yet, as he could now see no prospect of usefulness, and as his personal safety was constantly endangered, he gladly complied with his lordship's request. His lordship had given Howe so little time to deliberate and prepare for his journey, that he found it utterly impossible to take leave personally of all his friends. Immediately,

therefore, on his arrival on the continent, about the end of August 1685, he wrote them a most affectionate letter, full of the tenderest concern for their welfare.

Adverting to the reasons which induced him to undertake this journey, he remarks with characteristic simplicity, "It much satisfies me, that with regard to this step, I have a record above. He who knoweth all things, knoweth that I am not designing for myself. I love not this present world, and covet not an abode in it; nor have I at any time been anxious to remain in it, even when it was most friendly, except on the account of doing some good to the souls of men. It has been my habitual sentiment, a long time, to value and desire peace and quiet, with a tolerable share of health, more than life. Nor have I found any thing more destructive to my health than confinement in my room a few days in the city air, which was much better and more healthful to me formerly, than since the anger and jealousies of such as I never had a disposition to offend, have of late occasioned persons of my circumstances seldom to walk the streets."

The moderation and forbearance which he affectionately urged upon his people on this occasion, show by what a liberal and Christian spirit he was still actuated. "Consider," he says, "whether there be no disposition to treat others as you are treated. The inward temper of our minds is so much the more narrowly to be inspected, by

how much the less there is opportunity to discover it by outward acts. As to such as differ from us about the forms and ceremonies that are now required in the worship of God, should we not be glad if they were as much restrained from using them in their worship, as we are from worshipping without them? Why should we not suppose that their way should be as suitable to them as ours is to us? But some will say, we are right, and they are wrong; and why cannot any man say the same with equal confidence? Do we think there is no difference to be put between controversies about the circumstantial and the essentials of Christianity? Till those who seem to think it more glory to be called Protestants than Christians, have learnt to follow our Lord's advice, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you that do ye to them;' till they become studious of excelling other men in substantial goodness, abstractedness from the world, meekness, humility, sobriety, self-denial, and charity; and to lay a greater stress hereupon, than on being of this or that denomination, God's controversy will not cease. I pray you, let it be considered deeply, that after that great precept, Ephesians, iv. 30, 'Grieve not the Spirit of God,' it immediately follows, 'Let all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.' Plainly implying, the spirit of all love, goodness, sweetness, and benignity is grieved by nothing more than by bitter

and wrathful tempers. Oh ! the gentleness, kindness, tenderness, of the truly Christian spirit, as it most eminently appeared in our Lord himself ! And how pleasant is it to oneself to be void of all wrathfulness and vindictive designs or inclinations towards other men ! For my own part, I should not have that peace and consolation in a suffering condition (and I consider it my greatest suffering to be restrained so many years from pleading with sinners, that they might be saved) as through the goodness of God I have found, and do find, in being conscious to myself of no other but kind and benign thoughts towards those individuals by whom I have suffered. My heart tells me, that I desire not the least hurt to those who would do me the greatest ; and that I feel within myself an unfeigned love and high estimation of many, accounting them pious worthy persons, and hoping to meet them in the all-reconciling world, who are yet, through some mistake, too harsh towards us who dissent from them. And in things of this nature, I pray that you and I may abound more and more."

Deeply as Howe mourned over the sad results of that party spirit which now defaced the beauty, and wasted the energies of the Christian church, he was not immoderately depressed. Firmly believing himself, that the Christian cause would ultimately triumph, he laboured to inspire his people with the same confidence. "I would not," he says at the close of his address, "have your spirits dis-

couraged or sunk in dejection. 'The Lord will not cast off his people.' By his people I do not mean individuals of this or that party, but those who fear God and work righteousness, be they of what party soever. Christianity is not that which is appropriate to this or that party, but whatever of sincere religion shall be found common to them all. God will yet have such a people in the world, and I doubt not more numerous than ever. And as the bitterness of Christians chased away his Spirit, so shall his Spirit finally vanquish and drive away all that bitterness. As the long-continued apostacy of the Christian church commenced, and has been kept up by constant war against the Spirit of Christ, so shall the restitution and recovery of Christianity to its ancient primitive state be by the victory of the Spirit. Then shall all the enmity, pride, wrathfulness, and cruelty which have rent the church of Christ, and made it so little in itself, be melted down, and with all their impurities, earthliness, carnality, love of this present world, and prevalence of sensual lusts, be removed in a way grievous to none. In the meantime let us draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to us; and let us take heed of turning the religion of our closets into spiritless and uncomfortable formality."

In Howe's travels with Lord Wharton, he visited most of the principal cities and towns on the continent. The opportunities thus afforded him, of adding to the stores of his already well-furnished mind,

he permitted not to pass unimproved. He conversed freely, whenever opportunities offered, with the controversial divines of every sect. He often mourned in secret over the melancholy state of things in England, which he continued to learn grew worse instead of better. After travelling a year with Lord Wharton, perceiving no prospect of returning to England with safety, he at length engaged a house at Utrecht, where Mrs. Howe joined him at his request. Here he had the Earl of Sutherland and his Countess, with some other distinguished individuals, as his lodgers. He now preached in his turn at the English church in that city, with the Rev. Messrs. Mead, Woodcock, and Cross. These excellent men spent many days together, at stated intervals, in solemn prayer for their friends at home; earnestly entreating the Almighty to restore liberty and peace to his suffering people. Howe preached at his own house on the Sunday evening, and had for his auditors many persons of distinction, who had left England on account of the serious aspect of public affairs; now become so alarming, that it was obvious some national convulsion must before long take place.

Several English students were then finishing their studies in the University, to whom Howe was particularly attentive; giving them opportunities, at convenient seasons, of delivering discourses to him in private, and in various ways offering them his counsel

and advice, much to their advantage, as they often afterwards acknowledged. By all the professors in the University Howe was treated with the greatest respect, as he was also by almost every person of distinction in the city. During his continuance in Holland he was honoured with several interviews with the Prince of Orange, who subsequently swayed the British sceptre, and whose reign forms one of the most eventful and brilliant eras in English history. The prince received Howe on all occasions in a manner the most gracious, treated him invariably with the utmost civility and respect, and evidently entertained towards him sentiments of real esteem. He made frequent inquiries respecting Cromwell, whom he always called Howe's old master; and he was often much pleased with the interesting anecdotes which Howe related of him, and with Howe's judicious remarks on the Protector's habits and character.

At length, in 1687, the celebrated declaration of king James for liberty of conscience, allowing to all who did not conform to the church, the privilege of worshipping God in any form they pleased, was published. Howe and his little party of refugees received the welcome intelligence with gratitude and joy. His friends in London immediately sent him a pressing invitation to return, and become again their pastor. With this he very cheerfully, without the least hesitation complied; and accordingly made instant

preparations for his voyage. Before he quitted Holland, he waited on the Prince of Orange, to express his obligations for the honour he had done him. He stated, that as religious liberty was now enjoyed by his friends in England, they had importuned him to return, which it was his intention to do. The prince received him very graciously, and kindly expressed many wishes for his future welfare. Advising him, on his return, not only to pursue conciliatory measures, which he felt assured he would do, but to urge others to do the same; and to intermeddle as little as possible with the political measures which then seemed to be in agitation. Howe thanked the Prince for his advice, which he assured him he would take care to observe; and his subsequent conduct proved that he forgot not his promise.

In May, 1687, Howe arrived with his family in London. The cordial welcome given him by all his people, proved how ardently attached they were to his ministry, and how deeply anxious they were again to enjoy the privilege of sitting under it. But whether they were to enjoy this for any length of time seemed to Howe very doubtful, as the public mind was in a much less tranquil state than he had anticipated. The posture of national affairs at this period was to Howe any thing but pleasing. He once more felt himself to be placed in very critical and trying circumstances; but he deter-

mined, zealously and conscientiously to discharge his duties, and to leave the event with God.

It was impossible that an individual of Howe's eminence could remain a mere spectator of the events now in progress: anxious as he was to avoid intermeddling with public affairs, he was compelled often to take an active part in repelling the attacks made on his friends. In attending the meetings held for this purpose, his Christian candour never forsook him. He invariably recommended the adoption of such measures as were the least likely to irritate: often reminding his brethren, some of whom felt inclined to pursue a different conduct, that if they failed to accomplish their object by Christian forbearance, they would at least enjoy the satisfaction arising from a conviction that they had been actuated by the spirit of their religion, which would be of infinitely greater value to them than the most splendid earthly advantages.

The nation was now torn into numerous factions; feuds and animosities prevailed to an alarming extent. Howe and his friends were in almost daily expectation of some fearful explosion. At length the storm, which had been so much dreaded, subsided into a calm; Providence opened the way for national tranquillity; William III. landed in England: the nation received him with joy. A better spirit immediately prevailed among all classes of men towards each other. The dissen-

ters deemed it advisable to send a respectful address to his majesty, on his accession to the throne, which Howe was deputed to present. He was introduced to the king by Lords Devonshire, Wharton, and Wiltshire. He delivered an eloquent and appropriate speech on the occasion, to which his majesty returned a very gracious answer, assuring him that the preservation of the Protestant religion would ever be the special object of his attention.

During this year, Howe published some valuable practical discourses, eminently adapted to direct men's attention to the great essentials of religion. One was on John, v. 42, entitled, "Directions what we are to do, after a strict Inquiry whether or no we truly love God;" a most searching and useful discourse. The other was an awakening sermon, no less excellent, on Romans, vi. 13. Perceiving that endeavours were still made to confine within as narrow limits as possible, the liberty given to Protestant dissenters, Howe also published at this time a temperate and firm address, entitled, "The Case of the Protestant Dissenters considered."

At length, on the 24th of May, 1688, the toleration act received the royal assent, and the dissenters were generally contented and thankful. To improve this joyful event, and to check any imprudent ebullition of feeling on either side, Howe published an admirable address, which he

modestly entitled, "Humble Requests to Conformists and Dissenters, touching their Temper and Behaviour towards each other." It is impossible not to admire the peaceful tendency of this production. Every part of it is alike excellent, but we can only select the following remarks: "Let us carefully abstain from judging each other, for hereby we shall contradict that common rule of our Christian faith, 'Judge not that ye be not judged.' Blessed God, how little use is made of this important rule! Why, of all parts of that holy book, is this chapter, Rom. xxv. 13, only thought no part of God's word? Is it a light thing to usurp the throne of Christ, the judgment-seat of God? Yet how common a thing has it been. Let us not value ourselves upon being of this or that side of the severing line. Though we cannot sincerely be of this or that sentiment, but we must think ourselves right and others wrong; yet we ought to consider the subject of our dispute as a small, minute thing, a point compared with the vast orb of things that may be and ought to be known. Perhaps divers that differ from us are men of greater and more comprehensive minds than we, and have more of the sanctifying, saving knowledge of solid goodness,—more grace and holiness. And since they are not matters of salvation about which we differ, let us not despise and set at nought one another on account of the little differences. Our greatest concern in

this world, and which is common to us all, is the bettering of our spirits. Let us, above all, with sincere minds, more earnestly endeavour to promote the interest of religion itself, not of this or that party. Let us show ourselves manly Christians; not swayed by trifles and little things, as children, differing about this or that mode or form; lest, while we are disputing about the forms, the life of religion be lost, and we come to bear the character of that church, ‘Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.’ If so, after all the wonders God hath wrought for us, we may ere long expect to hear of our candlesticks being removed, and that our sun has gone down at noon!”

While thus endeavouring to quench the embers of strife among Christians of different communities, Howe was grieved to perceive discord beginning to kindle among his own brethren. Antinomianism had unhappily spread its pernicious influence over the minds of many individuals, owing principally to the republication of Dr. Crisp’s works. Its characteristic effects, pride, separation, and intolerance were soon visible. To oppose this heresy, Howe employed all the energies of his mind; directing his attacks, however, not so much against the error itself, which he probably thought it useless to expose, as against its sad effects: but all his efforts, though directed by uncommon wisdom, proved unavailing. Want of

the same time, he commenced a more awakening series of discourses, preached either on the Sunday afternoons or the evenings, from the 2 Cor. iv. 2—6: ‘Commending ourselves to every man’s conscience as in the sight of God.’ These were followed by some very powerful admonitory sermons, on the next verse: ‘If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.’ These were succeeded by fourteen most interesting sermons on Romans, viii. 24: ‘We are saved by hope.’ It was evident to all that Howe felt very deeply the responsibility of his ministerial charge at this period of his life. The subjects he selected to bring before his people, the seriousness with which he treated them, the affectionate earnestness with which he endeavoured to commend to his people’s attention, the deep and ardent piety which distinguished all his conduct, —all proved that he was anxious so to acquit himself that he might save the souls of men, and deliver up his final account with joy. About this time, Howe published a funeral sermon on Luke, xiii. 14, for Mrs. Sampson, wife of Dr. Henry Sampson, M. D. It was not intended for the press, but was published at the doctor’s particular request.

In the midst of these engagements, Howe found time to defend the great doctrines of religion, when they were attacked. Among other truths that were then made the subjects of controversy, was the doctrine of the Trinity. Different explications of this fundamental verity had been published by

Drs. Wallis, Sherlock, South, and Cudworth, besides sundry treatises on the subject. Willing to have so important a doctrine properly elucidated, and not quite satisfied with the productions of the above writers, Howe published his thoughts on the subject in a tract modestly entitled, "A calm and sober Inquiry concerning the Possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead." He treated this most intricate subject with his characteristic acuteness, moderation, and liberality. To those whose grasp of mind was not sufficient to follow him, he appeared to have approached too near the Arian hypothesis; but this is evidently for want of duly considering the train of reasoning he was pursuing. Dr. Sherlock, in a postscript to his work on the Trinity, animadverted on Howe's publication, and it was attacked by an anonymous writer. To both these Howe replied in a calm and Christian temper; and thus ended the controversy.

In 1693, Howe commenced a series of Sunday afternoon or evening sermons, on Friendship with God. These were followed, in 1694, by another series on Regeneration. Both subjects were treated in a manner the most interesting and profitable. They were not published during his life, and perhaps were not intended for publication at all; but they now form a valuable portion of his posthumous works; and are most interesting specimens of his usual style of preaching. In 1695, he published his funeral sermon on the death of

queen Mary, from Hebrews, xii. 23. 'We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect.' In 1698, he published a funeral sermon for the Rev. Richard Adams, M. A., a man of sound learning and sterling piety, with whom he had been on terms of close intimacy, for fifty years. They were fellow-students of Brazen-Nose College, Oxford. "I remember his course," says Howe, "at that time. Our conversation was not casual, like that of mere colleagues; it resembled more the intercourse of affectionate friends. Many a day we have prayed together, conferred and taken sweet counsel together. He was an ornament to his college, and gave ample proof of his sound learning in his excellent annotations on the Epistle to the Philippians, published by Matthew Pool. In the great city he was a burning and a shining light, till many lights were in one day put under a bushel. I need not tell you how black was that day." In the same year Howe published a sermon which he had preached on the day of public thanksgiving for peace in December, 1697. This was followed by another excellent discourse of a most useful tendency, on Reformation of Manners, or the Duty of civil Magistrates.

Howe's extraordinary exertions had, at length, brought on a most painful disease. He was first attacked with it in 1695; when, after spending some weeks at Bath, he recovered, but did not regain his former strength. His frequent attacks of pain,

though they enfeebled his bodily powers, did not diminish his zeal in the service of God. The only effect they seemed to have was to render him more fit for the enjoyment of heaven, and more ardently desirous after it. In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Spilsbury, whom he very highly esteemed, he writes: “When, O when shall we meet above! Dulness and sluggishness will then be shaken off, and we shall be all spirit and life. Yet we may here be doing our Lord some service, or at least some that he will graciously accept as such. May I once more hope to salute my dear brother in this world? Whether I shall or not, I must leave to Him to whom all things must be left. Thou mayst have taken thy flight before this reach thee: but thou art ready to enter into the joy of thy Lord, and wilt shortly be adoring before the throne: O with what complacency! receiving the end of thy faith, even the salvation of thy soul; having fought the good fight, and obtained the crown. And must thy poor brethren be left behind, to sigh and groan still amidst our drowsy hearers, and too drowsy fruitless labourers? But I envy thee not; I rather, with those that are near thee, rejoice in thy glory. Thou art on my heart; and if God saw it good, I could live and die with thee.”

In 1699, Howe published a funeral sermon for the Rev. Matthew Read, an eminently pious and laborious dissenting minister. The same year he gave to the world his elaborate discourse, entitled,

“The Redeemer’s Dominion over the Invisible World;” and a sermon on the death of Dr. Bates, which he dedicated to his grace the Duke of Bedford. In 1701, a circumstance occurred which again called him forth into the field of controversy. Sir Thomas Abney, then lord mayor, who was a member of Howe’s congregation, worshipped alternately, on the Sunday, at Howe’s chapel and at the parish church, taking with him to both places the usual insignia of office. By some individuals this was, as might have been expected, severely animadverted upon, as a flagrant impropriety. A pamphlet was published upon it, entitled, “An Inquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters.” In the preface, Howe was called upon to defend it, if he thought it defensible, and if not, to protest against it. The spirit of this writer differed so much from that of Howe’s, that he very reluctantly responded to the call, still he did not think it right to let it pass unnoticed. At length he defended it, in a pamphlet entitled, “Considerations relating to occasional Conformity,” written with much spirit and ability.

Howe’s next publication was a production of great importance, in the form of two discourses: the first on Man’s Enmity against God; the second on Reconciliation between God and Man. These fundamental points of Christian theology he treats with all his characteristic seriousness and deep comprehensiveness of thought. In 1702,

he gave to the world the second part of his great work, "The Living Temple," with some masterly animadversions on Spinoza's system. This was followed by a funeral sermon for his friend, the Rev. Peter Vink, B. D. On the 5th of November he preached a sermon in commemoration of the great national deliverance from the popish conspiracy, which, at the earnest solicitation of his hearers, he consented to publish, though he did not compose it for that purpose. It was founded on Colossians, ii. 13, and was entitled, "Deliverance from the Powers of Darkness."

The attacks of Howe's painful malady became now more frequent, severe, and protracted. The effects were visible to all his friends in the decay of his bodily strength, though he still retained his full vigour of intellect. Religion now shed its happiest influence over his mind. He enjoyed a high degree of spiritual complacency. The trying nature of his malady required especially the exercise of patience; and though his pain was often very acute, he complained not. His last publication was an excellent sermon, full of spiritual and holy feeling, on Hebrews, x. 36, entitled "A Discourse on Patience, as it hath respect to future Blessedness." The elevated tone of piety which runs through this discourse, proves that Howe felt increasingly the power of religion, and was deeply anxious that others should feel it too. As his end approached, his joy evidently increased. Having

no fear of death, he viewed his approaching end with serenity and peace. So delightful was his conversation, that he seemed to breathe the atmosphere of heaven before he quitted the regions of sense.

The last time he administered the sacrament to his people, the scene was particularly affecting. He had but just recovered from a severe attack of his malady, and had scarcely strength to endure the fatigue of the service. When partaking of the elements, his soul kindled into so heavenly a rapture, that he seemed to be carried beyond himself, and his friends were apprehensive he would have expired in the service. In this last sickness, his frame was holy and delightful, and his conversation most interesting. Many individuals of rank visited him, with whom he conversed cheerfully and freely on his approaching end. Among others, Richard Cromwell, who was now well advanced in life, came to pay him his parting visit. The interview was most affecting. The conversation of Howe was solemn and impressive. On taking their final leave of each other, both were in tears. With the ministers and other pious friends who visited him, he conversed like one who was already an inhabitant of heaven; and who, instead of being unwilling to die, had evidently a desire to depart and to be with Christ. At length, on the 2nd of April, 1705, after many weeks of severe pain, his happy spirit took its flight to

those regions of peace and holiness to which, through the grace of God, it had been so attempted.

He was interred in the parish church of All-hallows, and a funeral sermon was preached for his death by his fellow-labourer, the Rev. John Spademan, from 2 Tim. iii. 14: ‘ But continue thou in the things thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.’

Howe had collected some most valuable materials, relating to the extraordinary incidents of his life, and to the times in which he lived. These he had industriously concealed till his last illness; when, for reasons which he did not explain, he called his son to him, and giving him the key of his private desk, requested him to bring the papers, which were carefully stitched up in a number of small volumes. These he made him solemnly promise, notwithstanding all his reluctance, immediately to destroy. Thus were his family, much to their grief and to the loss of the Christian world, bereft of all written memorials respecting him, with the sole exception of the following interesting memorandum, written with his own hand on the blank page of his Bible.

“ Dec. 26, 1689. After I had long and repeatedly thought with myself, that besides a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying taste of and relish for them was also necessary,

that with stronger force and more powerful energy they might penetrate into the inmost centre of my heart, and there being deeply fixed and rooted, might govern my life; and that there could be no other sure ground whereon to conclude and pass a sound judgment on my state Godward; and after I had, in my course of preaching, been insisting largely on 2 Cor. ii. 12, I awoke with a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the divine majesty, did seem to draw into my open and expanded breast. Often have I since reflected, with great complacency, on the signal pledge of special Divine favour vouchsafed to me on that memorable day; and have, with repeated fresh pleasure, tasted the delights thereof. But what of the same kind I felt through the admirable beauty of my God, and the pleasant comfortable influence of the Holy Spirit, in October 22, 1704, farsurpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasing melting of heart: tears gushed out of my eyes for joy, that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men, and that for this very purpose my own should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit."

To many this will perhaps appear little better than delusion, or enthusiasm. We remind such, that no individual was ever less enthusiastic, or less

likely to be the subject of delusion, than Howe. It was evidently a manifestation of the Divine presence, perhaps not unlike that which St. Paul enjoyed, in the revelation made to him, described in 2 Cor. xii.; or like that 'joy unspeakable and full of glory' often attained by believers in the apostolic age, 1 Pet. i. 8, and not unattainable now.

"What Howe said of Bates," as a modern writer has well observed, "might be said with still greater truth of himself:—'God had designed him to circumstances, and to a station not obscure in this world; and had accordingly formed him with advantages, so that his exterior appearance might inspire respect. And though the treasure to be lodged there was to be put into an earthen vessel, yet even that was wrought of finer, or more accurately figured and better turned clay.'" Calamy says of him, that he was tall and exceeding graceful; he had a good presence, and a piercing, pleasant eye; and there was that in his appearance and carriage which discovered that he had something within him uncommonly great, tending to excite veneration."

Howe's natural endowments were of the highest order. His judgment was sound and discriminating, his memory capacious and ready, and his argumentative powers singularly acute. None could with greater facility demolish the cobweb systems of fallacious and sophistical reasoners. The grasp of his mind was most comprehensive: he seemed

to have no difficulty in seizing every part of each subject that came under his notice. The ease with which he could penetrate into the remotest branch of any subject, and inspect and analyze it, sometimes makes him appear tedious to those who think not. His imagination was vivid and fertile, but always sober and chaste: it was never employed to encumber his subject with useless ornaments, but to illustrate and enforce it. There was a richness and a splendour about some of his conceptions that delight and almost astonish the mind, while they soften and improve the heart. But it was not so much the preponderance of any one quality that he possessed, as the richness, fullness, and harmony of all. Every element of mental vigour was combined in him in their just proportion. His acquired attainments were most extensive. As a scholar he ranked in a very high, if not in the highest class. His knowledge of philosophy, Pagan and Christian, and of theology in all its branches, was profound.

All these abilities he consecrated to religion; devoutly and humbly acknowledging that they were not his own, but belonged to Him whose are all things, and in whose work he accounted it his highest honour to be employed. His whole soul was absorbed in this great object. Amidst the temptations to which he was exposed, he suffered not his attention to be diverted from it any longer than was really necessary. Zeal to benefit the

souls of men, by presenting to their view, in all its majesty and beauty, the great plan of human redemption, was ever the leading object of his life. All his productions breathe the tenderest solicitude for their welfare. The bitter spirit of the times in which he lived ruffled not the well-tempered frame of his mind: he soared on the wings of a devotion, not sickly nor fanciful, but rational and scriptural, into a region peaceful and serene. Religion ever seemed to be his element: he cultivated, habitually, communion with God, through the Redeemer, and appeared invariably to be aspiring after the Divine likeness. But this did not unfit him for the duties of life; no one ever discharged them with more punctuality. As a pastor he was beloved and almost revered by his people: his courteous, conciliatory manners procured him the respect of all. Such was his prudence, that he carefully avoided, without any sacrifice of principle, making any one his enemy.

In the delicate task of reproof others he was always faithful, but kind. In conversation he seldom permitted vice to go unreprieved. Being in company one day with a gentleman who frequently interlarded his conversation with profane language, and who was extolling very highly the character of Charles II., Howe observed, that in his humble opinion, he had omitted the mention of one very great excellency of that prince, which had been

universally awarded him. "What is that?" inquired the gentleman, impatiently. "That he never used profane language in his discourse," replied Howe. The gentleman took the reproof, and promised not to swear in future. On another occasion, when walking in St. James's Park, about the time the bill on occasional conformity was in the House, he was accosted by the footman of a noble lord, who said that lord — had sent his compliments, and would be glad to speak with him. Howe immediately followed, and was courteously received. The conversation was instantly directed to the subject of conformity; and while his lordship was stating that he had supported the liberal side in the House, he used an oath, in condemning its opponents; on which Howe, in a calm and dignified manner, remarked: "My lord, it is a great satisfaction to us, who in all affairs of this nature desire to look upwards, that there is a God who governs the world, to whom we can leave the issues and events of things; and we are satisfied that he will not fail, in due time, of making a suitable retribution to all, according to their present carriage. And this great Ruler, permit me to observe, my lord, has declared that he will make a difference between him that useth, and him that feareth an oath." Feeling instantly the force and propriety of the reproof, his lordship said, "Sir, I thank you cordially for your freedom, and shall

endeavour to make a good use of it." "My lord," rejoined Howe, "I have a great deal more reason to thank you for saving me the trouble of the most difficult part of a discourse—the application."

Of Howe's writings little need be said, after the following eulogy, passed upon them by a celebrated modern divine, who imbibed much of Howe's devotional and catholic spirit, with at least equal comprehension of mind, the late Rev. Robert Hall:—"As a minister, I have derived more benefit from the works of Howe, than from those of all other divines put together. There is an astonishing magnificence in his conceptions. He had not the same perception of the beautiful as of the sublime, and hence his endless subdivisions. There was an innate aptitude in his mind for discerning minute graces and proprieties, and hence his sentences are often long and cumbersome. He is distinguished by calmness, self-possession, majesty, and comprehensiveness; and I decidedly prefer him to Baxter. I admire exceedingly his 'Living Temple,' his 'Redeemer's Tears,' &c.; but, in my opinion, the best thing he ever wrote is his 'Treatise on the Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with his Counsels and Exhortations.' This I regard as the most profound, the most philosophical, and the most valuable of all Howe's writings."*

This masterly treatise we have now the pleasure

* Dr. Gregory's Life of Robert Hall, Note A.

to introduce to our readers. Much might be written upon it: the subject discussed affords ample scope for lengthened remarks; but had we space for them we should think them unnecessary. Our object will be, to give a concise analysis of this and the two other productions that compose this volume, that the reader may peruse them with increasing pleasure and advantage. The point to be discussed in the treatise is simply this—how can it, according to the notions we can form of the subject, be consistent with the wisdom, sincerity, and integrity of God, or the admission of his foreknowledge of all future contingencies, which cannot be denied, that he should exhort men to avoid those sins which he knows they will, notwithstanding all his warnings and entreaties, most certainly commit. Without attempting to determine the fitness or impropriety of the terms prescience and foreknowledge, in reference to the Almighty, or to perplex the subject with the incomprehensible notion of unsuccessive eternal duration, Howe shows, that while the greatest care should be taken to avoid ascribing to God perfections clearly at variance with each other, equal care should be taken to form comprehensive conceptions of his character, and such as include in it every perfection. In our views of the subject we must be most cautious, not hastily and irreverently to decide respecting what may or may not appear to us inconsistent with the Divine perfections. It becomes us

much more to suspect, what is far more likely to be the case, that the supposed inconsistency may be owing to the feebleness of our own conceptions, rather than to any real incongruity in the matters themselves. We are much too prone rashly to grasp at subjects beyond the compass of our minds; and on discovering two things, both perhaps of equal importance, and both far too comprehensive to come within the reach of a created intellect, even of the highest order, foolishly, and without due consideration to reject one, because to us it appears irreconcilable with the other. Ought we to think it strange, that with our limited powers we should be incapable fully to comprehend, in their exact proportions, the immense perfections of God? Shall we complain because we find it difficult to accomplish this, when perhaps our perplexity arises, in a great degree, if not entirely, from our crowding together a mass of confused ideas, for want of a little patient and sober enquiry? Our minds cannot grasp infinity; but we might, by diligent and deliberate reflection, often enlarge them, so that what appeared at first confused and contradictory, may afterwards become regular and consistent. Pride and self-conceit may prompt us to pronounce things inconsistent, of which, though we have taken little pains to investigate them, we do not like to acknowledge ourselves ignorant; but of this we may be assured, that the truths of our holy religion form a system the most beautiful and har-

monious, free from all inextricable entanglements; and if we enquire into them with patience and humility, not for the purposes of speculation, or to gratify a vain curiosity, but to remove some doubt from our minds, we shall very clearly perceive such to be the case. Or if we find some truths respecting God, difficult satisfactorily to reconcile in all points, which it is hardly possible should not be the case, it will not be about those which render the object of our religion at once venerable and lovely, termed his moral perfections; but about some consequence, which we venture, ignorantly or proudly, to attach to them, by a train of reasoning arrogant, irreverent, and unprofitable.

God is certainly willing to be known by his creatures. He has imprinted on their minds ideas of his character, which lead them at once, without any metaphysical reasoning, to acknowledge that he is holy, just, merciful, and true; and to reject with abhorrence the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, revengeful Deity. But as man is now become vicious and depraved, he is in danger of forming the most inconsistent views of the Divine Being. Hence the importance of a written revealed record, a sure word unto which we may look. This we have in the Scriptures. These are to be our constant guide. And if we find statements that seem not, according to our conceptions, to accord, we must modestly, patiently, and humbly reconsider them; remembering, that

as no man knows the things of a man so well as he knows them himself, so the things of God can only be clearly and fully known by the Spirit of God.

Taking the Scriptures for our guide, we shall find that God is every where declared to be possessed of perfect wisdom, forming and adapting all things to forward his own great designs. That the path he takes should elude our penetration, ought to excite in us no surprise; since we often find ourselves surpassed in our conceptions, even by men. How much more is this likely to be the case with him whose judgments are unsearchable? We see proofs in the stupendous effects of his omnipotence, how far he excels us in power; why should he not equally surpass us in wisdom? Nor must it be forgotten, that to have a perfect knowledge of all things at once, which God is declared to have, is a greater perfection than to acquire the knowledge of them in succession. The exact fulfilment of predictions recorded in Sacred Writ, proves unquestionably that God foreknows future events; so that it would be a task as hopeless as it is impious, to attempt a vindication of his wisdom and sincerity, by a denial of his prescience. Were there only a single historical fact recorded in the Scriptures, (whereas there are many,) in which it does evidently appear that God did particularly foreknow the certain commission of crimes by men, which he earnestly dissuaded them

from, it would prove irresistibly, that dehortations from sin, and warnings against it, can never be alleged as any proof against the Divine prescience.

But it will perhaps be said, this does not exactly meet the case, the question being, not as to the existence of the Divine prescience and dehortations, but as to their reconcileableness. Let it not be imagined that the difficulty in this case is as great as the vain attempts made by some to reconcile the irresistible decrees of God, for the existence of sin with his laws against it. With this we shall not intermeddle; but shall leave it for those who can entertain so monstrous a conception of God, as to imagine that he can be supposed irresistibly to determine a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then severely to punish him for it. Our object must then be to reconcile God's prescience of sin with his provisions and dissuasions against it. A little consideration will show us that this involves no contradiction. The certain foreknowledgè of an event, or of a course of action, has no influence in their production. For what influence can foreknowledge, any more than after knowledge, have to alter or affect in any way either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the person performing it? Things, whether good or evil, can never be otherwise by being foreknown or not foreknown. Because the Almighty foreknows that men will

certainly transgress his laws, must he therefore relinquish his right to govern them, or cease to dissuade them from their sinful courses? The dignity of the Divine government required that a most public manifestation should be made of his aversion to sin and love of holiness. His abounding mercy prompted him to declare it as his gracious inclination to receive into his favour, through the Redeemer, all such as comply with his invitation. Must he, because he foresees that men will be wicked, disobedient, unthankful, and unholy, omit to do what is worthy of himself? If, through the perverseness of many of his creatures, one end of his publicly declared will be not answered, another, perhaps not less important, the vindication of his government, is. Who then will dare to say, that God has in this respect acted unwisely?

As to the sincerity of God, in providing salvation for those who he knew would reject it, let it be remembered, that the declarations of God's merciful intentions must have been made known to men indiscriminately, or Providence must, in some extraordinary way, have made a division of the world into two great classes; those whom it was foreknown would, and those who would not accept the tidings of mercy: a plan which we think none would recommend. But it will perhaps be said, if God was sincerely desirous that all should be saved, why has he not sent the gospel to all nations? And who, we ask in reply, will dare to

accuse God of having withheld it? He entrusted the message to one people, whom he commanded to make it known through all the world. God has done his part, and has exceeded in goodness our largest expectations. To the culpable negligence of men, is it owing that the gospel has been so partially diffused. That God should, in some extraordinary way, provide that all should not reject his gracious message, cannot be unbecoming the dignity of his character, as the Sovereign Disposer of all things. His clemency to all, even unto the most rebellious; sparing them by his patience, sustaining them by his bounty, protecting them by his power, directing them by his Word to be industrious, temperate, frugal, sober; to controul their passions, to moderate their resentments; above all, his great love in the gift of his Son, for their redemption; and making them the super-added promise of his Spirit, on its being earnestly implored, sufficiently vindicate his character from all suspicions of insincerity.

The Almighty does not in his word address men individually: he says not to this or that man, who he foresees will be disobedient and perverse, "I intreat thee to accept of mercy, though I know thou wilt disregard my entreaties, and perish." He addresses men promiscuously: he commissioned his prophets to declare generally, that he had no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but would rather he should turn and live. It was never

his intention to save men on any other terms than on their compliance with the conditions of the gospel; with which all might comply, were it not for their own perverseness. The sum of the Divine declarations is, that, as men, by their revolt from God, have rendered themselves liable to his displeasure and condemnation; so God is willing to pardon and purify them that truly repent, and turn to him with all their hearts, implicitly trusting in him under all circumstances, and diligently making use of every means of improvement he has enjoined. It may please him, in some instances, to exert the power of his grace in an extraordinary manner; but as he is under no obligation to do this, it would be rash presumption to expect it. Often and importunately as the Almighty entreats men to turn from their evil courses, promising them the gracious aids of his Spirit, yet has he not given any reason to expect that, in the neglect of the ordinary means of his own appointment, power will be exerted to overcome their aversion to his laws. It is true that God beseeches men to obey and live; urges them to it by considerations the most deeply affecting, and speaks as if he were grieved at their disobedience. But we must not imagine, because he thus speaks, that he desires their deliverance from sin for his own sake, or that he desires it in a way that would derange the order of his government, and violate the rules of his justice. We must not

attach the same signification to words of this import when used in reference to the Divine Being, as we attach to them in reference to ourselves. God graciously condescends thus to speak in compliance with our weakness, intending thereby to signify, which perhaps he could not otherwise have done, that it is more agreeable to his nature and will that men should obey and live, than that they should disobey and perish. This divine solicitude is never expressed as if it were his will to love men, be their conduct what it may. It is no part of God's government irresistibly to prevent men from violating his law, or refusing the offers of his mercy; though he has removed all obstructions to their keeping the one, and complying with the other. He may greatly diversify, in his economy of means towards his creatures, the degrees of assistance he affords them; more powerfully affecting the minds of some than of others; and working more efficaciously on the mind of the same individual at one time than at another. Not to admit that he does this is to deny a great part of the Scriptures. To inquire into the fitness of this diversity would ill become creatures like us. Of this we may be assured, that it is not exerted arbitrarily, but on principles of equity and unerring wisdom. He giveth more grace to the humble; the proud he sendeth empty away. If we have not, it is because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. From the whole it clearly appears, that God does really will

the salvation of all; not omitting to afford to all the aid necessary to effect it, if rightly improved; while to some, for wise and inscrutable reasons, he affords extraordinary assistance, working in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

The distinction sometimes made between the secret and the revealed will of God, as if his intentions differed from his declarations, if it ought ever to be made, is here utterly inadmissible. It is impossible for God to lie. His veracity is like himself, immutable. The truth is, God doth really will that to be done by men, which he doth not irresistibly compel them to do; nor does it thence follow that his will is frustrated. This cannot, by any possibility, be the case. It may seem to be so, if we look only at the event, unconnected with the means; but these must never be disjoined, both being equally the objects of the divine will. God foreknows when he urges men to comply with his invitations, that many will turn from them and perish; but he foreknows, at the same time, that they might do otherwise, and that, if they did so, the result would correspond. They transgress, not because he foreknows it, but he foreknows it because they would transgress: not through any reluctance on his part to afford them the aids of his Spirit, but through their aversion of heart to his commands. God declared himself willing to save them in the way of his own appointment, and was graciously ready to afford them all needful help,

though he foresaw that many would reject his counsel, and perish. What proof then have we of God's insincerity?

We can conceive of no way by which the sincerity of God could have been more clearly expressed. Only two other methods can be imagined—either that he should have left men in their state of apostacy, which would have been derogatory to his holiness, to his goodness, and even to his veracity, or that he should have followed up the publication of his gracious intentions towards men, by his irresistible grace to all. This, it would be rash to say, he could not have accomplished, for all things are possible to him. But how could his holiness and justice then have been maintained? In estimating what God can do, we must not consider his power only. They are two very distinct considerations, what the power of God would enable him to do, and what he can do as a being infinitely wise, holy, and just. God cannot do any thing that would tarnish the lustre of his own perfections. The Scriptures affirm that he cannot lie. With equal certainty we may conclude that he cannot do any thing that is unwise or unholy, or unrighteous, or even imprudent; but that he acts in the best and most proper manner on all occasions, and has the most justifiable reasons for every step he takes. We often err, even when it is our most sincere wish to do right. It is never so with God. So accurately does he know every movement of provi-

dential machinery, with all their infinitely diversified effects, that he cannot commit a mistake. Of this we may be assured, that he governs the world on principles steady and uniform; reserving to himself the right occasionally to step out of his usual course; doing this however, but very unfrequently, and never except for the wisest and best reasons, though we may not be able to discover them. Were the divine government conducted on any other principles, what confusion would there be in the world! If second causes did not ordinarily follow the first, every thing would be uncertain. Regard ought always to be had to this established order of things, in soliciting any favour of God, or we shall be asking him to perform miracles on our behalf, instead of requesting him to appear for us, by the still, silent movements of his providence.

It is the same in religion as in providence: God has respect to the fitness of things here as well as elsewhere. He may occasionally convey the blessings of his grace to individuals in some extraordinary way, without the use of his instituted means; but this is not his usual course. In all such cases we may be assured there is a fitness clear to the divine inspection, though unseen by us. On the whole, it evidently appears that God governs his creatures on principles wise, and just, and merciful, and true. With him there is no partiality or insincerity. He has the best reasons for all his conduct. He could have prevented not only the entrance of sin

into our world, but also its very existence ; and if such had appeared to his infinite mind the wisest and most benevolent course, the most likely to render his government august and awful in the present life, and glorious in the final issue of all things, he would most certainly have taken it. It becomes us, however, not too curiously to inquire into the divine proceedings, our conceptions of which, even after our most elaborate researches, must necessarily, in our present state, be most imperfect. The ways of God are open to the inspection of minds of a much higher order than ours, who gaze upon them with admiration and delight. It is unreasonable to imagine, that during the short continuance of our lives, with minds so disordered and beclouded by sin, we should be able to fathom the depths of divine wisdom. Instead of complaining, that we meet with some perplexing statements, we ought rather gratefully to adore God, for opening to our view so much that is clear and satisfactory. In heaven our minds will be free from all worldly entanglements, and we shall be capable of a mental grasp beyond the utmost extent of our present conceptions ; but even there, the deep councils of God will be more than sufficient to fill us with wonder and admiration through eternity. What now appears intricate will then be perfectly clear. Our views of things will differ from those we now entertain far more than the conceptions of the wisest men differ from those of a

child. It becomes us then, while we earnestly endeavour to form the clearest and most comprehensive ideas we can of God, and of his government, to exercise caution, and not hastily to decide on things so far beyond our reach. Our present state is one of imperfection and of trial. Vanity is inscribed on all things below ; so that to expect a perfection of knowledge in the things of God, where all besides is imperfect, would be presumptuous and absurd.

On the extreme vanity of man considered apart from his immortality, Howe expatiates in a manner the most striking, in his treatise, “ ‘The Vanity of Man as Mortal,’ ” which forms a part of this volume, but of which we can only give this very brief summary. If man is not to exist beyond the grave, nothing is more shadowy, delusive, and unsubstantial than human life. It starts up before us, wears an aspect of reality, of beauty, and of importance ; but suddenly it droops and falls into a state of loathsome decay. On this principle man is the mere shadow of a being, absolutely less than nothing and vanity : his existence is as a dream or a vision of the night : he walketh in a vain show, and disquieteth himself in vain. His existence is as useless as it is unsubstantial ; it answers no valuable end. His intellectual capabilities, which enable him to soar far above the regions of sense, his powers of volition, the adaptation of his nature to an existence beyond the limits

of time, and the ardent desires he feels after it, all seem to be useless, on the assumption that he is not to live after death.

It would be foolish to imagine that the all-wise Creator made man incapable of forming a just view of the proper end of his existence: equally absurd would it be to suppose, that what ought to be the end of his existence is unsuited to the capabilities of his nature. We can conceive of no ends which men can propose to themselves, but such as may be included under the principles of sense, reason, or religion.

Nothing can be clearer, than that the gratification of our senses cannot be the end of our existence. To sensualize our minds, to accumulate wealth, to acquire applause by the glitter of our possessions, are ends too ignoble to satisfy our nature. If we rise a scale higher we shall soon find that scientific attainments, be they ever so extensive, are nearly unsatisfactory. Of what use will be the richest and most comprehensive mind, if death is to terminate our existence? On this hypothesis, must not those who have acquired the largest share of knowledge be the most unhappy, and quit life with the greatest reluctance? Even religion itself, on the admission that man is not immortal, is an object of comparative insignificance.

Real religion consists in a desire to know God, to love him, to honour him, and to seek his favour. Practical obedience to these duties is holiness, which

cannot be attained without much self-denial : but if we are to perish in the grave, what substantial benefits can it confer ? Must not our endeavours after it be most languid, if we knew, that just when we had acquired as much of it as was attainable here, and had begun to feel a keen relish for its ennobling enjoyments, we should sink into annihilation ? Were this the case men would indeed appear to be made in vain ; for what wise and important end can we then conceive God to have had in his creation ? Why has he given him such noble powers, if his existence is to be so temporary ?

Our inquiries into the designs of the Almighty ought to be humble and modest. Every thing that looks like an attempt to bring him down to the level of our feeble powers should be carefully avoided ; yet may we venture to remark, that it seems not to accord, either with the wisdom or goodness of God, to have made creatures who feel such longings after immortality, and who possess such capabilities for its enjoyments, were their existence to be so temporary. We may imagine too that man, as the product of Divine skill, would have been furnished with the strongest incentives to love and fear God ; but, if he is not to exist beyond the grave, this is by no means the case.

Since, then, it would be profane and impious, as well as most distressing to ourselves, thus to limit our conceptions of man's existence ; since we can give no rational account why we were created, if

we limit our views to the narrow boundary of time ; and since the certainty of our existence in a future state, is so clearly brought to light by the gospel, let us labour to have our minds well established in this great truth. Viewing our present state as one that is introductive and preparatory to another of illimitable extent, every difficulty in the case will vanish : nothing exceptionable or unaccountable will then appear in the Divine conduct. It will be evident that man had this earthly state of existence given him by the all-wise and benevolent Creator, that his allegiance might be tried for a season, and that God, rich in mercy, after man had disobeyed his most reasonable commands, had provided means for his recovery to his favour, and restoration to his image, exactly adapted to his fallen condition. We shall no longer need to perplex ourselves with inquiries, why such a creature was made. We may follow him through the dark cloud of mortality that hangs over the grave, to the light and glory of immortality.

The truth then of our future existence being so firmly established, it remains to see what practical purposes it may answer. There is not an evil practice to which we may be addicted, the folly of which it does not severely reprove. It shows us the extreme absurdity and danger of confining our attention only to things of the present life. How perfectly ridiculous does it make the conduct of the practical atheist appear ! Our existence in a

future state being certain, should it not be our constant endeavour to prepare for it? Refusing thus to act, do we not proclaim to the world, to our own as well as our Maker's dishonour, that we regard our souls as given us to no purpose? Ought we not so to shape our conduct as to prepare for this future and nobler state of being — aiming to make the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives such as become individuals so situated; weighing calmly and dispassionately the intrinsic value of things that belong only to this life, with a manliness of temper, ever justly apportioning our anxiety to the real importance of the objects about which we are conversant; maintaining a rational authority over our passions, keeping them in due subjection to right reason; repressing all irregular affections towards things earthly, avoiding the morosity of the cynic and the levity of the sensualist; seeking so to enjoy the pleasures of life as neither to undervalue them, nor to be under their power; keeping constantly in view, by the exercise of a lively faith, that this earth, with all that belongs to it, will certainly pass away and be succeeded by an existence that will never terminate; often representing to ourselves the awful realities of the last day; taking care to avoid all undue solicitude about the body, neither to pamper its fleshly desires, nor to comply with its slothful passions, but determining to direct the main stream of our thoughts, desires, and hopes to future realities.

If we really believe in the certain existence of a future state of rewards and punishments, the evidence for which is incontrovertible, is it not absurd to refuse them the chief place in our affections? Ought it not to be our constant desire to ornament our spirits and to get them attempered to that state of felicity in which, if we are Christians, we shall assuredly dwell? so that were we asked, whither we are going, and what is the chief object of our life, we might reply, “ We are making ready for eternity. Our constant aim is to converse much with that God into whose likeness we shall then be transformed. Recollecting that the perfection of our being is not be attained till we put off these bodies, we live in a cheerful expectation of death, willing to wait our allotted time, till our great change comes; and committing ourselves entirely to the great Author of our salvation, who hath brought life and immortality to light, and who now holds the keys of death and of hell.”

On this subject Howe enlarges, in his masterly sermon, entitled “ The Redeemer’s Dominion over the Invisible World,” inserted in this volume; preached on occasion of the death of John Houghton, Esq., an excellent individual, who was cut off in the bloom of life. Taking the words, ‘ And have the keys of hell and of death,’ Rev. i. 18, for his text, he shows that it is the prerogative of the great Mediator between God and man, the first and the last, to claim this unlimited dominion over death and the

invisible world. The extent of this power he proves, by a train of reasoning the most convincing, cannot be confined within the narrow limits of the place of punishment assigned for evil spirits, but must extend to every region in the vast dominion of nature—the entire invisible world, too great and glorious for human eye to penetrate, or human thought to conceive—the whole unknown empire of the mighty creation, the boundless regions of bliss, as well as the abodes of misery. Into these death is to us the door of entrance: of this door he holds the keys. He opens and no man can shut; he shuts and no man can open.

Having established this great truth, Howe proceeds to remark, that this being the case, it is evident men do not die at random; they neither come in nor go out of the world by chance. All is at the disposal of the great Redeemer, the Father of our spirits. Every turn we take in life we are under his inspection—he measures out our existence, and when it has run its allotted limits, turns the key. This he often does judicially, but never without allowing the most profligate space to repent. At the turn of this key we cease to live here, but do not cease to exist; we are still under his controul: to withstand his power is impossible; his summons all must implicitly obey, willing or unwilling, prepared or unprepared. In the unseen world all are equally under his superintendence. He appoints to each his separate state of rewards or punish-

ments. It is gratifying to reflect that this power is in the hands of the compassionate Jesus, who shed his blood to purchase our redemption. He held the keys of justice before he became incarnate; but he assumed our nature that he might hold the keys of mercy; not to rebellious transgressors, but to the penitent believer. To such the revelation he has made of the future world is most encouraging. At present he conceals its glories from our view, for purposes the most benevolent. We are to live by faith in the full assurance of its existence. Our state now is one of trial, not of reward. The course to be taken with us, is not what would certainly effect our salvation, but what would be most suited to the dignity of the Divine government. Obedience to the commands of Christ is our duty, and had a complete discovery of future glory been the best suited to our case, it would assuredly have been made.

Let it be our aim to live in the constant expectation of being summoned to enter a future world; seeking to prepare for the event which will shortly be inevitable; so numbering our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom; avoiding all undue anxiety about the present life; taking care to improve our time for the great purposes for which especially it was given; endeavouring to form clear and comprehensive conceptions of the Redeemer's dignity and of the vast extent of his dominions. Without a vivid sense of his greatness, power, wis-

dom, love, our religion will have in it no vitality. While we rely entirely on him for salvation, let us by all means submit to his government; taking his laws for the rule of our conduct, cheerfully bearing his mild and easy yoke, and closely following his example. We shall thus meet death not only without fear, but with triumph in the delightful anticipation of future blessedness.

The consideration of the Redeemer's dignity, wisdom, power, and love should induce us patiently to submit to the loss of our choicest friends, or dearest relatives. His right to call us into the unseen world at any time, in any way, under any circumstances, none can dispute. All things and persons were created by him and for him. Our conclusions, under bereavements are frequently most erroneous. We judge after the flesh; forgetting that God often deprives us of those on whom our affections were too intensely fixed, in mercy both to them and to ourselves; by the same stroke removing them from danger, and rousing us to consideration. Youthful piety, associated with eminent talent, ought ever to command respect; but it must not be overvalued: if it be, God will teach us that the maintenance of his cause in the world depends not on the life of the most distinguished individual, but that he can dispense with the services of those who seem the best fitted to accomplish his gracious purposes. Our misapprehensions on this subject arise chiefly from the limited

views we form of the unseen world. We regret the loss of pious and talented youth, as if, because they cease to exist here, they were necessarily in a state of unconscious inactivity; forgetting, that in the boundless amplitude of the heavenly *hades*, God calls them to nobler employments than any they could be engaged in on earth; and assigns them that station among the innumerable multitudes of glorified spirits that replenish the vast regions of light and bliss, where they instantly attain that perfection they could never reach here, and are engaged in a course of holy obedience to be eternally perpetuated. Not that we are to undervalue the services of pious, holy, and zealous Christians here: we ought to value them very highly; but to suppose that our present exertions are of more value than they will be in future, is to invert the order of things;—to esteem the means more than the end; time more than eternity.

How cheering is it to the Christian, who, though content to wait his appointed time, is yet willing to be absent from the body, to know that it is the prerogative of Jesus to call him out of time into eternity! Happy they whose hopes rest solely on him! the song of triumph is theirs:—‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

T. T.

Manningtree, July 20, 1835.

THE
RECONCILEABLENESS
OF
GOD'S PRESCIENCE
OF THE
SINS OF MEN,
WITH THE
WISDOM AND SINCERITY OF HIS COUNSELS, EXHORTATIONS,
AND WHATSOEVER MEANS HE USES TO PREVENT THEM.
IN A LETTER
TO THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq.
TO WHICH IS ADDED
A POSTSCRIPT IN DEFENCE OF THE SAID LETTER.

TO THE

HON. ROBERT BOYLE.

SIR,

THE veneration I have long had for your name, could not permit me to apprehend less obligation than that of a law, in your recommending to me this subject. For within the whole compass of intellectual employment and affairs, none but who are so unhappy as not at all to know you, would dispute your right to prescribe, and give law. And taking a nearer view of the province you have assigned me, I must esteem it alike both disingenuous and undutiful, wholly to have refused it. For the less you could think it possible to me to perform in it, the more I might perceive of kindness allaying the authority of the imposition; and have the apprehension the more obvious to me that you rather designed in it mine own advantage, than that you reckoned the cause could receive any, by my undertaking it.

The doubt, I well know, was mentioned by you as other men's, and not your own; whose clear mind, and diligent inquiry, leave you little liable to be encumbered with greater difficulties. Wherefore that I so soon advert from you, and no more allow these papers to express any regard unto you, till the shutting of the discourse, is only a seeming disrespect or indecorum, put in the stead of a real one. For after you have given them the countenance, as to let it be understood you gave the first rise and occasion to the business and design of them; I had little reason to slur that stamp put upon them, by adding to their (enough other) faults, that of making them guilty of so great a misdemeanour and impertinency, as to continue a discourse of this length, to one that hath so little leisure or occasion to attend to any thing can be said by them.

GOD'S PRESCIENCE

OF THE SINS OF MEN.

SECT. I. What there is of difficulty in this matter I cannot pretend to set down in those most apt expressions wherein it was represented to me, and must therefore endeavour to supply a bad memory out of a worse invention. So much appears very obvious, that ascribing to the ever blessed God, among the other attributes which we take to belong to an every way perfect Being, a knowledge so perfect as shall admit of no possible accession or increase; and consequently the prescience of all future events, as whereof we doubt him not to have the distinct knowledge when they shall have actually come to pass; since many of those events are the sinful actions or omissions of men, which he earnestly counsels and warns them against; this matter of doubt cannot but arise hereupon, viz. "How it can stand with the wisdom and sincerity which our own thoughts do by the earliest anticipation challenge to that ever happy Being, to use these (or any other means) with a visible design to prevent that, which in the mean time appears to that all-seeing eye sure to come to pass." So that, by

this representation of the case, there seem to be committed together,—either, first, God's wisdom with this part of his knowledge, for we judge it not to consist with the wisdom of a man, to design and pursue an end, which he foreknows he shall never attain:—or secondly, the same foreknowledge with his sincerity and uprightness, that he seems intent upon an end, which indeed he intends not. The matter then comes shortly to this sum. Either the holy God seriously intends the prevention of such foreseen sinful actions and omissions, or he doth not intend it. If he do, his wisdom seems liable to be impleaded, as above. If he do not, his uprightness and truth.

My purpose is not, in treating of this affair, to move a dispute concerning the fitness of the words prescience or foreknowledge, or to trouble this discourse with notions I understand not, of the indivisibility and unsuccessiveness of eternal duration, whence it would be collected there can be no such thing as first or second, fore or after, knowledge in that duration; but be contented to speak as I can understand, and be understood. That is, to call that foreknowledge which is the knowledge of somewhat that as yet is not, but that shall sometime come to pass. For it were a mere piece of legerdemain, only to amuse inquirers whom one would pretend to satisfy; or to fly to a cloud for refuge from the force of an argument, and avoid an occurring difficulty by the present reliefless shift of involving oneself in greater. Nor shall I design to myself so large a field as a tractate concerning the Divine prescience, so as to be obliged to discourse particularly whatsoever may be thought to belong to that theological topic; but confine

the discourse to my enjoined subject, and offer only such considerations as may some way tend to expedite or alleviate the present difficulty.

SECT. II. It were one of the greatest injuries to religion, a subversion indeed of its very foundations, and than by doing which, we could not more highly gratify atheistical minds, instead, and under pretence of ascribing perfections to the nature of God, to ascribe to it inconsistencies, or to give a self-repugnant notion of that adorable Being, the parts whereof should jumble and not accord with one another. And yet equal care is to be taken, lest, while we endeavour to frame a consistent notion of God, we reject from it any thing that is truly a perfection, and so give a maimed one. Whereby we should undo our own design, and by our over-much caution to make our conception of him agree with itself, make it disagree to him. For to an absolutely perfect Being, no other can agree than that, which not only is not made up of contradictions; but which also comprehends in it all real perfections either explicitly, or which leaves room for all, by not positively excluding any of them: which to do, and afterwards to assign that as the proper notion of God, were itself the greatest contradiction. We need therefore to be very wary, lest we pronounce too hastily concerning any thing which, to our most sedate thoughts, appears simply a perfection in itself, that it carries with it a repugnancy to somewhat else necessary to be ascribed to him.

We are first to suspect (as there is greatest cause) and inquire whether the ail be not wholly in our own minds; which in this and such like

cases, we certainly shall, upon due reflection, find labouring under the natural defect of that incomprehensive narrowness that is, in some degree, unavoidably followed with confusion and indistinctness of thoughts; and may perhaps find cause to accuse them of the more culpable evils, both of slothfulness, that withholds them from doing what they can, and self-conceit, by which they imagine to themselves an ability of doing what they cannot. It cannot be unobserved by them that have made themselves any part of their own study, that it is very incident to our minds, to grasp at more than they can compass; and then, through their own scantiness, (like the little hand of a child,) to throw away one thing that hath pleased us, to make room for another, because we cannot comprehend both together. It is not strange, that our so straitly limited understandings should not be able to lodge commodiously the immense perfections of a Deity; so as to allow them liberty to spread themselves in our thoughts in their entire proportions. And because we cannot, we complain, when we feel ourselves a little pinched that the things will not consist; when the matter is, that we have unduly crowded and huddled them up together, in our incomprehensive minds, that have not distinctly conceived them.

And though this consideration should not be used for the protection of an usurped liberty of fastening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we please; (as indeed what so gross absurdity might not any one give shelter to by such a misapplication of it?) we ought yet to think it seasonably applied, when we find ourselves urged with difficulties on one hand and the other; and

apprehend it hard, with clearness and satisfaction, to ascribe to God, what we also find it not easy not to ascribe. Nor would it be less unfit to apply it for the patronage of that slothfulness wherein our discouraged minds are sometimes too prone to indulge themselves. To which purpose I remember somewhat very apposite in Minucius Felix, that many, through the mere tediousness of finding out the truth, do rather, by a mean succumbency, yield to the first specious show of any opinion whatsoever, than be at the trouble, by a pertinacious diligence, of applying themselves to a thorough search. Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much further than usually it is, if we would allow ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so as gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency, to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord, and lodge together.

Especially we should take heed lest it be excluded by over-much conceitedness, and a self-arrogating pride, that disdains to be thought not able to see through every thing, by the first and slightest glance of a haughty eye; and peremptorily determines that to be unintelligible, that an arrogant, uninstructed mind hath only not humility enough to acknowledge difficult to be understood. Whence it is too possible some may be over-prone to detract from God what really belongs to him, lest any thing should seem detracted from themselves, and impute imperfection to him rather

than confess their own; and may be so over-ascribing to themselves, as to reckon it a disparagement not to be endured, to seem a little puzzled for the present, to be put to pause, and draw breath awhile, and look into the matter again and again; which if their humility and patience would enable them to do, it is not likely that the Author of our faculties would be unassisting to them, in those our enquiries which concern our duty towards himself. For though in matters of mere speculation, we may be encountered with difficulties, whereof perhaps no mortal can ever be able to find out the solution, (which is no great prejudice, and may be gainful and instructive to us,) yet as to what concerns the object of our religion, it is to be hoped we are not left in inextricable entanglements; nor should think we are till we have made our utmost trial: the design being not to gratify our curiosity, but to relieve ourselves of uncomfortable doubtfulness in the matter of our worship, and (in a dutiful zeal towards the blessed object thereof) to vindicate it against the cavils of ill-minded men.

SECT. III. But if the unsuccessfulness of often repeated endeavours make us despair of being able, with so full satisfaction, to reconcile some things which we have thought were to be attributed to God; it will be some relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies, are not of the same order, nor such as with equal evidence and necessity are to be affirmed of him. And when we make a comparison, we may find ourselves at a certainty concerning those his attributes which most commonly, and at the first view, approve

themselves to every man's understanding. Among which we little hesitate, (as we are most concerned not to do,) about those which carry with them the import of moral goodness; and which render the object of our religion, at once, both most venerable and lovely. For none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him; so as even to prevent ratiocination or argument, with whomsoever the apprehension of his existence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledged that there is a God, refuses to conceive otherwise of him, than that he is holy, just, merciful, true, &c. and rejects with abhorrence the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, deceitful Deity. As for those that, by a long train of our own more uncertain and lubricous reasonings, we endeavour to deduce, if we find ourselves constrained any where to admit a diffidence, it were rather to be placed here. For it is at first sight evident, since God is most certainly willing to be known of them that are sincerely willing to know him, that what is a natural impression, stamped by his own hand on every man's mind, hath more of absolute certainty, than what depends on metaphysical subtlety; whereof so very few are capable, and whereby divers pretenders thereto, do so frequently (and perhaps very dangerously) ensnare themselves. And it is of far greater importance, such a notion of God be entertained, as whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love, (the very life and soul of all religion,) than such as shall be the result, and entertainment, only of scholastic wit.

Yet also, since it is very manifest that man is now become a degenerate creature, and in an

apostacy from God, he is very little to be trusted with the framing his own idea of him; being certainly most unapt to allow any thing a place in it, that would have an unfavourable aspect upon his vicious inclinations and his guilty state. And the contagion of man's sinfulness having spread itself as far as he hath propagated his own nature; so as no notion in his mind can be more common than the perversion and distemper of his mind itself; the possibility and danger is very obvious, of mistaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic common notion. And though these are not impossible to be distinguished, and in some cases very easy, as when men find it imposed unavoidably upon them, to apprehend and acknowledge some things which they are very unwilling should be true, (in which case their sentiments have the same right to be believed as the testimony of an enemy on the opposite party's behalf,) we have yet no reason to neglect any other means, whereby we may be more certainly directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him, and what not.

SECT. IV. Nor can we be at a greater certainty, than in admitting such things to belong to the blessed God, as he plainly affirms of himself; or any way, by his word, evidently discovers to belong to him. For as none knows the things of man, but the spirit of a man that is in him, so the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God.¹ Taking therefore his own word for our measure in the present case, (which I will suppose

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 11.

the reader not to think it unreasonable to appeal to; and what is here said, is intended only for those that have that estimate of the writings wont to go under that name,) what it says of him (much more what it proves) will no doubt be admitted for certain truth: though, if it say such things as, to us, seem not so manifestly to agree with one another, our endeavour must be the more earnest and solicitous (as also it ought to be the more modest) to discuss, and remove the *ἐναντιοφανές* or whatsoever semblance of disagreement. And whosoever concern themselves to peruse that venerable book, will find every where, on the one hand, proclaimed and magnified in it, (what our own minds cannot but have been prepossessed of,) the most exquisite wisdom of God, whereby he forms and contrives the methods of all his dispensations, and disposes them in the aptest subserviency to his own great and most important ends; that 'all his ways are judgment,'¹ and that he 'worketh all things according to the counsel of his will:'² in sum, that all wisdom is appropriated to him, that he is celebrated in the style of 'God, only wise.'³ Nor are we therefore to think it strange, if, many times, we are not able to trace him out, or understand the reason of every thing he thinks fit to do; for the paths of the more perfect wisdom, must therefore be expected to be the more abstruse, and remoter from common apprehension.

How often do we find ourselves so far outgone by wise and designing men, as that we are sometimes constrained to confess and admire their great prudence and conduct (when they have effected

¹ Deut xxxii. 4.² Eph. i. 11.³ Rom. xvi. ult.

their purposes) in those managements, which we have before beheld, either with silent ignorance, or perhaps, not without censure. How much less should the wisest of men regret it, to find all their conjectures exceeded by the infinite wisdom; in the contemplation whereof, we find the great apostle (notwithstanding the vast capacity of his divinely enlightened understanding) exclaiming in a transport, 'O the depths!'¹ And when our eyes tell us, from so manifest stupendous effects, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reasonable to expect he should surpass us proportionably in the contrivances of his wisdom also. And whereas the conjunction is rare, among men, of deep political wisdom, with integrity and strict righteousness; this proceeds from the imperfection and insufficiency of the former in great part, that they know not how to compass their designs, unless often, by supplying their want of wisdom, out of the spoil and violation of their justice and honesty. Otherwise, these are things not altogether so out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accomplish their purposes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how; only the respect and deference they have for them is less, than what they bear to their own interests and ends.

But besides the natural, inflexible rectitude of the divine will, we are secured, from his all-sufficiency, that we shall never be fraudulently imposed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men. For there is nothing to be gained by it: and we cannot conceive what inducement

¹ Rom. xi. 33.

he should have, to make use of any so mean and pitiful shifts for the governing of his creatures, whom he spontaneously raised out of nothing, and hath so perfectly within his power. Unless we should be so most intolerably injurious to him, as to imagine a worse thing of him than we would of the worst of men, that he loved falsehood for its own sake; and that against his so constantly professed detestation of it, the declared repugnancy of it to his nature, and the even tenour of his word, (every where agreeing with itself herein,) so often describing him by that property, 'God that cannot lie,' and, with the same positiveness, avowing his own uprightness, and requiring it, expressing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it, in his intelligent creatures. The righteous God loveth righteousness, and with his countenance doth he behold the upright.¹ Nor is his testimony the less to be regarded for that it is laudatory, and of himself. For we are to consider the prerogative of him that testifies, and that if he were not *ἀυτοπίστος* he were not God. Besides that his giving us this or any representation of himself (to whom it were enough to enjoy his own perfections) is a vouchsafement, and done of mere grace and favour to us, that we may by it be induced to place with satisfaction our unsuspecting trust and confidence in him; as also, that he says in all this, no other thing of himself, than what our own minds, considering him as God, must acknowledge most worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the most apparent necessity. This part, therefore, of the idea of God hath so firm a foundation, both in the

¹ Psalm xi. 17.

natural complexion of our own minds, and the report which his word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant; and cannot have the thought of defending his prescience, by entrenching upon his wisdom and truth, without offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves.

SECT. V. On the other hand also, as it cannot but seem to us a higher perfection to know all things at once, than gradually to arrive to the knowledge of one thing after another; and so proceed from the ignorance of some things to the knowledge of them; and that nothing is more certain, than that all possible perfection must agree to God; so we find his own word asserting to him that most perfect knowledge which seems to exclude the possibility of increase; or that any thing should succeed into his knowledge. For how plainly is it affirmed of him, that he knows all things. And even concerning such future things as about which our present inquiry is conversant, the affirmation is express and positive. I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.¹ Nor is the affirmation naked, and unfortified. For in the same sacred records, we have the same thing both affirmed and proved; inasmuch as we find, in a great part thereof, are contained things foretold by most express prophecy, unto which the events recorded in other parts (and many of them in other unquestioned writings besides) have so punctually cor-

¹ Isa. xlvi. 9, 10, with chap xli. 22, 23.

responded, as to leave no place for doubt or cavil. Instances are so plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And surely what was so expressly foretold could not but have been foreknown. It seems then an attempt also equally hopeless and unrelieving, as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his wisdom and sincerity, by assaulting his prescience or certain foreknowledge of whatsoever shall come to pass. And that their defence is not to be attempted this way, will further most evidently appear from hence, that it is not impossible to assign particular instances of some or other most confessedly wicked actions; against which God had directed those ordinary means of counselling and dehorting men, and which yet it is most certain he did foreknow they would do. As, though it was so punctually determined even to a day,¹ and was (though not so punctually²) foretold unto Abraham, how long, from that time,³ his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs; yet how frequent are the counsels and warnings sent to Pharaoh to dismiss them sooner; yea, how often are Moses and Aaron directed to claim their liberty, and exhort Pharaoh to let them go, and at the same time told, he should not hearken to them.⁴ Nor indeed is it more seldom said that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, lest he should. Though it may be a doubt whether those passages be truly translated; for the gentler meaning of the Hebrew idiom being well known, it would seem more agreeable to the text,

¹ Exod. xi. 41.

² Gen. xv. 3.

³ What there is of difficulty or doubt about this prophecy, see fully cleared in the late letter to the Deist.

⁴ Exod. iv. &c.

to have expressed only the intended sense, than to have strained a word to the very utmost of its literal import, and manifestly beyond what was intended. After the like manner is the prophet Ezekiel sent to the revolted Israelites, and directed to speak to them with God's own words, the sum and purport whereof was to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways, lest they should die; when as yet it is plainly told him, 'but the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me.'¹ Unto which same purpose it is more pertinent, than necessary to be added, that our Saviour's own plain assertions that he was the Son of God, the many miracles by which he confirmed it, and his frequent exhortations to the Jews to believe in him thereupon, had a manifest tendency to make him be known and believed to be so, and consequently to prevent that most horrid act of his crucifixion; for it is said, and the matter speaks itself, that, if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:² notwithstanding that it was a thing which God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done.³ That is, foreseeing wicked hands would be prompted and ready for this tragic enterprise, his sovereign power and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge so only, and not with less latitude, to define or determine the bounds and limits of that malignity, than to let it proceed unto this execution; and to deliver him] up (not by any formal resignation, or surrender, as we well know, but permitting him) thereunto. Though the same phrase of delivering him hath, elsewhere, another notion, of assigning or appointing him to

¹ Ezek. iii. 7.² 1 Cor. ii.³ Acts, iv. 28.

be a propitiation for the sins of men, by dying; which was done by mutual agreement between both the parties, him that was to propitiate, and him who was to be propitiated. In which respect our Saviour is also said to have given himself for the same purpose; ¹ which purpose it was determined not to hinder prepared hands to execute in this way.

Now if it did appear but in one single instance only, that the blessed God did foreknow, and dehort from the same act, it will be plainly consequent, that his warnings, and dehortations from wicked actions in the general, can with no pretence be alleged as a proof against his universal prescience. For if the argument he dehorted from the doing such an action, therefore he did not foreknow it, would be able to conclude any thing, it must be of sufficient force to conclude universally; which it cannot do, if but a single instance can be given, wherein it is apparent he did both dehort and foreknow. It can only pretend to raise the doubt which we have in hand to discuss, how fitly, and with what wisdom and sincerity, he can be understood to interpose his counsels and monitions in such a case.

SECT. VI. Wherefore nothing remains but to consider how these may be reconciled, and made appear to be no way inconsistent with one another. Nor are we to apprehend herein so great a difficulty, as it were to reconcile his irresistible pre-determinative concurrence to all actions of the creature, even those that are in themselves most

¹ Tit. ii. 14.

malignantly wicked, with the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them, and severest punishments of them according to those laws. Which sentiments must, I conceive, to any impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable, how the influence and concurrence, the holy God hath to the worst of actions, is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best; wherein such inherently evil actions are less to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or the actor that does them; or wherein not a great deal more; and leave it undeniable, that the matter of all his laws, in reference to all such actions that ever have been done in the world, was a simple and most natural impossibility. Nothing being more apparently so, than either not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power; or to separate the malignity thereof, from an intrinsically evil action; and that this natural impossibility of not sinning was the ineluctable fate of his (at first) innocent creatures: who also (as the case is to be conceived of with the angels that kept not their first station) must be understood irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment, for the doing of what it was (upon these terms) so absolutely impossible to them to avoid.

SECT. VII. This too hard province the present design pretends not to intermeddle in, as being neither apprehended manageable, for those briefly mentioned considerations, and many more that are wont to be insisted on in this argument: nor indeed at all necessary. For though many considerations have been, with great subtlety,

alleged and urged to this purpose, by former and some modern writers, (which it is besides the design of these papers severally to discuss,) these two which seem the most importunate and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force; and then the less strength which is in others, will be nothing formidable: viz. that it necessarily belongs to the original and fountain being, to be the first cause of whatsoever being; and consequently that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked action, must principally owe itself to the determinative productive influence of this first and sovereign cause. Otherwise it would seem there were some being that were neither *primum* nor *a primo*.

And again, (which we are more concerned to consider, because it more concerns our present subject,) that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men, (many whereof, as hath been observed, he hath foretold,) if their futuration were a mere contingency, and depended on the uncertain will of the subordinate agent, not determined by the supreme. But neither of these seem able to infer the dismal conclusion of God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions. Not the former; for it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights and privileges of the first cause, to assert that no action can be done but by a power derived from it; which in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please, without over-asserting, that they must be irresistibly determined also, even to the worst of actions done by them. Besides that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever-blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature, of such

a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting unless whatsoever he thus enables, he determine (that is, for it can mean no less thing, impel) it to do also. And except it were affirmed impossible to God to have made such a creature, (that is, that it implied a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved,) there is no imaginable pretence why it should not be admitted he hath done it; rather than so fatally expose the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God, by supposing him to have made laws for his reasonable creatures, impossible, through his own irresistible counter-action, to be observed; and afterwards to express himself displeas'd, and adjudge his creatures to eternal punishments, for not observing them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impossible, nor again, what hath been done to manifest the vanity of those attempts. But I must confess a greater disposition to wonder, that ever such a thing should be disputed, than dispute so plain a case. And that a matter whereupon all moral government depends, both human and divine, should not have been determin'd at the first sight. It is not hard for a good wit to have somewhat to say for any thing; but to dispute against the common sense of mankind, we know beforehand, is but to trifle: as the essay to prove the impossibility of local motion. The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds, and create such a sense in our souls, as should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers. And that we should rather choose to

have our sight, hearing, and motive-power, or what not besides disputed, or even torn away from us, than ever suffer ourselves to be disputed into a belief that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish, the same thing. Nor is it difficult to urge more puzzling sophisms against the former, than for this latter. But the efforts of a sophistical wit against sense, and more against the sense of our souls, and most of all against the entire sum and substance of all morality and religion, at once, are but like the attempt to batter a wall of brass with straws and feathers. Nor is the assault, on this part, more feeble and impotent, than the defence is wont to be of the other. For I would appeal to the quick refined sense of any sober and pious mind, after serious, inward consultation with itself; being closely urged, with the horror of so black a conception of God, that he should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then to exact severest punishments for the offence done; what relief it would now be to it, to be only taught to reply, that man is under the law, and God above it—a defence that doubles the force of the assault. What! that God should make a law, and necessitate the violation of it! and yet also punish that violation! And this be thought a sufficient salvo, that himself is not subject to any law! Will a quick-scented, tender spirit, wounded by so unsufferable indignity, offered to the holy God, be any whit eased or relieved, by the thin sophistry of only a collusive ambiguity in the word law? which sometimes signifies the declared pleasure of a ruler to a subject; in which sense any eye can see

God can be under no law, having no superior; but not seldom, also, an habitual fixed principle and rule of acting after one steady tenor: in which sense how manifest is it, that the perfect rectitude of God's own holy gracious nature is an eternal law to him, infinitely more stable and immutable than the ordinances of day and night! Or what relief is there in that dream of the supposed possibility of God's making a reasonable creature with an innocent aversion to himself? For what can be supposed more repugnant, or what more impertinent? If innocent, how were it punishable? A law already made in the case, how can it be innocent?

But whatsoever strength there may be in arguments and replies, to and fro, in this matter; that which hath too apparently had greatest actual efficacy, with many, hath been the authority and name of this or that man of reputation, and the force of that art of imputing a doctrine, already under a prejudicial doom, to some or other ill-reputed former writer. I profess not to be skilled in the use of that sort of weapons. And what reputation ought to be of so great value with us, as that of God and religion? Though if one would take that invidious course, it were easy to evince, that such a predeterminative influx to the production of all whatsoever actions, is the dearly espoused notion of one, of as deservedly an ill character, as ever had the name of a Christian writer. And whether he would not take that name for a dishonour to him, I pretend not to know. But let us take this sober account of the present case, that in this temporary state of trial, the efficacious grace of God is necessary to actions sincerely good and

holy ; which therefore all ought undespairingly to seek and pray for ; but that in reference to other actions, he doth only supply men with such a power, as whereby they are enabled, either to act, or, in many instances, (and especially when they attempt any thing that is evil,) to suspend their own action. And surely it carries so unexceptionable a face and aspect with it, that no man that is himself sober, will think the worst name, of whosoever shall have said the same thing, were a prejudice to it ; or should more oblige him to reject it, than we would think ourselves obliged to throw away gold, or diamonds, because an impure hand hath touched them ; or to deny Christ, because the devils confessed him. Though also, if any should impute the so stating of this matter to any author, that hath been wont to go under an ill name and character, in the Christian church ; there were a great oversight committed ; to say no harder thing of it. For the writers whose names would be supposed a prejudice, have neither said the same thing, nor with the same design. They would have this indetermination of the power afforded to the creature, to be so universal, as to extend equally to evil actions and to good ; and have asserted it with a manifest design to exclude efficacious grace, in reference to the best actions. Whereas this account would make it not of so large extent : (as it were very unreasonable any should :) for though it may well be supposed extendible to many actions, besides those that are intrinsically evil, or to any that are not spiritually good, yet nothing enforces (nor can it be admitted) that it should actually and always extend so far. For who can doubt but God can overrule the inclinations and

actions of his creature, when he pleases ; and, as shall best consist with his wisdom, and the purity of his nature, either lay on or take off his determining hand. Nor is it here asserted with any other design, than to exempt the blessed God, as far as is possible, from a participation in the evil actions of his creatures ; in the meantime entitling him most entirely to those that are sincerely good : though it must be left imputable to men themselves (it being through their own great default) if they have not the grace which might effectually enable them to do such also. And as for the latter. This supposed indetermination of the human will, in reference, especially, to wicked actions, is far from being capable of inferring, that God cannot therefore foreknow them ; or any thing more, than that we are left ignorant of the way, how he foreknows them. And how small is the inconvenience of acknowledging that, yea, and how manifest the absurdity of not acknowledging the like, in many cases ! since nothing is more certain, than that God doth many things besides, whereof the manner how he does them, we can neither explicate nor understand ! For neither is it difficult to assign instances more than enough of actions done by ourselves of the manner whereof we can give no distinct account, as those of vision, intellection, with sundry others.

Some have been at great pains, we well know, to explain the manner of God's foreknowledge of these futurities, otherwise than by laying the foundation thereof in his supposed efficacious will or decree of them. They that can satisfy themselves with what Thomas and Scotus have attempted, and the followers of them both—that can understand

what it is, with the one, for all things to be eternally present to the Divine intellect in *esse reali*, and not understand by it, the world to have been eternal; or, what with the other, that they be all present only in *esse representativo*, and not understand by it, barely that they are all known, and no more, (which seems like the explication of the word invasion by invasion,) let them enjoy their own satisfaction. For my own part, I can more easily be satisfied to be ignorant of the *modus* or medium of his knowledge, while I am sure of the thing; and I know not why any sober-minded man might not be so too; while we must all be content to be ignorant of the manner, yea, and nature too, of a thousand things besides, when that such things there are, we have no doubt; and when there are few things, about which we can, with less disadvantage, suffer our being ignorant, or with less disreputation profess to be so. It cannot therefore be so affrightful a thing, to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions, well to consist with our ignorance how he foreknows them, as that we should think it necessary to overturn and mingle heaven and earth, rather than admit it.

SECT. VIII. Wherefore waving that unfeasible, unnecessary, and unenjoined task, of defending God's predeterminative concurrence unto sinful actions; our encounter must only be of the more superable difficulty, to reconcile his prescience of them with his provisions against them, i. e. how fitly the wise and holy God can have interposed his precautions and dissuasions, in their own nature, aptly tending to withhold and divert men from those evil actions,

which he yet foresees they will do. And it is, in the first place, evident, there can be no pretence to allege that there is any such repugnancy in the matter, as shall amount to a contradiction, so much as virtual, or which the things signified, on the one part and the other, can be understood any way to import, that indeed there should be a direct and explicit contradiction between foreknowing and dehorting, we may, at first sight, perceive the terms cannot admit; for there is nothing enunciated (affirmed or denied) in either. But let the sense of both be resolved into propositions, capable of being confronted to one another, and all that can be made of the former, will only come to this, "You will do such a thing," and of the latter, no more but this, "You ought not to do it:" these are at as great distance, as can be imagined, from grating upon, or jarring with, one another. And wherein is the indecorum of it, that both these *effata* should proceed from the same mouth, viz. of a governor, or one that hath authority over others.

We will, for discourse sake, suppose a prince endowed with the gift or spirit of prophecy. This most will acknowledge a great perfection, added to whatsoever other his accomplishments. And suppose we this his prophetic ability so large, as to extend to most events that shall fall out within his dominions. Is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his subjects by laws, or any way admonish them of their duty? Hath this perfection so much diminished him as to depose him from his government? It is not, indeed, to be dissembled, that it were a difficulty to determine, whether such foresight were, for himself, better or worse. Boundless knowledge seems only in a fit conjunction with as

unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it should destroy his relation to his subjects: as what of it were left, if it should despoil him of his legislative power, and capacity of governing according to laws made by it? And to bring back the matter to the supreme Ruler: let it for the present be supposed only, that the blessed God hath, belonging to his nature, the universal prescience whereof we are discoursing; we will, surely, upon that supposition, acknowledge it to belong to him as a perfection. And were it reasonable to affirm that by a perfection he is disabled for government; or were it a good consequence, 'He foreknows all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the world?'

SECT. IX. And, that we may consider the matter more narrowly, would the supposition of such foreknowledge in God, make that cease to be man's duty which had otherwise been so, and take away the differences of good and evil? Would it nullify the obligation of God's law, and make man's own inclination his only rule? or, if it be said, because it is foreknown man will do such a thing, therefore he may, where is the connexion? For what influence can foreknowledge have, to alter or effect any way, either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the person that shall do it; any more than the present knowledge of the same thing, now in doing? which knowledge none would deny to God; and which, when it occurs to a man, is no more understood to make an evil action innocent, than the action makes the eye guilty, of him that beholds it only and detests it at once. Surely what is, in its own nature, whether good

or evil, can never not be so, be it foreknown or not foreknown.

But if what was otherwise man's duty, be still his duty, what can make it unfit that it be declared, and made known to him to be so? and how is that otherwise to be done, than by these disputed means? yea (for this is the case) what can make it less fit, than it would be that God should cease to rule over the world; and quit the right of his government to his revolted creatures, upon no other reason, than only that he foresees they have a mind to invade it? It may now perhaps be said, all this reasoning tends indeed to establish the contrary assertion, that notwithstanding God do foreknow man's sin, it is however necessary he forewarn him of it—but it answers not the objected difficulty, viz. how reasonably any such means are used for an unattainable end; as it is manifest, the end, man's obedience, cannot be attained when it is foreknown he will not obey.

SECT. X. It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider, (a matter, as is known, wont to be much vexed in the schools,) how God may be said to act for any end at all. And it appears very certain, that he who is so every way absolutely perfect and happy, cannot be thought to intend and pursue an end, after the same manner as we are wont to do. We being conscious to ourselves of indigency, or, at the best, of obligation to the author of our beings, are wont to design this or that end for the relieving of ourselves, or the approving ourselves to him. And, our satisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we solicitously deliberate about the fittest means

to attain it; and are tossed with various passions, of desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and grief, according as the end is apprehended more or less excellent, or likely to be attained; varying often our course upon new emergencies, as this or that may probably promote or hinder the success of our pursuit. In short, we pursue ends, as being both impatient of disappointment, and uncertain of their attainment.

The blessed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be supposed to propound an end to himself as that whereupon his satisfaction depends, which were inconsistent with his already complete felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy; but acting always from an immense self-sufficient fulness of life, and of all perfections, doth ever satisfy himself in himself, and take highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity, and rectitude of his own most holy will and way. And again, as he doth not seek a yet unattained satisfaction, in any end he can be supposed to propound to himself; so nor can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For deliberation would imply doubtfulness and uncertainty, which his absolute perfection cannot admit; nor doth need, the whole frame and compass of things intended by him, in their distinct references and tendencies, being, at once, present to his all-comprehending view; so that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledge with him, or for any new resolves thereupon. 'Known to the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the world.'¹

¹ Acts, xv. 18.

SECT. XI. This being premised ; it is now further to be considered, that howsoever one end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the divine will have a visible aptitude, viz. the obedient compliance of men with them ; another more noble end was, however, attainable, not unbecoming the designment of the divine wisdom, and which it was every way most worthy of God to be more principally intent upon. It is fit the mention of this be prefaced with an obvious remark ;—that the misapprehension of the state of things between God and man doth, in great part, owe itself to our aptness to compare unduly the divine government with that of secular rulers ; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other. Whereas there cannot but be a vast difference, between the constitution and end of God's government over his creatures, and more especially mankind, and that of man over his fellow-creatures of the same kind. The government of secular human rulers, can never be, in the constitution of it, altogether absolute, nor ought, in the design of it, primarily to intend the personal advantage of the ruler himself, who as much depends upon his subjects, and hath (at least) as great need of them, as they can be understood to have of him. But as to the blessed God the matter is apparent, and hath its own triumphant evidence, that since he is the original and root of all being, that all things are mere dependencies upon his absolute pleasure, and entirely of him, and by him, all ought to be to him, that he alone might have the glory.¹

¹ Rom. ii.

Wherefore, it must be asserted, and cannot fail of obtaining to be acknowledged, by every impartial and sober considerer of things, that there is a much more noble and important end, that all God's public edicts and declarations to men, (the instruments of his government over them,) do more principally aim at, than their advantage, viz. the dignity and decorum of his government itself; and that he may be found in every thing to have done as became him, and was most worthy of himself. And what could be more so, than that he should testify the aversion of his own pure and holy nature, to whatsoever was unholy and impure, his love of righteousness and complacency to be imitated herein, together with his steady, gracious propension to receive all them into the communion of his own felicity or blessedness (for the Redeemer's sake) who should herein comply with him? Nor are we to understand that he herein so designs the reputation of his government, as men are often wont to do things out of design for their interest in that kind, that are, otherwise, against their overruled inclination. But we are to account these his declarations (although they are acts of an intelligent agent, and the products of wisdom and counsel, yet also) the spontaneous emanations of his own holy and gracious nature, such as wherein he most fully agrees, and consents with himself. And is it now to be expected, that because he foresees men will be wicked, and do what shall be unworthy of them, he must therefore lay aside his nature, and omit to do what shall be worthy of himself?

SECT. XII. And hereupon it may be expected,

the more ingenuous and candid will allow themselves to think the matter tolerably clear, in reference to the former part of the proposed difficulty; i. e. will apprehend this way of dealing with men not imprudent, or inconsistent with the divine wisdom, since, though one end, in a great part, fail, yet another, more valuable, is attained. But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may still urge, viz. how it can stand with sincerity; whereas that end also which fails, seems to have been most directly intended, that the blessed God should seem so earnestly intent upon it: since it is hardly conceivable, that the same thing should be, at once, seriously intended as an end, and yet, at the same time, give the eye, which seems to design it, no other prospect than of a thing never to be brought to pass.

Wherefore we are next to consider, that we may proceed gradually, and not omit to say what is in itself considerable; though it is not all (which cannot be said at once) that is to be said;—that the public declarations of the divine will, touching man's duty, do attain that very end, his obedient compliance therewith, in great part, and as to many (although it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the most) are the no less successful, than the apt means of attaining it. Nor, certainly, if it were foreknown the world would be so divided, as that some would obey, and others not obey, was it therefore the fittest course, that these two sorts should, by some extraordinary act of providence, be carefully severed from each other; and those be dealt withal apart from the rest. But rather, that the divine edicts should be of a universal tenour, and be directed to all as they are; the matter of

them being of universal concernment, and equally suitable to the common case of all men.

SECT. XIII. Neither yet was it necessary, that effectual care should be taken, they should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person. Since it is apparently to be resolved into the wickedness of the world, that they do not so; and that there is not a universal diffusion of the gospel into every part. For it being evident to any one's reflection, that men are in a state of apostacy and defection from their Maker and common Lord, and therefore subject to his displeasure; whereas the merciful God hath done his own part, and so much beyond what was to be expected from him; issued out his proclamations of peace and pardon, upon so easy and indulgent terms, as are expressed in his gospel; if, hereupon, men also did their part, behaved themselves suitably to the exigency of their case, and as did become reasonable creatures, fallen under the displeasure of their Maker, (whereof their common condition affords so innumerable, so pregnant proofs,) the gospel, wheresoever it should arrive, would have been entertained with so great a transport of joy, and so ready and universal acceptance, as very soon to have made a great noise in the world; and being found to be of a universal tenour and concernment, and that what it says to one nation, it equally says the same to every one; it could not but be, that messengers would interchangeably have run from nation to nation; some to communicate, others to inquire after, those strange tidings of great joy unto all people, lately sent from heaven, concerning the Emmanuel, God

with us—God, again upon his return to man, and now in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And thus how easily, and even naturally, would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world! especially the merciful God having so provided, that there should be an office constituted, and set up; a sort of men, whose whole business it should be, to propagate and publish those happy tidings. But that men should so indulge their sensual, terrene inclination, as not at all to use their understandings and considering power, about other matters than only what are within the sight of their eye, when by so easy and quick a turn of thoughts they might feel and find out who made them, and was the original of their life and being, and that things are not right, and as they should be, between him and them; and so by what is within the compass of natural revelation, be prepared for what is supernatural,—and not that only, but to that stupidity, by which they are unapt to inquire after and receive, to add that obstinate malignity by which they are apt to reject and oppose the merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended, reconcileable Creator and Lord,—how manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the little, slow progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only! As suppose we a prince of the greatest clemency, benignity, and goodness, from whom a whole country of his subjects have made a most causeless defection; hereupon to send the whole body of the rebels a gracious proclamation of free pardon upon their return to their allegiance and duty; and it only from hence comes to pass, that every individual person of them distinctly understands not what the message from

their prince did import; because, they that heard it would not, many of them, allow themselves to consider and regard it; and others of them, with despiteful violence, fell upon the heralds, barbarously butchering some of them, and ignominiously repulsing the rest: who would not say, that prince had fully done his part, and acquitted himself answerably to the best character, though he should send to the rebels no further overtures? Much more, if through a long tract of time, he continue the same amicable endeavours for their reduction, notwithstanding the constant experience of same ill success; who would not cast the whole business of the continued ill understanding, between him and the revolters, upon themselves? and reckon it impossible any should be ignorant of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity, and disaffection to him and his government, were not their common temper?

Though so infinitely do the mercies of God exceed those of the most merciful prince on earth, as well as his knowledge and power; that wheresoever there are any exempt cases, we must conceive him equally able and inclined to consider them distinctly. And so vastly different may we well suppose the degrees of happiness and misery to be, in the other world; as that there may be latitude enough, of punishing and rewarding men, proportionably to the degrees of light they have had, and the more or less malignity, or propension to reconciliation, was found with them thereupon.

SECT. XIV. Nor again was it at all incongruous, or unbecoming, that the blessed God, this being

the common temper and disposition of all men, to reject his gracious tenders, should provide, by some extraordinary means, that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to sovereignty (even where it is infinitely less absolute) than arbitrarily to design the objects of special favour? Who blames a prince, for placing special marks of his royal bounty, or clemency, here and there as he thinks fit? or that he hath some peculiar favourites, with whom he familiarly converses, whom he hath won, by some or other not common inducements, and assured their loyal affection; though there be thousands of persons in his dominions besides, of as good parts, dispositions, and deserts as they? It belongs to sovereignty, only so to be favourable to some, as, in the mean time, to be just towards all. Yea, and it must be acknowledged, such are the dispensations of the holy God towards the whole community of mankind, as import not only strict righteousness, but great clemency and mercy also. Though they might easily understand themselves to be offenders, and liable to the severities of his justice, they are spared by his patience, sustained by his bounty, protected by his power; their lives and properties are fenced by his own laws. And whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another; and each one his own greatest enemy; it is provided by those laws, even for the worst of men, that none shall injure them, that all love them and seek their good. He interposes his authority on their behalf; and, if any wrong them, he takes it for an affront done to himself. By the same laws they are directed to industry, frugality, sobriety, temperance, to exercise a government

over themselves, to bridle and subdue their own exorbitant lusts and passions; their more immediate tormentors, and the sources of all the calamities and miseries which befall them in this world. By all which evidences of his great care, and concern for their welfare, they might understand him to have favourable propensions towards them, and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy; and might, by his goodness, be led to repentance.

Yea, and moreover, he hath sent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this world, full of grace and truth, upon the most merciful errand. And they have some of them been in transports, when they have but fancied such a descent, for the doing them only some lighter good turn; as upon the cure of the cripple, 'The gods' (say they) 'are come down in the likeness of men!'¹ He being filled with the glorious fulness of the Godhead, hath been a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men; and if they would believe and obey him, they would find that sacrifice is accepted, and available for them. And though they are disabled to do so only by their own wicked inclination, even against that also they have no cause to despair of being relieved, if they would (which they might) admit the thoughts of their impotency, and the exigency of their case, and did seriously implore Divine help.

SECT. XV. Now with whom these methods succeed well, there is no suspicion of insincerity. Let us see what pretence there can be for it, with the

¹ Acts, xiv.

rest. It is to be considered, that, as to them he doth not apply himself to every, or to any, person immediately, and severally, after some such tenour of speech as this, "I know thee to be a profligate hopeless wretch, and thou wilt finally disregard whatsoever I say to thee, and consequently perish and become miserable; but however (though I foresee most certainly thou wilt not, yet) I entreat thee to hear, and obey, and live." Indeed, sending a prophet to a promiscuous people, he foretells him of such ill success.¹ But it is not told him he should succeed so ill universally, and it is implied, he should not.²

But the course the great God takes, is only to apply himself to these (as hath been said) in common with the rest. For if it be said he also applies himself to them by the private dictates of his Spirit; he doth not, by it, make formed speeches to men. But as to those its common motions, whereby it applies itself unto them, doth only solicit, in a stated manner of operation, in and by their own reason and consciences, (as he concurs with our inferior faculties, and with the inferior creatures suitable to their natures and capacities :) speaking no other than their own language, as they are instructed out of his word, or by other means; which he usually continues to do, till by their resistencies, they have sealed up their own consciences, and consequently (according to its more ordinary fixed course, and laws of access and recess) shut out the Holy Spirit both at once. Nor is it more to be expected he should universally alter that course, than that he should

¹ Ezek. iii. 7.

² Ver. 21.

alter the courses of the sun, moon, and stars, and innovate upon universal nature. So that what is endeavoured for the reducement of such as finally refuse to return, by particular applications to this or that person, and beyond what is contained in the public declarations of his written word, is substituted by ministers and inferior agents, that know no more of the event, than they do themselves. And that this was the fittest way of dealing with reasonable creatures, who, that will use his own reason, sees not ?

SECT. XVI. That our disquisition may be here a little more strict, we shall inquire both,—What may be supposed possible to be alleged out of God's word, in reference to them that persist in wickedness till they finally perish, which it can be thought not consistent with sincerity, to have inserted upon the supposed foresight of so dismal an issue ; and—What more convenient course we can think of, which sincerity (as we apprehend) would have required.

As to the former. It may, perhaps, be alleged, that he professes to will the salvation of all men¹—not to desire the death of him that dieth :²—yea, and profess himself grieved that any perish.³ Now these things, compared with his public declarations and tenders, directed, in a universal tenour, to all men, carry that appearance and show with them, as if he would have it believed, his end were to save all. Wherewith his foresight of the perdition of so many seems ill to agree. For how can that end be seriously intended which it is fore-

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

² Ezek. xviii. 32.

³ Ps. lxxxii. 12, 13.

seen will not be brought about? And how can it be thought to consist with sincerity, that there should be an appearance of his having such an end, unto which, a serious real intention of it doth not correspond? Wherefore we shall here examine, what appearance such expressions as those above recited, can, by just interpretation, be understood to amount unto; and then show, that there is really with the blessed God what doth truly and fully correspond to that appearance; and very agreeably too, with the hypothesis of his foreseeing how things will finally issue, with very many.

And first, that we may understand the true import of the expressions which we have mentioned, and others of like sound and meaning, we are to consider, that though being taken severally and apart, they are not capable of a sense prejudicial to the cause, the defence whereof we have undertaken; which we shall afterwards more distinctly evince; yet, it were very injurious, to go about to affix a sense unto a single expression, without weighing the general design of the writings, whereof it is a part. It were quite to frustrate the use of words, when a matter is to be represented, that is copious, and consists of many parts and branches, which cannot be comprehended in one or a few sentences; if we will pretend to estimate and make a judgment of the speaker's full meaning, by this or that single passage only, because we have not patience or leisure to hear the rest; or perhaps have a greater disposition to cavil at his words, than understand his meaning. If a course resembling this should be taken, in interpreting the edicts or laws of princes and states, (suppose it were a proclamation of pardon to delinquent sub-

jects,) and only this or that favourable clause be fastened upon, without regard to the inserted provisos and conditions; the (concerned) interpreters might do a slight, temporary, and easily remediable wrong to the prince, but are in danger more fatally to wrong themselves.

The edicts of the great God, that are publicly extant to mankind, (the universal publication whereof they partly withstand, and which they too commonly deprave, and perversely misinterpret, where they do obtain,) carry no such appearance with them, as if he had ever proposed it to himself, for his end, to save all men, or any man, let them do what they please, or how destructive a course soever they take, and shall finally persist in. If that were supposed his design, his so seemingly serious counsels and exhortations were as ludicrous, as they could be thought, if it were as peremptorily determined all should perish. For what God will, by almighty power, immediately work, without the subordinate concurrence of any second cause, must be necessarily; and it is equally vain, solicitously to endeavour the engaging of subordinate agents, to do that which without them is absolutely necessary, as it were to endeavour that, by them, which is absolutely impossible.

SECT. XVII. That which his declarations to men do amount unto, is, in sum, thus much,—that, whereas they have, by their defection and revolt from him, made themselves liable to his justice, and very great consequent miseries; he is willing to pardon, save, and restore them to a blessed state, upon such terms as shall be agree-

able (the recompence due to his injured law being otherwise provided for, at no expense of theirs) to the nature of that blessedness they are to enjoy, the purity of his own nature, and the order and dignity of his government. That is, that they seriously repent and turn to him, love him as the Lord their God, with all their heart and soul, and might and mind; and one another as themselves; (being to make together one happy community, in the participation of the same blessedness;) commit themselves by entire trust, subjection, and devotedness to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the measure of light wherewith he shall have been revealed and made known to them; submit to the motions and dictates of his blessed Spirit, whereby the impression of his own holy image is to be renewed in them, and a divine nature imparted to them: and carefully attend to his word as the means, the impressive instrument or seal, by which, understood and considered, that impression shall be made, and the very seeds out of which that holy nature, and the entire frame of the new creature, shall result and spring up in them; so as to make them apt unto the obedience that is expected from them, and capable of the blessedness they are to expect: that if they neglect to attend to these external discoveries, and refuse the ordinary aids and assistances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own consciences, they are not to expect he should overpower them, by a strong hand, and save them against the continuing disinclination of their own wills. Nor (whatsoever extraordinary acts he may do upon some, to make them willing) is there any universal promise in his word, or other encouragement, upon which

any may reasonably promise themselves that, in the neglect and disuse of all ordinary means, such power shall be used with them, as shall finally overcome their averse, disaffected hearts.

SECT. XVIII. It is true, that he frequently uses much importunity with men, and enforces his laws with that earnestness, as if it were his own great interest to have them obeyed; wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man, solicitously intent upon an end which he cannot be satisfied till he attain. Yet withal, he hath interspersed, every where, in his word, so frequent, Godlike expressions of his own greatness, all-sufficiency, and independency upon his creatures, as that if we attend to these his public declarations, and manifests of himself, entirely, so as to compare one thing with another, we shall find the matter not at all dissembled; but might collect this to be the state of things between him and us, that he makes no overtures to us, as thinking us considerable, or as if any thing were to accrue to him from us; but that, as he takes pleasure in the diffusion of his own goodness, so it is our interest to behave ourselves suitably thereunto, and, according as we comply with it, and continue in it, or do not, so we may expect the delectable communications of it, or taste, otherwise, his just severity. That, therefore, when he exhorts, obtests, entreats, beseeches that we would obey and live; speaks as if he were grieved at our disobedience, and what is like to ensue us therefrom; these are merciful condescensions, and the efforts of that goodness, which chooseth the fittest ways of moving us, rather than that he is moved himself, by any such passions as

we are wont to feel in ourselves, when we are pursuing our own designs; and that he vouchsafeth to speak in such a way as is less suitable to himself, that it may be more suitable to us, and might teach us, while he so far complies with us, how becoming it is that we answerably bend ourselves to a compliance with him. He speaks, sometimes, as if he did suffer somewhat human, as an apt means (and which to many proves effectual) to bring us to enjoy, at length, what is truly divine. We may, if we consider, and lay things together, understand these to be gracious insinuations; whereby, as he hath not left the matter liable to be so misunderstood, as if he were really affected with solicitude, or any perturbation concerning us, (which he hath sufficiently given us to understand his blessed nature cannot admit of,) so nor can they be thought to be disguises of himself, or misrepresentations, that have nothing in him corresponding to them. For they really signify the obedience and blessedness of those his creatures that are capable thereof, to be more pleasing and agreeable to his nature and will, than that they should disobey and perish; (which is the utmost that can be understood meant by those words, God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth;) but withal, that he so apprehends the indignity done to his government, by their disobedience, that if they obey not (as the indulgent constitution and temper of his law and government now are, in and by the Redeemer) they must perish; and that he hath also such respect to the congruity and order of things, as that it shall not be the ordinary method of his government over reasonable creatures, to overpower them into that obedience, by which it

may come to pass that they perish not. All which may be collected from those his own plain words, in that other recited text, and many besides of like import, when, with so awful solemnity, he professes, that as he lives he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live; and adds, 'Turn ye, turn ye; why will you die?'¹ That is, that their repentance, and consequent welfare, would be more grateful to him than their perdition, upon their persevering in destructive ways; but yet, that if they were not moved to repent, by these his pleadings and expostulations used with them, they should die, and were therefore concerned to attend and hearken to such his reasonings and warnings, as the apt means to work their good; not expecting he should take ordinary courses with them, in order to it: and that the real respect he had thereunto, should never induce him to use any indecorous course to bring it about; but that he had a more principal respect to the rules of justice, and the order of his government, than to their concerns: and that he, notwithstanding, expresses himself aggrieved that any finally perish. If we consider and recollect, what notices he hath furnished our minds with, of the perfections of a deity, and what he hath remonstrated to us of his own nature, so plainly in his word; we cannot understand more by it, than the calm dispassionate resentment and dislike, which, most perfect purity and goodness have, of the sinfulness and miserable ruin of his own creatures.

In all which, we have a most unexceptionable idea of God, and may behold the comely con-

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

junction of his large goodness, strict righteousness, and most accurate wisdom all together: as we are also concerned, in making our estimate of his ways, to consider them; and not to take our measure of what is suitable to God, by considering him according to one single attribute only, but as they all are united, in his most perfect being; and in that blessed harmony, as not to infer with him a difficulty what to do, or what not. Which sometimes falls out with men, where there is an imperfect resemblance of those divine excellencies, not so exactly contempered together. As it was with that Spartan prince and general in Plutarch, when finding a necessity to march his army, and taking notice of one, for whom he had a peculiar kindness, that through extreme weakness was not possibly to be removed, he looked back upon him, expressing his sense of that exigency, in those emphatical words, how hard a matter is it at once *ἔλθειν καὶ φρονεῖν*, “to exercise pity and be wise!” God’s own word misrepresents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow ourselves to confer it with itself, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it, taken alone, import him so to have willed the happiness of men, for any end of his, that he resolved he would, by whatsoever means, certainly effect it: as we are wont, many times, with such eagerness to pursue ends upon which we are intent, as not to consider of right or wrong, fit or unfit, in our pursuit of them, and so let the cost of our means not seldom eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him, or was his part as our most benign, wise, and righteous Governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby; but that we should not do

so, through his omission of any thing, which it became him to do to prevent it.

SECT. XIX. It may therefore be of some use further to take notice, that a very diverse consideration must be had, of the ends which shall be effected by God's own action only, and of those which are to be brought about (in concurrence and subordination to his own) by the intervenient action of his creatures. Especially (which is more to our purpose) such of them as are intelligent, and capable of being governed by laws. As to the former sort of these ends, we may be confident they were all most absolutely intended, and can never fail of being accomplished. For the latter, it cannot be universally said so. For these being not entirely his ends, but partly his, and partly prescribed by him, to his reasonable creatures, to be theirs; we are to conceive he always, most absolutely, intends to do what he righteously esteems congruous should be his own part,—which he extends and limits as seems good unto him,—and sometimes, of his own good pleasure, assumes to himself the doing of so much, as shall ascertain the end; effectually procuring, that his creature shall do his part also. That is, he not only enacts his laws, and adds exhortations, warnings, promises, to enforce it, but also emits that effectual influence, whereby the inferior wheels shall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed creature excited and assisted, and (by a spirit in the wheels) made as the chariots of a willing people. At other times, and in other instances, he doth less, and meeting with resistance, sooner retires; follows not his external edicts and declarations, with so

potent and determinative an influence, but that the creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and so that end be not effected.

That the course of his economy towards men on earth is, *de facto*, ordered with this diversity, seems out of question. Manifest experience shows it. Some do sensibly perceive that motive influence, which others do not. The same persons, at some times, find not that, which at other times they do. His own word plainly asserts it: 'He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.' Where he will, he, in this respect, shows mercy; where he will, he hardeneth, or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we should be constrained to rase out a great part of the sacred volume, if we should not admit it to be so. And as the equity and fitness of his making such difference (when it appears he doth make it) cannot without profaneness be doubted, so it is evident, from what was before said, they are far removed from the reach and confines of any reasonable doubt; since he forsakes none, but being first forsaken. Nor have men any pretence to complain of subdalous dealing, or that they are surprisingly disappointed, and lurch'd of such help as they might have expected; inasmuch as this is so plainly extant in God's open manifests to the world, that he uses a certain arbitrariness, especially in the more exuberant dispensation of his grace; and is inserted to that purpose, that they may be cautioned not to neglect lower assistances; and warned, because he works to will and to do of his own pleasure, therefore to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.¹ Whereupon, elsewhere,

¹ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

after the most persuasive alluring invitations: 'Turn ye at my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit to you, I will make known my words to you,' it is presently subjoined: 'Because I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.'¹

From all which it is plainly to be understood, that the general strain and drift of God's external revelation of his mind to man, in his word, and the aspect of even those passages that can, with most colour, be thought to signify any thing further, do amount to nothing more than this, that he doth so far really will the salvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themselves; but not so as to effect it by that extraordinary exertion of power, which he thinks fit to employ upon some others.

Nor is it reasonably to be doubted, (such a will being all that can be pretended to be the visible meaning of the passages before noted,) whether there be such a will in God or no: and so somewhat really corresponding (the next thing promised to be discoursed) to the aspect and appearance hereof, which is offered to our view. For what should be the reason of the doubt? He, who best understands his own nature, having said of himself what imports no less; why should we make a difficulty to believe him? Nor indeed can any notices we have of the perfections of the divine nature be less liable to doubt, than what we have of his unchangeable veracy; whence, as it is impossi-

¹ Prov. i.

ble to him to lie, it must be necessary, that he be really willing of what he hath represented himself so to be. I must here profess my dislike of the terms of that common distinction, the *voluntas beneplaciti, et signi*, in this present case: under which, such as coined, and those that have much used it, have only rather, I doubt not, concealed a good meaning, than expressed by it an ill one. It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance the ignominious slander, which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God, and the course of his procedure towards men; and which it is the design of these papers to evince of as much absurdity and folly, as it is guilty of impiety and wickedness: as though he only intended to seem willing of what he really was not; that there was an appearance to which nothing did *subesse*. And then why is the latter called *voluntas*? unless the meaning be, he did only will the sign; which is false and impious; and if it were true, did he not will it with the will of good pleasure? And then the members of the distinction are confounded; or, as if the evil actions of men were more truly the objects of his good pleasure, than their forbearance of them. And of these faults the application of the distinction of God's secret will, and revealed, unto this case, though it be useful in many, is as guilty.

SECT. XX. The truth is, (unto which we must esteem ourselves obliged to adhere, both by our assent and defence,) that God doth really and complacentially will (and therefore doth with most unexceptionable sincerity declare himself to will) that to be done and enjoyed by many men, which he doth not, universally, will to make them do, or

irresistibly procure that they shall enjoy. Which is no harder assertion, than that the impure will of degenerate, sinful man, is opposite to the holy will of God; and the malignity of man's will to the benignity of his—no harder than that there is sin and misery in the world, which how can we conceive otherwise, than as a repugnancy to the good and acceptable will of God? Methinks it should not be difficult to us to acknowledge, that God doth truly, and with complacency, will whatsoever is the holy, righteous matter of his own laws. And if it should be with any a difficulty, I would only make this supposition, what if all the world were yet in innocency, yielding entire universal obedience to all the now extant laws of God, which have not reference to man as now fallen, (as those of repentance, faith in a Mediator, &c.) would it now be a doubt with any, whether God did truly and really will, and were pleased with, the holiness and righteousness which were every where to be found in the world? Surely we would not, in this case, imagine the creature's will more pure and holy than the divine; or that he were displeased with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again, suppose the world revolted, what then is that holy will of God changed? will we not say it remains the same holy will still, and stands the same rule of righteousness and duty that it was? Doth the change of his rebel creatures infer any with him? or do only the declarations of his former will remain to be their rule, and keep them still obliged, his will itself being become another from what it was? Surely he might as easily have changed his laws.

And if we say his will is changed, how should

we know it to be so? If we know it not, surely such a thing should not be said or thought. If we knew it, how should those yet extant laws and declarations continue to oblige, against the lawgiver's known will? And then the easy expedient to nullify the obligation of a law, that were thought too restrictive, were to disobey it. And men might, by sinning once, license themselves to do the same thing (though then we could not call it sinning) always; and so the creature's should be the supreme and ruling will; nor had it been a false suggestion, but a real truth, that man, by becoming a sinner, might make himself a god. Or, if it shall be thought fit to say, that the divine will would not, in that supposed case, be said to be changed; but only, that now the event makes it appear not to have been what we thought it was; that were to impute both impurity and dissimulation to the holy, blessed God, as his fixed attributes, and what we thought unfit, and should abhor, to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him for perpetuity.

SECT. XXI. And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we ascribe to God a liability to frustration and disappointment. That is without pretence; the resolve of the divine will, in this matter, being not concerning the event what man shall do, but concerning his duty what he should, and concerning the connexion between his duty and his happiness. Which we say he doth not only seem to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his prescience of the event, which we all this while assert, let frustration be so much as possible to him; especially, it being at

once foreseen, that his will, being crossed in this, would be fulfilled in so important a thing, as the preserving the decorum of his own government, which had been most apparently blemished, beyond what could consist with the perfections of the Deity, if either his will concerning men's duty, or the declarations of that will, had not been substantially the same that they are. We are, therefore, in assigning the object of this or that act of the divine will, to do it entirely, and to take the whole object together, without dividing it, as if the will of God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part (and especially if that be but a less considerable part) of the thing willed. In the present case, we are not to conceive that God only wills either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate. But, in the whole, the determination of God's will is, that man shall be duly governed, that is, congruously both to himself and him; that such and such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty, by his doing whereof, the dignity and honour of God's own government might be preserved, which was the thing principally to be designed, and in the first place; and, as what was secondary thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for. Therefore it being foreseen a violation would be done to the sacred rights of the divine government, by man's disobedience, it is resolved, they shall be repaired and maintained by other means. So that the divine will hath its effect, as to what was its more noble and principal design; the other part failing only by his default, whose is the loss.

And if yet it should be insisted, that in asserting

God to will what by his laws he hath made become man's duty, even where it is not done, we shall herein ascribe to him, at least, an ineffectual and an imperfect will, as which doth not bring to pass the thing willed; it is answered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the divine will, merely for its not effecting every thing, whereto it may have a real propension. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it should effect any thing, which it were less fit for him to effect, than not to effect it. The absolute perfection of his will stands in the proportion, which every act of it bears, to the importance of the things about which it is conversant: even as, with men, the perfection of any act of will is to be estimated, not by the mere peremptory sturdiness of it, but by its proportion to the goodness of the thing willed. Upon which account, a mere velleity (as many love to speak) when the degree of goodness in the object claims no more, hath unconceivably greater perfection in it, than the most obstinate volition. And since the event forbids us to admit that God did ever will the obedience and felicity of all, with such a will as should be effective thereof; if yet his plain word shall be acknowledged the measure of our belief, in this matter, which so plainly asserts him some way to will the salvation of all men, it is strange if, hereupon, we shall not admit rather of a will not-effective of the thing willed, than none at all.

The will of God is sufficiently to be vindicated from all imperfection, if we have sufficient reason for all the propensions and determinations of it, whether from the value of the things willed, or from his own sovereignty who wills them. In the

present case, we need not doubt to affirm, that the obedience and felicity of all men is of that value, as whereunto a propension of will, by only simple complacency, is proportionable. Yet, that his not procuring, as to all, (by such courses as he more extraordinarily takes with some,) that they shall, in event, obey and be happy, is upon so much more valuable reasons (as there will be further occasion to show ere long) as that, not to do it was more eligible, with the higher complacency of a determinative will. And since the public declarations of his good will, towards all men, import no more than the former, and do plainly import so much; their correspondency to the matter declared is sufficiently apparent. And so is the congruity of both with his prescience of the event. For though, when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part, (which it is most agreeable to his holy, gracious nature to do,) he foresee many will not be moved thereby; but persist in wilful neglect and rebellions 'till they perish; he, at the same time, sees that they might do otherwise, and that, if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them: his prescience no way imposing upon them a necessity to transgress. For they do it not because he foreknew it, but he only foreknew it because they would do so. And hence he had, as it was necessary he should have, not only this for the object of his foreknowledge, that they would do amiss and perish; but the whole case in its circumstances, that they would do so, not through his omission, but their own. And there had been no place left for this state of the case, if the public edicts and manifests had not

gone forth, in this tenour, as they have. So that the consideration of his prescience being taken in, gives us only, in the whole, this state of the case, that he foresaw men would not take that course which he truly declared himself willing they should (and was graciously ready to assist them in it) in order to their own well-being. Whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

SECT. XXII. Nor (as we also undertook to show) could any course (within our prospect) have been taken, that was fit, in itself, and more agreeable to sincerity. There are only these two ways to be thought on besides; either, that God should wholly have forborne to make overtures to men in common; or, that he should efficaciously have overpowered all into a compliance with them. And there is little doubt, but upon sober consideration, both of these will be judged altogether unfit. The former, inasmuch as it had been most disagreeable—to the exact measures of his government, to let a race of sinful creatures persist, through many successive ages, in apostacy and rebellion, when the characters of that law, first written in man's heart, were in so great a measure outworn, and become illegible, without renewing the impression in another way, and re-asserting his right and authority, as their ruler and Lord;—to the holiness of his nature, not to send into the world such a declaration of his will, as might be a standing testimony against the impurity whereinto it was lapsed;—to the goodness of it, not to make known upon what terms, and for whose sake, he was reconcileable; and—to the truth of the thing, since he

really had such kind propensions towards men in common, not to make them known:—that it had, itself, been more liable to the charge of insincerity, to have concealed from men what was real truth, and of so much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing them, but act his own nature; the goodness whereof is no more lessened, by men's refusal of its offers, than his truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its assertions: besides the great use such an extant revelation of the way of recovery was to be of, to those that should obediently comply with it, even after they should be won so to do.

SECT. XXIII. And the latter we may also apprehend very unfit too; though, because that is less obvious, it requires to be more largely insisted on. For it would seem that if we do not effect any thing which we have a real will unto, it must proceed from impotency, and that we cannot do it; which, who would say of the great God? Herein, therefore, we shall proceed by steps, and gradually offer the things that follow to consideration.

As, that it were indeed most repugnant to the notion of a deity, to suppose any thing, which includes in it no contradiction impossible to God, considered according to that single attribute of power only. But yet we must add, that this were a very unequal way of estimating what God can do, that is, to consider him as a mere being of power. For the notion of God so conceived, were very inadequate to him, which taken entirely, imports the comprehension of all perfections. So that they are two very distant questions,—What the power of God alone could do? and—What

God can do? And whereas to the former the answer would be,—whatsoever is not in itself repugnant to be done; to the latter, it must only be,—whatsoever it becomes or is agreeable to a being every way perfect to do. And so it is to be attributed to the excellency of his nature, if, amongst all things not simply impossible, there be any which it may be truly said he cannot do. Or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his power, but from the concurrence of all other perfections in him. Hence his own word plainly affirms of him that he cannot lie. And by common consent it will be acknowledged, that he cannot do any unjust act whatsoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common suffrage (when the matter is considered) subjoin, that his wisdom doth as much limit the exercise of his power, as his righteousness or his truth doth; and that it may, with as much confidence and clearness, be said and understood, that he cannot do an unwise or imprudent act as an unjust. Further, that as his righteousness corresponds to the justice of things, to be done or not done, so doth his wisdom to the congruity or fitness. So that he cannot do what it is unfit for him to do, because he is wise; and because he is most perfectly and infinitely wise, therefore nothing that is less fit. But whatsoever is fittest, when a comparison is made between doing this or that, or between doing and not doing, that the perfection of his nature renders necessary to him, and the opposite part impossible. Again, that this measure must be understood to have a very large and most general extent unto all the affairs of his government, the object it concerns being so very large. We, in our

observation, may take notice, that fewer questions can occur concerning what is right or wrong, than what is fit or unfit. And whereas any man may in a moment be honest, if he have a mind to it; very few (and that by long experience) can ever attain to be wise. The things about which justice is conversant being reducible to certain rules, but wisdom supposes very general knowledge of things scarce capable of such reduction. It is, besides, the primary requisite, in any one that bears rule over others: and must therefore most eminently influence all the managements of the Supreme Ruler.

SECT. XXIV. It is moreover to be considered, that innumerable congruities lie open to the Infinite Wisdom, which are never obvious to our view or thought: as, to a well-studied scholar, thousands of coherent notions, which an illiterate person never thought of; to a practised courtier, or well-educated gentleman, many decencies and indecencies, in the matter of civil behaviour and conversation, which an unbred rustic knows nothing of; and to an experienced statesman, those importancies, which never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough. What government is there that hath not its arcana, profound mysteries and reasons of state, that a vulgar wit cannot dive into? And from whence, the account to be given, why this or that is done or not done, is not, always, that it would have been unjust it should be otherwise, but it had been imprudent. And many things are, hereupon, judged necessary not from the exigency of justice, but reason of state. Whereupon men of modest and sober

minds, that have had experience of the wisdom of their governors and their happy conduct, through a considerable tract of time; when they see things done by them, the leading reasons whereof they do not understand, and the effect and success comes not yet in view, suspend their censure, while as yet all seems to them obscure, and wrapt up in clouds and darkness; yea though the course that is taken have, to their apprehension, an ill aspect; accounting it becomes them not, to make a judgment of things so far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wisdom of their rulers, who, they believe, see reasons for what they do, into which they find themselves unable to penetrate. With how much more submissive and humble veneration, ought the methods of the Divine government to be beheld and adored, upon the certain assurance we have, that all things therein are managed by that wisdom, which could never in any thing mistake its way! Whereas, there was never any continued administration of human government so accurate and exact, but that after some tract of time, some or other errors might be reflected on therein.

Again, it may further be said, without presuming beyond due bounds, that though infinite congruities must be supposed to lie open to the divine understanding, which are concealed from ours, yet that these two things in the general are very manifestly congruous to any sober attentive mind, that directly concern, or may be applied to the case under our present consideration, viz. That the course of God's government over the world, be, for the most part, steady and uniform, not interrupted by very frequent, extraordinary, and anomalous

actions; and again, That he use a royal liberty, of stepping out of his usual course, sometimes, as he sees meet. It cannot but appear to such as attend, highly incongruous, should we affirm the antithesis to either of these; or lay down counterpositions to them, and suppose the course of the Divine government to be managed agreeably thereunto.

SECT. XXV. For, as to the former; what confusion would it make in the world, if there should be perpetual innovations upon nature—continual or exceeding frequent impeditions, and restraints of second causes. In the sphere of nature, the virtues and proper qualities of things, being never certain, could never be understood, or known. In that of policy, no measures, so much as probable, could ever be taken. How much better is it, in both, that second causes ordinarily follow their inclinations! And why is it not to be thought congruous, that, in some degree, things should be proportionally so, in the sphere of grace? whereto, by and by, we shall speak more directly. We pray, when our friends are sick, for their recovery. What can be the sober meaning and design of such prayers? Not that God would work a miracle for their restitution, (for then we might as well pray for their revival after death,) but, that God would be pleased so to co-operate, in the still and silent way of nature, with second causes, and so bless means, that they may be recovered, if he see good: otherwise that they and we may be prepared to undergo his pleasure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our prayers, in reference to the public affairs, and better posture of the world.

And we may take notice, the Divine wisdom lays a very great stress upon this matter, the preserving of the common order of things; and cannot but observe a certain inflexibleness of Providence herein; and that it is very little apt to divert from its wonted course. At which weak minds are apt to take offence: to wonder, that against so many prayers and tears God will let a good man die, or one whom they love; or that a miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wronged at any time; or, that the earth doth not open and swallow up the person that hath done them wrong: are apt to call for fire from heaven, upon them that are otherwise minded, and do otherwise than they would have them. But a judicious person would consider, if it be so highly reasonable that my desires should be complied with so extraordinarily, then why not all men's? And then were the world filled with prodigies and confusion. The inconveniences would soon be to all equally discernible and intolerable; (as the heathen poet takes notice, should Jupiter's ear be over-easy;) yea, and the impossibility were obvious of gratifying all, because of their many counter-desires.

And for the other; it were no less incongruous, if the Supreme Power should so tie its own hands, and be so astricted to rules and methods, as never to do any thing extraordinary, upon never so important occasion. How ill could the world have wanted such an effort of omnipotency, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! or the miracles wrought in our Saviour's and the next following days! Such things are never done, but when the all-comprehending wisdom sees it most congruous;

and that the cause will over-recompense the deflection from the common course. If no such thing did ever fall out, what a temptation were it to mankind, to introduce into their belief an unintelligent fate instead of a Deity! Besides that the convincing testimony were wanting, which we see is so necessary for the confirmation of any particular revelation from God, which comes not within the compass of nature's discovery, (upon which account also, it is as apparently necessary such extraordinary works should not be over-frequent, for then they become ordinary, and useless to that special end,) so that here the exertions both of the ordinate and absolute power of God (as some distinguish) have their so appropriate, and so visibly apt and congruous, uses, that they are discernible to a very ordinary understanding, how much more to the infinite wisdom of God!

SECT. XXVI. Now hereupon we say further, there is the like congruity, upon as valuable (though not altogether the same) reasons that, in the affairs of grace, there be somewhat correspondent; that, ordinarily, it be sought and expected, in the use of ordinary means; and that, sometimes, its sovereignty show itself in preventing exertions, and in working so heroically, as none have, beforehand, in the neglect of its ordinary methods, any reason to expect. And we may fitly add, that where sovereignty is pleased thus to have its exercise and demonstrate itself, it is sufficient that there be a general congruity, that it do so sometimes, as an antecedent reason to the doing of some such extraordinary things; but that there should be a particular, leading congruity or ante-

cedent reason, to invite those extraordinary operations of grace to one person more than another, is not necessary. But it is most congruous, that, herein, it be most arbitrary; most agreeable to the supremacy of God; to the state of sinful man, who hath infinitely disoblged him, and can deserve nothing from him; yea, and even to the nature of the thing. For, where there is a parity, in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reason to this, rather than that. The most prudent man, that is wont to guide himself by never so exquisite wisdom, in his daily actions, where there is a perfect indifferency between doing this thing or that, is not liable to censure, that he is not able to give a reason why he did that, not the other: wisdom hath no exercise in that case.

But that the blessed God doth ordinarily proceed in these affairs, by a steady rule, and sometimes show his liberty of departing from it, is to be resolved into his infinite wisdom, it being, in itself, most fit he should do both the one and the other; and therefore to him most necessary. Whereupon, the great apostle, St. Paul, discoursing upon this subject, doth not resolve the matter into strict justice, nor absolute sovereignty; (both which have their place too, in his proceedings with men, as the sacred writings do abundantly testify;) but we find him in a transport, in the contemplation of the Divine wisdom, that herein so eminently shines forth: O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!¹

¹ Rom. xi. 33. See to the same purpose, ch. xvi. 25, 26, 27; and Eph. i. 5, 6, 7, with the 8th.

SECT. XXVII. To sum up all, we conclude it obvious to the apprehension of such as consider, that it was more congruous the general course of God's government over man should be by moral instruments. And howsoever it were very unreasonable to imagine, that God cannot in any case extraordinarily overway the inclinations, and determine the will of such a creature, in a way agreeable enough to its nature, (though we particularly know not, as we are not concerned to know, or curiously to inquire in what way,) and highly reasonable to admit that in many cases he doth; it is notwithstanding manifest, to any sober reason, that it were very incongruous, this should be the ordinary course of his conduct towards mankind, or the same persons at all times. That is, that a whole order of intelligent creatures should be moved only by inward impulses; that God's precepts, promises, and comminations, whereof their nature is capable, should be all made impertinencies, through his constant overpowering those that should neglect them; that the faculties, whereby men are capable of moral government, should be rendered, to this purpose, useless and vain; and that they should be tempted to expect to be constantly managed as mere machines, that know not their own use.

Nor is it less apprehensible, how incongruous it were also, on the other hand, to suppose that the exterior frame of God's government should be totally unaccompanied with an internal vital energy: or exclude the inward motions, operations, and influences, whereof such a creature is also fitly capable; or that God should have barred out himself from all inward access to the spirits of men, or commerce with them: that the supreme, universal,

paternal mind (as a heathen called it) should have no way for efficacious communications to his own offspring, when he pleases; that so (unsuitably to sovereignty) he should have no objects of special favour, or no peculiar ways of expressing it. It is manifestly congruous that the Divine government over man, should be (as it is) mixed or composed of an external frame of laws, with their proper sanctions and enforcements, and an internal effusion of power and vital influence, correspondent to the several parts of that frame; and which might animate the whole, and use it, as instrumental, to the begetting of correspondent impressions on men's spirits:—that this power be put forth, not like that of a natural agent, *ad ultimum*, (which if we would suppose the Divine power to be, new worlds must be springing up every moment,) but gradually, and with an apt contemperation to the subject, upon which it is designed; to have its operations and withal arbitrarily, as is becoming the great Agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it therefore belongs to measure its exertions, as seems meet unto him:—that it be constantly put forth (though most gratuitously, especially the disobligation of the apostacy being considered) upon all to that degree, as that they be enabled to do much good, to which they are not impelled by it:—that it be ever ready (since it is the power of grace) to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, wheresoever any former issues of it have been duly complied with. Though it be so little supposable that man should hereby have obliged God thereto, that he hath not any way obliged himself, otherwise, than that he hath implied a readiness to impart unto man what shall be neces-

sary to enable him to obey, so far as, upon the apostacy, is requisite to his relief; if he seriously endeavour to do his own part, by the power he already hath received: agreeably to the common saying, *homini facienti quod in se est, &c.* That, according to the royal liberty wherewith it works, it go forth, as to some, with that efficacy, as notwithstanding whatever resistance yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Christ.

SECT. XXVIII. The universal, continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be sure, been willed with a peremptory, efficacious will if it had been best. That is, if it had not been less congruous than to keep them some time (under the expectation of future confirmation and reward) upon trial of their fidelity, and in a state wherein it might not be impossible to them to make a defection. And so it had easily been prevented, that ever there should have been an apostacy from God, or any sin in the world. Nor was it either less easy, by a mighty irresistible hand, universally to expel sin, than prevent it; or more necessary or more to be expected from him. But if God's taking no such course, tended to render his government over the world more august and awful for the present, and the result and final issue of all things more glorious at length, and were consequently more congruous; that could not be so willed, as to be effectually procured by him. For whatsoever obligation strict justice hath upon us, that congruity cannot but have upon him. And whereas it would be concluded, that whatsoever any one truly wills, they would effect if they

could, we admit it for true, and to be applied in the present case; but add, that as we rightly esteem that impossible to us which we cannot justly do, so is that to him, not only which he cannot do justly, but which, upon the whole matter, he cannot do most wisely also; that is, which his infinite wisdom doth not dictate is most congruous and fit to be done.

Things cohere and are held together, in the course of his dispensation, by congruities as by adamantine bands, and cannot be otherwise. That is, comparing and taking things together, especially the most important. For otherwise, to have been nicely curious about every minute thing, singly considered, that it might not possibly have been better, (as in the frame of this or that individual animal or the like,) had been needlessly to interrupt the course of nature, and therefore, itself, to him an incongruity; and doth, in them that expect it, import more of a trifling disposition than of true wisdom. But to him whose being is most absolutely perfect, to do that which, all things considered, would be simply best, i. e. most becoming him, most honourable and Godlike, is absolutely necessary; and consequently, it is to be attributed to his infinite perfection, that, unto him, to do otherwise is absolutely impossible. And if we yet see not all these congruities which to him are more than a law, it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent judge. Yet, moreover, it is finally to be considered, that the methods of the Divine government are, besides his, to be exposed to the view and judgment of other intellects than our own, and we expect they should to our own, in another state.

What conception thereof is already received and formed in our minds, is but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is.

It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements and ways of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, should be attempered and fitted to the judgment that shall be made of them in this temporary state, that will so soon be over, and to the present apprehension and capacity of our now so muddled and distempered minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair and comely to angelical minds; and to our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. What discovery God affords of his own glorious excellencies and perfections, is principally intended to recommend him in that state wherein he, and all his ways and works, are to be beheld with everlasting and most complacential approbation. Therefore, though now we should covet the clearest and most satisfying account of things that can be had, we are yet to exercise patience, and not precipitate our judgment of them before the time: as knowing our present conceptions will differ more from what they will be hereafter, than those of a child from the maturer thoughts of the wisest man; and that many of our conceits, which we thought wise, we shall then see cause to put away as childish things.

The disorder, Sir, of this heap rather than frame of thoughts and discourse, as it cannot be thought more unsuitable to the subject than suitable to the author; and the less displeasè, by how much it could less be expected to be otherwise, from him, even in the best circumstances; so it may lay some claim to your easier pardon, as having been mostly huddled up in the intervals of a troublesome, long journey; wherein he was rather willing to take what opportunity the inconveniences and hurry of it could allow him, than neglect any, of using the earliest endeavour to approve himself, as he is your great admirer,

Most honoured Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

H. W.

A POSTSCRIPT

TO THE LATE LETTER.

FINDING that this discourse of the 'Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, &c.' hath been misunderstood and misrepresented; I think it requisite to say somewhat briefly in reference thereto. I wrote it upon the motion of that honourable gentleman to whom it is inscribed; who apprehended somewhat of that kind might be of use to render our religion less exceptionable to some persons of an inquiring disposition, that might perhaps be too sceptical and pendulous, if not prejudiced. Having finished it, I thought it best the author's name should pass under some disguise, supposing it might so better serve its end: for knowing my name could not give the cause an advantage, I was not willing it should be in a possibility of making it incur any disadvantage. And therefore, as I have observed some in such cases, to make use only of the two last letters, I imitated some other, in the choice of

the penultimate. But perceiving that discourse now to fall under animadversion, I reckon it becoming to be no longer concealed. It was unavoidable to me, if I would, upon reasonable terms, apply myself to the consideration of the matter I had undertaken, of showing the consistency of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the preventive methods we find him to have used against them, to express somewhat of my sense of (what I well knew to have been asserted by divers schoolmen) God's predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men also. For it had been (any one may see) very idle and ludicrous trifling, to offer at reconciling those methods with God's prescience, and have waved that manifestly greater difficulty, of reconciling them with his predeterminative concurrence, if I had thought there had been such a thing; and were a like case, as if a chirurgeon, undertaking a wounded person, should apply himself, with a great deal of diligence and address, to the cure of a finger slightly scratched, and totally neglect a wound feared to be mortal in his breast.

And whereas I reckoned God's prescience of all whatsoever futurities, and consequently of the sins of men, most certain and demonstrable, (though it was not the business of this discourse to demonstrate it, but supposing it, to show its reconcileableness with what it seemed not so well to agree with,) if I had believed his predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men to be as certain: perfect despair of being able to say any thing to purpose in this case, had made me resolve to say nothing in either. For, to show how it might stand with the wisdom and sincerity of the blessed God, to counsel men not to sin, to profess his hatred and detes-

tation of it, to remonstrate to men the great danger they should incur by it; with so great appearance of seriousness to exhort, warn, expostulate with them concerning it; express his great displeasure and grief for their sinning, and consequent miseries; and yet all the while act them on thereto, by a secret, but mighty and irresistible, influence,—seemed to me an utterly hopeless and impossible undertaking;—the other, without this, (supposing, as to this, the case to have been as some have thought it,) a very vain one. But being well assured, that what seemed the greater difficulty, and to carry most of terror and affright in the face of it, was only a chimera, I reckoned the other very superable; and therefore directed my discourse thither, according to the first design of it, which was in effect but to justify God's making such a creature as man, and governing him agreeably to his nature.

Now judging it requisite, that he who should read that discourse concerning this designed subject with any advantage, should have the same thoughts of the other, which was waved, that I had; I apprehended it necessary to communicate those thoughts concerning that, as I did. Not operosely, and as my business, but only on the bye, and as was fit in reference to a thing that was to be waved, and not insisted on. Now I perceive that some persons, who had formerly entertained that strange opinion of God's predeterminative concurrence to the wickedest actions, and not purged their minds of it, have been offended with that letter, for not expressing more respect unto it; and yet offered nothing themselves, (which to me seems exceeding strange,) for the solving of that great difficulty and

encumbrance, which it infers upon our religion. Nor do I much wonder, that this opinion of pre-determinative concurrence to sinful actions, should have some stiff adherents among ourselves. For having been entertained by certain Dominicans, that were apprehended in some things to approach nearer us than others to the Roman church, it came to receive favour and countenance from some of our own, of considerable note for piety and learning, whose name and authority cannot but be expected to have much influence on the minds of many. But I somewhat wonder, that they who have had no kindness for this letter, upon the account of its dissent from them, in this particular, should not allow it common justice. For, because it hath not said every thing they would have had it say, and that would have been grateful to themselves, they impute to it the having said what it said not, and what they apprehended would be most ungrateful to all pious and sober men. The sum is, they give out concerning it, that it denies the providence of God about sin, which all good men ought to abhor from; and insinuate that it falls in with the sentiments of Durandus, which they know many think not well of.

All that I intend to do, for the present, upon this occasion, shall be to show wherein the letter is misrepresented, and charged with what it hath not in it; to remark what is said against that supposed sense of it, and give the true sense of what it says touching this matter, with a further account of the author's mind herein than it was thought fit to insert into so transient and occasional a discourse as that part of the letter was; whereby it may be seen, wherein he agrees with those of that

opposite persuasion, and what the very point of difference is. Further than this, I yet intend not to go, till I see further need. There have two discourses come to my view that have referred to that letter. The one in manuscript only; which, because it is uncertain to me whether the reputed author of it will own it or no, and because it says little or nothing, by way of argument, against the true sense of the letter, I shall take no further present notice of. The other is printed, and offers at somewhat of argument, which therefore I shall more attentively consider. It doth this letter an honour, whereof its author never had the least ambition or expectation, to insert the mention of it into the close of a very learned, elaborate work;¹ with which it might, yet, easily be imagined, its simplicity, and remoteness from any pretence to learning, would so ill agree, that a quarrel could not but ensue. It is from one, who having spent a great part of his time in travelling through some regions of literature, and been peaceable, as far as I have understood, in his travels, it might have been hoped would have let this pamphlet alone; when, for what I can observe, he finds no fault with it but what he makes, and is fain to accuse it of what is no where to be found in it, lest it should be innocent.

It is an unaccountable pleasure which men of some humours take, in depraving what is done by others, when there is nothing attempted that doth interfere with them; nothing that can, righteously, be understood to cross any good end, which they more openly pretend to, nor the more concealed

¹ Court of the Gentiles, part ii. page 522.

end (if they have any such) of their own glory. Common edification seems less designed, when every thing must be thrown down which is not built by their own hands, or by their own line and measure. I plead nothing of merit in this little essay; only I say for it, that I know not what it can be guilty of towards this learned man, that can have occasioned this assault upon it by his pen. By how much the less it keeps his road, the more I might have thought it out of the way of his notice. I am sure it meant him no harm, nor had any design to pilfer from him any part of his collections. But he says, he may not let it pass. Then there is no remedy. But I wonder what he should mean by he may not. It must either mean, that he thought it unlawful to let it pass, or that he had a mighty strong and irresistible inclination to squabble a little with it. The former cannot be imagined. For then, for the same reason, he would have attempted sundry others of former and later days, that have said much to the purpose, which this letter doth but touch *obiter*, and on the bye, in its way to another design. But those were giants, whom it was not so safe to meddle with: therefore he could very wisely let them pass, though they have wounded his beloved cause, beyond all that it is in the power of his (or any) art to cure. Whence it is consequent, that the whole business must be resolved into the latter. And this inclination cannot but owe itself to some peculiar aspect and reference he had to the author; whom, though he was in *incognito*, yet (as I have been informed) he professes to have discoursed with upon the same subject many times. And so, therefore, he might once more, before this public

rencounter, if he had thought fit, and nature could have been repelled awhile.

It is true, he hath found me not facile to entertain his sentiments in this matter. And, indeed, I have deeply dreaded the portentous imaginations which I found had more lightly tintured his mind, as to this thing, concerning the blessed God; than which, upon deliberation, I do believe, no human wit can ever devise worse; as I have often freely told divers of my friends, and it is very likely, among them, himself. Though I do not suspect the contagion to have infected his vitals; by a privilege, vouchsafed to some, that they may possibly drink some deadly thing that shall not hurt them. But why must an impatience of this dissent break out into so vindictive an hostility? I will not say I expected more friendly dealing; for, as I do well know it was very possible such a public contest might have been managed with that candour and fairness, as not at all to entrench upon friendship; so, as it is, I need not own so much weakness, as upon many years' experience, not to be able to distinguish and understand, there are some tempers less capable of the ingenuities that belong to that pleasant relation. But it was only a charitable error, of which I repent not, that I expected a more righteous dealing.

He pretends to give my sense in other words, and then gravely falls to combating his own man of straw, which he will have represent me; and so I am to be tortured in effigy. It can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature which should be capable of acting without immediate concurrence. This he puts in a different character, as if I had said so much. And

why might not my own words be allowed to speak my own sense, but that his understanding and eyes must then have conspired to tell him, that the sense would have been quite another? It is a predeterminative concurrence to all actions, even those that are most malignantly wicked, and again, God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions, which is the only thing I speak of; as what I cannot reconcile with the wisdom and sincerity of his councils and exhortations against such such actions. And if he had designed to serve any common good end, in this undertaking of his, why did he not attempt to reconcile them himself? But the wisdom and sincerity of God are thought fit (as it would seem) to be sacrificed to the reputation of his more peculiarly admired schoolmen. If there be such a universal determination, by an irresistible divine influence, to all even the wickedest actions, (which God forbid!) methinks such a difficulty should not be so easily passed over. And surely the reconciling such a determinative influence, with the Divine wisdom and sincerity, had been a performance worth all his learned labours besides, and of greater service to the Christian name and honour.

But it seems the denying concurrence by such predetermining influence, is the denying of all immediate concurrence. And I am sent to the Thomists, Scotists, Jesuits, and Suarez more especially, to be taught otherwise; as if all these were for determinative concourse; which is very pleasant, when the very heads of the two first-mentioned sects were against it, as we shall see further anon; the third generally, and Suarez particularly, whom he names, have so industriously and strongly

opposed it. Yea, and because I assent not to the doctrine of predeterminative concurrence, I am represented (which was the last spite that was to be done me) as a favourer of the hypotheses of Durandus. And he might as truly have said of Henry Nicholas, but not so prudently, because he knows whose opinions have a nearer alliance to that family. Now I heartily wish I had a ground for so much charity towards him, as to suppose him ignorant that immediate concurrence, and determinative, are not wont to be used by the schoolmen, in this controversy, as terms of the same signification. If he do himself think them to be all one, what warrant is that to him to give the same for my sense; when it is so well known they are not commonly so taken, and that determinative concurrence is so voluminously written against, where immediate is expressly asserted? Let him but soberly tell me, what his design was, to dash out the word *determining* from what he recites of that letter, and put in *immediate*, which he knows is not to be found in any of the places he refers to in it. Or what was the spring of that confidence that made him intimate the Scotists, Thomists, the Jesuits, and particularly Suarez, to be against what is said in the letter, in this thing? If he could procure all the books in the world to be burnt, besides those in his own library, he would yet have a hard task to make it be believed in the next age, that all these were for God's efficacious determination of the wills of men unto wicked actions.

I need not, after all this, concern myself as to what he says about the *no medium* between the extremes of his disjunctive proposition. Either the human will must depend upon the divine inde-

pendent will of God, &c. (as he phrases it in the excess of his caution, lest any should think the will of God was not a divine will,) or God must depend on the human will, &c.; unless he can show that the human will cannot be said to depend on the divine, as being enabled by it, except it be also determined and impelled by it to every wicked action. A created being that was entirely from God, with all the powers and faculties which belong to it; that hath its continual subsistence in him, and all those powers continued and maintained by his influence every moment; that hath those powers made habile, and apt for whatsoever its most natural motions and operations, by a suitable influence whensoever it moves or operates: can this creature be said not to depend, as to all its motions and operations, unless it be also unavoidably impelled to do every thing to which it is thus sufficiently enabled?

I again say, was it impossible to God to make such a creature that can, in this case, act or not act? It is here oddly enough said, that the author gives no demonstration hereof. Of what? Why, that it can never be proved (as the reference to the foregoing word shows) that it implies a contradiction, &c. It seems, it was expected that author should have proved by demonstration, that it can never be proved that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting (as he feigns him to have said) without immediate concurrence. By what rule of reasoning was he obliged to do so? But if the proving there is such a creature, as, in the case before expressed, can act without determinative concurrence, will serve turn to prove that it cannot be proved it

implies a contradiction there should be such a one, I may think the thing was done; and may think it sufficiently proved, that there is such a creature; if it appear (whereof there is too much proof) that there are such actions done by creatures, as, for the reasons that were before alleged, it could not stand with the nature of God to determine them unto. And was nothing said tending to prove this, that it could not consist with the nature of God to determine men unto all the wicked actions they commit? It seems unless it were put into mood and figure, it is no proof. Nor was it the design of those papers to insist upon that subject; but there are things suggested *in transitu*, as such a discourse could admit, that, whether they are demonstrative or no, would puzzle a considering person:—that God should have as much influence and concurrence to the worst actions as to the best; as much or more than the sinner or the tempter: that the matter of his laws to Adam, and his posterity, should be a natural impossibility: and, I now add, the irreconcilableness of that determination, with God's wisdom and sincerity, &c. These I shall reckon demonstrations, till I see them well answered.

However, if mine were a bad opinion, why was it not as confutable without the mention of Durandus? But that was, with him, an odious name; and fit, therefore, to impress the brand which he desired I should wear for his sake. This is a likely way to clear the truth! Yet if it serve not one design, it will another, he thinks, upon which he was more intent. Are all for Durandus's way that are against a predeterminative influence to wicked actions? I could tell him who have shown more

strength in arguing against Durandus than I find in all his arguments, who yet have written, too, against determinative concourse to such actions, more than ever he will be able to answer, or any man. The truth is, when I wrote that letter, I had never seen Durandus; nor indeed did I consult any book for the writing of it, (as I had not opportunity, if I had been so inclined,) except, upon some occasions, the Bible: not apprehending it necessary to number votes, and consider how many men's thoughts were one way, and of how many the other, before I would adventure to think any of my own. But I have this day, upon the view of his animadversions, taken a view of Durandus too: and really cannot yet guess what should tempt him to parallel my conceptions with Durandus's, but that he took his for somewhat an ill-favoured name. Durandus flatly, in several places, denies God's immediate concourse to the actions of the creatures;¹ which I never said nor thought; but do really believe his immediate concourse to all actions of his creatures, both *immediatione virtutis* and *suppositi*, (that I may more comply with his scholastic humour, in the use of such terms, than gratify my own,) yet not determinative unto wicked actions.

Again, Durandus denies immediate concourse, universally, and upon such a ground as whereupon the denial must equally extend to good actions as to bad; viz. that it is impossible the same numerical action should be from two or more agents immediately and perfectly, except the same numerical virtue should be in each; but he says the same numerical virtue cannot be in God and in the creature, &c.² Whereas he well knows the con-

¹ L. ii. Disc. 1. Q. 5. D. 37. Q. 1. ² Disc. 1, 2, 5, ut supr.

course or influence (for I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these two terms, as some do) which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be determinative as to those which are wicked. Yea, and the authors he quotes,¹ Aquinas and Scotus, though every body may know they are against what was the notion of Durandus, yet are as much against himself, if he will directly oppose that letter, and assert determinative concurrence to wicked actions. They held immediate concurrence, not determinative. The former, though he supposes divine help in reference to the elections of the human will, yet asserts the elections themselves to be in man's own power, and only says that in the executions of those elections men can be hindered; that (whatsoever influence he asserts of the first cause) men still, *habent se indifferenter ad benè vel malè eligendum.*² The other, though he also excludes not the immediate efficacy of God in reference to the actions of men, yet is so far from making it determinative, that the reason he gives why, in evil actions, man sins and God does not, is that the one of those causes *posset rectitudinem dare actui quam tenetur dare: et tamen non dat. Alia autem, licèt non teneatur eam dare: tamen quantum est ex se daret, si voluntas creata cooperaretur;*³ in the very place which himself refers to: wherein they differ from this author *toto cælo*, and from me, in that they make not determinative influence necessary in reference to good actions, which I expressly do.

Thus far it may be seen what pretence or colour he had to make my opinion the same with Durandus's, or his own the same with that of Thomas

¹ Sect. xi.² 1 Q. 83.³ L. iii. Disc. 27. Q. 2.

and Scotus. But if he knew in what esteem I have the schoolmen, he would hardly believe me likely to step one foot out of my way, either to gain the reputation of any of their names, or avoid the disreputation. He, notwithstanding, supposed his own reputation to be so good (and I know no reason why he might not suppose so) as to make it be believed I was any thing he pleased to call me, by such as had not opportunity to be otherwise informed. And thus I would take leave of him, and permit him to use his own reflections upon his usage of me, at his own leisure; but that civility bids me (since he is pleased to be at the pains of catechising me) first to give some answer to the questions wherein he thus expostulates with me.

Q. 1. Whether there be any action of man on earth so good, which hath not some mixture of sin in it? And if God concur to the substrate matter of it as good, must he not necessarily concur to the substrate matter as sinful? For is not the substrate matter of the act, both as good and sinful, the same?

A. 1. It seems, then, that God doth concur to the matter of an action as sinful. Which is honestly acknowledged, since by his principles it cannot be denied; though most of his way mince the business, and say the concurrence is only to the action which is sinful, not as sinful.

2. This I am to consider as an argument for God's predeterminative concurrence to wicked actions; and thus it must be conceived, that if God concur by determinative influence to the imperfectly good actions of faith, repentance, love to himself, prayer; therefore to the acts of enmity against himself, cursing, idolatry, blasphemy, &c. And is it not a mighty consequence? If to ac-

tions that are good *quoad substantiam*, therefore to such as are in the substance of them evil? We ourselves can, in a remoter kind, concur to the actions of others: because you may afford, yourself, your leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, therefore may you to them that are downright evil? because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing? and then ruin men for the actions you induced them to? You will say, God may rather, but sure he can much less do so than you. How could you be serious in the proposal of this question?

We are at a loss how it should consist with the divine wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth, to design the punishing man, yet innocent, with everlasting torments, for actions which God, himself, would irresistibly move him to; whereas his making a covenant with Adam in reference to himself and his posterity, implied there was a possibility it might be kept; at least that he would not make the keeping of it, by his own positive influence, impossible. And you say, if he might concur to the substrate matter of an action as good, which tends to man's salvation and blessedness, he must necessarily concur (and that by an irresistible determinative influence, else you say nothing to me) to the substrate matter of all their evil actions, as evil, which tend to their ruin and misery, brought upon them by the actions which God makes them do. I suppose St. Luke, vi. 9, with Hos. xiii. 9, show a difference. If you therefore ask me, why I should not admit this consequence? I say it needs no other answer, than that I take wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth, to belong more to the idea of God, than their contraries.

Q. 2. Is there any action so sinful that hath not some natural good as the substrate matter thereof?

A. True. And what shall be inferred? That therefore God must, by a determinative influence, produce every such action whatsoever reason there be against it? You might better argue thence the necessity of his producing every hour, a new world; in which there would be a great deal more of positive entity, and natural goodness. Certainly, the natural goodness that is in the entity of an action, is no such invitation to the holy God, by determinative influence to produce it, as that he should offer violence to his own nature, and stain the justice and honour of his government, by making it be done, and then punish it being done.

Q. 3. Do we not cut off the most illustrious part of divine providence in governing the lower world, &c.?

A. What? by denying that it is the stated way of God's government, to urge men, irresistibly, to all that wickedness for which he will afterwards punish them with everlasting torments? I should least of all ever have expected such a question to this purpose, and am ashamed further to answer it. Only name any act of providence I hereby deny, if you can. In the next place, that my sense may appear in my own words; and that I may show how far I am of the same mind with those that apprehend me at so vast a distance from them, and where, if they go further, our parting point must be; I shall set down the particulars of my agreement with them, and do it in no other heads than they might have collected, if they had pleased, out of that letter. As,

1. That God exerciseth a universal providence about all his creatures, both in sustaining and governing them.

2. That, more particularly, he exerciseth such a providence about man.

3. That this providence about man extends to all the actions of all men.

4. That it consists not alone in beholding the actions of men, as if he were a mere spectator of them only, but is positively active about them.

5. That this active providence of God about all the actions of men consists not merely in giving them the natural powers, whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers.

6. That this influence is in reference to holy and spiritual actions (whereto since the apostacy the nature of man is become viciously disinclined) necessary to be efficaciously determinative; such as shall overcome that disinclination, and reduce those powers into act.

7. That the ordinary, appointed way for the communication of this determinative influence, is by our intervening consideration of the inducements which God represents to us in his word, viz. the precepts, promises, and comminations, which are the moral instruments of his government. No doubt but he may (as is intimated in the letter) extraordinarily act men in some rarer cases, by inward impulse, without the help of such external means, as he did prophets or inspired persons; and when he hath done so, we were not to think he treated them unagreeably to their natures, or so as their natures could not, without violence, admit. But it hath been the care and designment of the

divine wisdom, so to order the way of dispensation towards the several sorts of creatures, as not only not, ordinarily, to impose upon them what they could not conveniently be patient of; but so as that their powers and faculties might be put upon the exercises whereof they were capable, and to provide that neither their passive capacity should be overcharged, nor their active be unemployed. And whereas the reasonable nature of man renders him not only susceptible of unexpected internal impressions, but also capable of being governed by laws, which require the use of his own endeavour to understand and obey them; and whereas we also find such laws are actually made for him, and propounded to him with their proper enforcements; if it should be the fixed course of God's government over him, only to guide him by inward impulses, this (as is said in that letter) would render those laws and their sanctions impertinencies; his faculties, whereby he is capable of moral government so far, and to this purpose, useless and vain: and would be an occasion, which the depraved nature of men would be very apt to abuse into a temptation to them, never to bend their powers to the endeavour of doing any thing that were of a holy and spiritual tendency, (from which their aversion would be always prompting them to devise excuses,) more than a mere machine would apply itself to the uses which it was made for, and doth not understand.

Therefore, lest any should be so unreasonable, as to expect God should only surprise them, while they resolvedly sit still and sleep; he hath, in his infinite wisdom, withheld from them the occasion hereof, and left them destitute of any encourage-

ment (whatsoever his extraordinary dealings may have been with some) to expect his influences, in the neglect of his ordinary methods, as is discoursed already and at large in the following pages; and which is the plain sense of that admonition, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Yea, and though there be never so many instances of merciful surprisals, preventive of all our own consideration and care, yet those are still to be accounted the ordinary methods which are so *de jure*, which would actually be so if men did their duty, and which God hath obliged us to observe and attend unto as such.

8. That in reference to all other actions which are not sinful, though there be not a sinful disinclination to them, yet because there may be a sluggishness and ineptitude to some purposes God intends to serve by them, this influence is also always determinative thereunto, whensoever to the immense wisdom of God shall seem meet, and concurring to his own great and holy ends.

9. That, in reference to sinful actions, by this influence God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers, whereby they are done; but also, as the first mover, so far excite and actuate those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action, to which they have a natural designation, and whereto they are not sinfully disinclined.

10. That, if men do then employ them to the doing of any sinful action; by that same influence, he doth, as to him seems meet, limit, moderate, and, against the inclination and design of the sinful agent, overrule and dispose it to good. But now

if, besides all this, they will also assert, that God doth, by an efficacious influence, move and determine men to wicked actions; this is that which I most resolvedly deny. That is, in this I shall differ with them, that I do not suppose God to have, by internal influence, as far a hand in the worst and wickedest actions, as in the best. I assert more to be necessary to actions to which men are wickedly disinclined; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions to which they have inclination more than enough. I reckon it sufficient to the production of this latter sort of actions, that their powers be actually habile, and apt for any such action, in the general, as is connatural to them; supposing there be not a peccant aversion, as there is to all those actions that are holy and spiritual; which aversion a more potent (even a determinative) influence is necessary to overcome. I explain myself by instance:—

A man hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating an apprehended good or evil. These powers being, by a present divine influence, rendered habile and apt for action, he can now love a good name, health, ease, life; and hate disgrace, sickness, pain, death; but he doth also by these powers, thus habilitated for action, love wickedness and hate God; I say, now, that to those former acts God should over and besides determine him, is not absolutely and always necessary; and to the latter, is impossible. But that, to hate wickedness universally, and as such, and to love God, the depravedness of his nature, by the apostacy, hath made the determinative influence of efficacious grace neces-

sary. Which, therefore, he hath indispensable obligation (nor is destitute of encouragement) earnestly to implore and pray for. My meaning is now plain to such as have a mind to understand it.

Having thus given an account wherein I agree with them, and wherein, if they please, I must differ; it may perhaps be expected I should add further reasons of that difference on my part: but I shall for the present forbear to do it. I know it may be alleged, that some very pious as well as learned men have been of their opinion; and I seriously believe it. But that signifies nothing to the goodness of the opinion: nor doth the badness of it extinguish my charity nor reverence towards the men. For I consider, that as many hold the most important truths, and which most directly tend to impress the image of God upon their souls, that yet are never stamped with any such impression thereby; so, it is not impossible some may have held very dangerous opinions, with a notional judgment, the pernicious influence whereof hath never distilled upon their hearts. Neither shall I be willing, without necessity, to detect other men's infirmities: yet if I find myself any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, I reckon the time I have to spend in this world can never be spent to better purpose, than in discovering the fearful consequences of that rejected opinion, the vanity of the subterfuges whereby its assertors think to hide the malignity of it, and the inefficacy of the arguments brought for it; especially those two which the letter takes notice of. For, as so ill-coloured an opinion ought never to be admitted without the most apparent necessity, so do I think it most apparent there is no necessity it should be

admitted upon those grounds, or any other ; and doubt not but that both the governing providence of God, in reference to all events whatsoever, and his most certain knowledge of them all, may be defended, against all opposers, without it. But I had rather my preparations to these purposes should be buried in dust and silence, than I should ever see the occasion which should carry the signification with it of their being at all needful. And I shall take it for a just and most deplorable occasion, if I shall find any to assert against me the contradictory to this proposition :—That God doth not by an efficacious influence, universally move and determine men to all their actions ; even those that are most wicked :—which is the only true and plain meaning of what was said, about this business, in the before-mentioned letter.

THE VANITY
OF
THIS MORTAL LIFE ;
OR
OF MAN, CONSIDERED IN HIS PRESENT MORTAL STATE.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO THE DESERVEDLY HONOURED

JOHN UPTON, OF LUPTON, ESQ.

SINCE it is the lot of the following pages to be exposed to public view, there is somewhat of justice in it, to yourselves or me, that the world do also know wherein divers of you have contributed thereto ; that if any thing redound hence to public advantage, it may be understood to be owing in part to you ; or if it shall be reckoned a useless trouble, in this way to represent things so obvious to common notice, and whereof so much is already said, all the blame to the publication be not imputed (as it doth not belong) to me only. But I must here crave your excuse, that, on this account, I give you a narrative of what (for the most part) you already know and may possibly not delight to remember ; both because it is now become convenient that others should know it too, and not necessary to be put into a distinct preface ; and because to yourselves the review of those less pleasing passages may be attended with a fruit which may be some recompence for their want of pleasure.

Therefore give the reader leave to take notice, and let it not be grievous to you that I remind you, that after this your near relation (whose death gave the occasion of the ensuing meditations) had from his youth lived between twenty and thirty years of his age in Spain, your joint importunity had at length obtained from him a promise of returning ; whereof, when you were in somewhat a near expectation, a sudden disease in so few days landed him in another world, that the first notice you had of his death or sickness, was by the arrival of that vessel (clad

in mourning attire) which, according to his own desire in his sickness, brought over the deserted body to its native place of Lupton; that thence it might find a grave, where it first received a soul; and obtain a mansion in the earth, where first it became one to a reasonable spirit. A little before this time, the desire of an interview among yourselves (which the distance of your habitations permitted not to be frequent) had induced divers of you to appoint a meeting at some middle place, whereby the trouble of a long journey might be conveniently shared among you. But, before that agreed resolution could have its accomplishment, this sad and most unexpected event intervening, altered the place, the occasion, and design of your meeting; but effected the thing itself, and brought together no less than twenty, the brothers and sisters of the deceased, or their consorts, besides his many nephews and nieces and other relations, to the mournful solemnity of the interment. Within the time of our being together upon this sad account, this passage of the Psalmist here insisted on, came into discourse among us; being introduced by an occasion, which (though then, it may be unknown to the most of you) was somewhat rare, and not unworthy observation; viz. that one of yourselves having been some time before surprised with an unusual sadness, joined with an expectation of ill tidings, upon no known cause, had so urgent an inculcation of these words, as not to be able to forbear the revolving them much of the former part of that day, in the latter part whereof the first notice was brought to that place of this so near a relation's decease.

Certain months after, some of you with whom I was then conversant in London, importuned me to have somewhat from me in writing upon that subject. Whereto I at length agreed, with a cautionary request, that it might not come into many hands, but might remain (as the occasion was) among yourselves. Nor will I deny it to have been some inducement to me to apply my thoughts to that theme, that it had been so suggested as was said. For such presages and abodings, as that above mentioned, may reasonably be thought to owe themselves to some more steady and universal principle than casualty or the

party's own imagination: by whose more noble recommendation (that such a gloomy premonition might carry with it not what should only afflict, but also instruct and teach) this subject did seem offered to our meditation. Accordingly, therefore, after my return to the place of my abode, I hastily drew up the substance of the following discourse; which, a year ago, I transmitted into their hands who desired it from me, without reserving to myself any copy. Hereby it became difficult to me presently to comply (besides divers considerations I might have against the thing itself) with that joint request of some of you, (in a letter, which my removal into another kingdom occasioned to come long after to my hands,) that I would consent these papers might be made public. For as I have reason to be conscious to myself of disadvantages enough to discourage any undertaking of that kind; so I am more especially sensible, that so cursory and superficial a management of a subject so important, (though its private occasion and design at first might render it excusable to those few friends for whom it was meant,) cannot but be liable to the hard censure (not to say contempt) of many whom discourses of this kind should more designedly serve. And therefore, though my willingness to be serviceable in keeping alive the apprehension and expectation of another state, my value of your judgments who conceive what is here done may be useful thereto, and my peculiar respects to yourselves, the members and appendants of a family to which (besides some relation) I have many obligations and endearments, do prevail with me not wholly to deny; yet pardon me that I have suspended my consent to this publication, till I should have a copy transmitted to me from some of you, for my necessary view of so hasty a production, that I might not offer to the view of the world, what, after I had penned it, had scarce passed my own. And now after so long an expectation, those papers are but this last week come to my hands, I here return them with little or no alteration; save, that what did more directly concern the occasion, towards the close, is transferred hither; but with the addition of almost all the directive part of the use: which I submit together to your pleasure and dispose.

And I shall now take the liberty to add, my design in consenting to this request of yours (and I hope the same of you in making it) is not to erect a monument to the memory of the deceased, (which how little doth it signify!) nor to spread the fame of your family; (though the visible blessing of God upon it, in the fruitfulness, piety, and mutual love, wherein it hath flourished for some generations, do challenge observation, both as to those branches of it which grow in their own more natural soil, and those, as I have now occasion to take further notice, that I find to have been transplanted into another country;) but that such into whose hands this little treatise shall fall, may be induced to consider the true end of their beings; to examine and discuss the matter more thoroughly with themselves, what it may or can be supposed such a sort of creatures was made and placed on this earth for: that when they shall have reasoned themselves into a settled apprehension of the worthy and important ends they are capable of attaining, and are visibly designed to, they may be seized with a noble disdain of living beneath themselves and the bounty of their Creator.

It is obvious to common observation, how flagrant and intense a zeal men are often wont to express for their personal reputation, the honour of their families, yea, or for the glory of their nation: but how few are acted by that more laudable and enlarged zeal for the dignity of mankind! How few are they that resent the common and vile depression of their own species! Or that, while in things of lightest consideration they strive with emulous endeavour, that they and their relatives may excel other men, do reckon it a reproach if, in matters of the greatest consequence, they and all men should not excel beasts! How few that are not contented to confine their utmost designs and expectations within the same narrow limits! through a mean and inglorious self despicency, confessing in themselves (to the truth's and their own wrong) an incapacity of greater things; and with most injurious falsehood, proclaiming the same of all mankind besides.

If he that, amidst the hazards of a dubious war, betrays the interest and honour of his country be justly infamous, and thought

worthy severest punishments, I see not why a debauched sensualist, that lives as if he were created only to indulge his appetite ; that so vilifies the notion of man, as if he were made but to eat and drink, and sport, to please only his sense and fancy ; that in this time and state of conflict between the powers of this present world, and those of the world to come, quits his party, bids open defiance to humanity, abjures the noble principle and ends, forsakes the laws and society of all that are worthy to be esteemed men, abandons the common and rational hope of mankind concerning a future immortality, and herds himself among brute creatures ; I say, I see not why such a one should not be scorned and abhorred as a traitor to the whole race and nation of reasonable creatures, as a fugitive from the tents, and deserter of the common interest of men ; and that both for the vileness of his practice and the danger of his example.

And who, that hath open eyes, beholds not the dreadful instances and increase of this defection ; when it hath prevailed to that degree already, that in civilized, yea, in Christian countries, (as they yet affect to be called,) the practice is become fashionable and in credit, which can square with no other principle than the disbelief of a future state, as if it were but a mere poetic or (at best) a political fiction ? And as if so impudent infidelity would pretend not to a connivance only but a sanction, it is reckoned an odd and uncouth thing for a man to live as if he thought otherwise ; and a great presumption to seem to dissent from the profane infidel crew. As if the matter were already formally determined in the behalf of irreligion, and the doctrine of the life to come had been clearly condemned in open council as a detestable heresy. For what tenet was ever more exploded and hooted at, than that practice is which alone agrees with this ? Or what series or course of repeated villainies can ever be more ignominious than (in vulgar estimate) a course of life so transacted as doth become the expectation of a blessed immortality ? And what, after so much written and spoken by persons of all times and religions for the immortality of the human soul, and so common an acknowledgment thereof by pagans, Mahomedans, Jews, and Christians, is man now at last

condemned and doomed to a perpetual death, as it were, by the consent and suffrage even of men; and that too without trial or hearing; and not by the reason of men, but their lusts only? As if (with a loud and violent cry) they would assassinate and stifle this belief and hope, but not judge it. And shall the matter be thus given up as hopeless; and the victory be yielded to prosperous wickedness, and a too successful conspiracy of vile miscreants against both their Maker and their own stock and race?

One would think whosoever have remaining in them any conscience of obligation and duty to the common Parent and Author of our beings, and remembrance of our divine original, any breathings of our ancient hope, any sense of human honour, any resentments of so vile an indignity to the nature of man, any spark of a just and generous indignation for so opprobrious a contumely to their own kind and order in the creation, should oppose themselves with an heroic vigour to this treacherous and unnatural combination. And let us (my worthy friends) be provoked, in our several capacities, to do our parts herein; and, at least, so to live and converse in this world, that the course and tenour of our lives may import an open asserting of our hopes in another; and may let men see we are not ashamed to own the belief of a life to come. Let us, by a patient continuance in well-doing, (how low designs soever others content themselves to pursue,) seek honour, glory, and immortality to ourselves; and by our avowed, warrantable ambition in this pursuit, justify our great and bountiful Creator, who hath made us not in vain, but for so high and great things; and glorify our blessed Redeemer, who amidst the gloomy and disconsolate darkness of this wretched world, when it was overspread with the shadow of death, hath brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. Let us labour both to feel and express the power of that religion which hath the inchoation of the (participated) divine life for its principle, and the perfection and eternal perpetuation thereof for its scope and end.

Nor let the time that hath since elapsed be found to have worn out with you the useful impressions which this monitory

surprising instance of our mortality did first make. But give me leave to inculcate from it what was said to you when the occasion was fresh and new : that we labour more deeply to apprehend God's dominion over his creatures ; and that he made us principally for himself, and for ends that are to be compassed in the future state ; and not for the temporary satisfaction and pleasure of one another in this world. Otherwise Providence had never been guilty of such a solecism, to take out one from a family long famous for its exemplary mutual love, and dispose him into so remote a part, not permitting to most of his near relations the enjoyment of him for almost thirty years (and therein all the flower) of his age ; and at last, when we were expecting the man, send you home the breathless frame wherein he lived. Yet it was not contemptible that you had that, and that dying (as Joseph) in a strange land, he gave also commandment concerning his bones ; that though in his life he was (mostly) separated from his brethren, he might in death be gathered to his fathers. It was some evidence (though you wanted not better) that amidst the traffic of Spain he more esteemed the religion of England, and therefore would rather his dust should associate with theirs, with whom also he would rather his spirit should. But whatever it did evidence, it occasioned so much, that you had that so general meeting with one another, which otherwise probably you would not have had, nor are likely again to have, (so hath Providence scattered you,) in this world ; and that it proved a more serious meeting than otherwise it might : for however it might blamelessly have been designed to have met together at a cheerful table, God saw it fitter to order the meeting at a mournful grave ; and to make the house that received you (the native place to many of you) the house of mourning rather than of feasting. The one would have had more quick relishes of a present pleasure, but the other was likely to yield the more lasting sense of an after profit. Nor was it an ill errand to come together (though from afar for divers of you) to learn to die ; as you might, by being so sensibly put in mind of it, though you did not see that very part acted itself. And

accept this endeavour, to further you in your preparations for that change, as some testimony of the remembrance I retain of your most obliging respects and love, and of my still continuing

Your affectionate and respectful kinsman,
and servant in our common Lord,

J. HOWE.

Antrim,
April 12, 1671.

THE
VANITY OF MAN AS MORTAL.

PSALM LXXXIX, 47, 48.

Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?

WE are not concerned to be particular and curious in the inquiry, touching the special reference or occasion of the foregoing complaints, from the 37th verse. It is enough to take notice, for our present purpose, that besides the evil which had already befallen the plaintiff, a further danger nearly threatened him, that carried death in the face of it, and suggested somewhat frightful apprehensions of his mortal state, which drew from him this quick and sensible petition in reference to his own private concern, ‘Remember how short my time is;’ and did presently direct his eye with a sudden glance from the view of his own, to reflect on the common condition of man, whereof he expresses his resentment, first, in a hasty expostulation with God, ‘Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?’—Then, secondly, in a pathetic dis-

course with himself, representing the reason of that rough charge, 'What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver,' &c. *q. d.* When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing almost as soon as they show themselves; have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a phenomenon, such a creature made to no purpose? the noblest part of this inferior creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. It is hard sure to design the supposal, (of what it may yet seem hard to suppose,) that all men were made in vain.

It appears, the expostulation was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case very abstractly considered, and by itself only; and that he did not in that instant look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleared with present sorrow, sees not so far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth, presently, when the tear is wiped out, and its own beams have cleared it up. We see he did quickly look further, and had got a more light-some prospect, when in the next words we find him contemplating God's sworn loving-kindness unto David;¹ the truth and stability whereof he at

¹ Verse 49.

the same time expressly acknowledges, while only the form of his speech doth but seem to import a doubt—‘Where are they!’ But yet—they were sworn in truth. Upon which argument he had much enlarged in the former part of the psalm; and it still lay deep in his soul, though he were now a little diverted from the present consideration of it: which, since it turns the scales with him, it will be needful to inquire into the weight and import of it. Nor have we any reason to think, that David was either so little a prophet or a saint, as in his own thoughts to refer those magnificent things (the instances of that loving-kindness, confirmed by oath, which he recites from the 19th verse of the psalm to the 38th, as spoken from the mouth of God, and declared to him by vision) to the dignity of his own person, and the grandeur and perpetuity of his kingdom; as if it were ultimately meant of himself, that God would make him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth,¹ when there were divers greater kings, and (in comparison of the little spot over which he reigned) a vastly spreading monarchy that still overtopped him all his time; (as the same and successive monarchies did his successors;) or that it was intended of the secular glory and stability of his throne and family; that God would make them to endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven; that they should be as the sun before him, and be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.²

That God himself meant it not so, experience and the event of things hath shown; and that

¹ Verse 27.

² Verses 29, 36, 37.

these predictions cannot otherwise have had their accomplishment, than in the succession of the spiritual and everlasting kingdom of the Messiah¹ (whom God raised up out of his loins to sit on his throne) unto his temporal kingdom. Wherein it is therefore ended by perfection rather than corruption: these prophecies being then made good, not in the kind which they literally imported, but in another (far more noble) kind. In which sense God's covenant with him must be understood, which he insists on so much in this psalm,² even unto that degree, as to challenge God upon it, as if in the present course of his providence he were now about to make it void; though he sufficiently expresses his confidence both before and after, that this could never be.³ But it is plain it hath been made void long enough ago, in the subversion of David's kingdom, and in that we see his throne and family have not been established for ever, not endured as the days of heaven; if those words had no other than their obvious and literal meaning. And if any, to clear the truth of God, would allege the wickedness of his posterity, first making a breach and disobliging him, this is prevented by what we find inserted in reference to this very case: 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, &c. then will I visit their iniquity with the rod, &c.'⁴ Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.' All which is solemnly sealed up with this, 'Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lie unto

¹ Acts, ii. 30.

² Verse, 28—34.

³ Verse 39.

⁴ Verse 30—34.

David.¹ So that they that will make a scruple to accuse the holy God of falsehood, in that which with so much solemnity he hath promised and sworn, must not make any to admit his further intendment in these words. And that he had a further (even a mystical and spiritual) intendment in this covenant with David, is yet more fully evident from that of the prophet Isaiah: ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,’ &c. ‘Incline your ear and come unto me. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander,’ &c.² What means this universal invitation to all thirsty persons, with the subjoined encouragement of making with them an everlasting covenant, (the same which we have here, no doubt, as to the principal parts, and which we find him mentioning also, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. with characters exactly corresponding to these of the prophet,) even the sure mercies of David? The meaning sure could not be, that they should be all secular kings and princes, and their posterity after them for ever; which we see is the verbal sound and tenour of this covenant.

And now since it is evident God intended a mystery in this covenant, we may be as well assured he intended no deceit, and that he designed not a delusion to David by the vision in which he gave it. Can we think he went about to gratify him with a solemn fiction, and draw him into a false and fanciful faith; or so to hide his meaning from him, as to tempt him into the belief of what he never meant? And to what purpose was this so special

¹ Verse 35.

² Isa. lv. 1—5.

revelation by vision, if it were not to be understood truly, at least, if not yet perfectly and fully? It is left us therefore to collect that David was not wholly uninstructed how to refer all this to the kingdom of the Messiah. And he hath given sufficient testimony in that part of sacred writ, whereof God used him as a penman, that he was of another temper than to place the sum and chief of his expectations and consolations in his own and his posterity's worldly greatness. And to put us out of doubt, our Saviour (who well knew his spirit) expressly enough tells us,¹ that 'he in spirit called him Lord, when he said, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy foot-stool.'² A plain discovery how he understood God's revelation touching the future concernments of his kingdom, (and the covenant relating thereto,) viz. as a figure and type of Christ's, who must reign till all his enemies be subdued. Nor was he in that ignorance about the nature and design of Christ's kingdom, but that he understood its reference to another world and state of things, even beyond all the successions of time, and the mortal race of men; so as to have his eye fixed upon the happy eternity which a joyful resurrection must introduce, and whereof Christ's resurrection should be the great and most assuring pledge. And of this we need no fuller an evidence than the express words of the apostle St. Peter³, who after he had cited those lofty triumphant strains of David, Psal. xvi. 8—11, 'I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be

¹ Matt. xxii.² Psal. cx.³ Acts, ii. v. 25, &c.

moved: therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, (or in the state of darkness,) neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' All which, he tells us, was spoken concerning Christ.¹ He more expressly subjoins, that David, 'being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, (it appears he spake not at random, but as knowing and seeing before what he spake,) that his soul was not left in hell,' &c.;² nor can we think he thus rejoices in another's resurrection, forgetting his own.

And yet we have a further evidence from the apostle St. Paul, who affirms, that the promise made to the fathers, God had fulfilled to their children, in that he had raised up Jesus again;³ as it is also written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption; he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Which it is now apparent must be understood of eternal mercies; such as Christ's resurrection and triumph over the grave doth insure to us. He therefore looked upon what was spoken concerning his kingdom here, as spoken ultimately of Christ's, the kingdom whereby he governs and conducts

¹ Verse 25.

² Verses 30, 31.

³ Acts xiii. 32—34.

his faithful subjects through all the troubles of life and terrors of death (through both whereof he himself, as their king and leader, hath shown the way) unto eternal blessedness; and upon the covenant made with him as the covenant of God in Christ, concerning that blessedness and the requisites thereto. And (to say no more in this argument) how otherwise can we conceive he should have that fulness of consolation in this covenant when he lay dying, as we find him expressing, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5: (for these were some of the last words of David, as we see, verse 1 :) 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.' What so great joy and solace could a dying man take in a covenant made with him, when he had done with this world, and was to expect no more in it, if he took it not to concern a future blessedness in another world? Was it only for the hoped prosperity of his house and family when he was gone? This (which is the only thing we can fasten on) he plainly secludes in the next words, 'although he make it not to grow.' Therefore it was his reflection upon those loving-kindnesses mentioned in the former part of the psalm, contained in God's covenant, and confirmed by his oath, but understood according to the sense and import already declared, that caused this sudden turn in David's spirit; and made him that lately spoke as out of a Golgotha, as if he had nothing but death in his eye and thoughts, to speak now in so different a strain, and (after some additional pleadings, in which his faith further recovers itself,) to conclude this psalm with solemn praise:

Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen and Amen.

We see then the contemplation of his own and all men's mortality, abstractly and alone considered, clothed his soul with black, wrapped it up in gloomy darkness, makes the whole kind of human creatures seem to him an obscure shadow, an empty vanity; but his recalling into his thoughts a succeeding state of immortal life, clears up the day, makes him and all things appear in another hue, gives a fair account why such a creature as man was made; and therein makes the whole frame of things in this inferior world look with a comely and well-composed aspect, as the product of a wise and rational design. Whence therefore we have this ground of discourse fairly before us in the words themselves:—that the short time of man on earth, limited by a certain unavoidable death, if we consider it abstractly by itself, without respect to a future state, carries that appearance and aspect with it, as if God had made all men in vain.—That is said to be vain, according to the importance of the word here used,¹ which is either false, a fiction, an appearance only, a shadow, or evanid thing; or which is useless, unprofitable, and to no valuable purpose. The life of man, in the case now supposed, may be truly styled vain, either way. And we shall say somewhat to each; but to the former more briefly.

1. It were vain, i. e. little other than a show, a mere shadow, a semblance of being. We must indeed, in the present case, even abstract him from himself, and consider him only as a mortal, dying

¹ שוא.

thing; and as to that of him which is so, what a contemptible nothing is he! There is an appearance of somewhat; but search a little, and inquire into it, and it vanishes into a mere nothing, is found a lie, a piece of falsehood, as if he did but feign a being, and were not. And so we may suppose the Psalmist speaking, upon the view of his own and the common case of man, how fast all were hastening out of life, and laying down the being which they rather seemed to have assumed and borrowed, than to possess and own: Lord, why hast thou made man such a fictitious thing, given him such a mock-being? Why hast thou brought forth into the light of this world such a sort of creatures, that rather seem to be than are; that have so little of solid and substantial being, and so little deserve to be taken for realities; that only serve to cheat one another into an opinion of their true existence, and presently vanish and confess their falsehood? What hovering shadows, what uncertain entities are they! In a moment they are and are not; I know not when to say I have seen a man. It seems as if there were some such things before my eyes; I persuade myself that I see them move and walk to and fro, that I talk and converse with them, but instantly my own sense is ready to give my sense the lie. They are on the sudden dwindled away, and force me almost to acknowledge a delusion. I am but mocked with a show; and what seemed a reality proves an imposture. Their pretence to being is but fiction and falsehood, a cozenage of over-credulous, unwary sense. They only personate what they are thought to be, and quickly put off their very selves as a disguise. This is agreeable to the language

of Scripture elsewhere, ‘ Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie,’¹ &c. In two respects may the present state of man seem to approach near to nothingness, and so admit this rhetorication of the Psalmist, as if he were in this sense a vain thing, a figment, or a lie, viz. in respect to the *minuteness*, and *instability* of this, his material and perishable being.

1. The minuteness, the small portion or degree of being which this mortal part of man hath in it. It is truly said of all created things, Their *non-esse* is more than their *esse*; they have more no-being than being. It is only some limited portion that they have, but there is an infinitude of being which they have not. And so coming infinitely nearer to nothingness than fulness of being, they may well enough wear the name of nothing. Wherefore the first and fountain-being justly appropriates to himself the name, I am; yea, tells us, he is, and there is none besides him; therein leaving no other name than that of nothing unto creatures. And how much more may this be said of the material and mortal part, this outside of man, whatever of him is obnoxious to death and the grave! which alone (abstractly looked on) is the subject of the Psalmist’s present consideration and discourse. By how much any thing hath more of matter, it hath the less of actual essence. Matter being rather a capacity of being, than being itself, or a dark umbrage or shadow of it, actually nothing, but *εὐδωλον*, *ψευδος*, (as are the expressions of a noble philosopher,²) a mere semblance, or a lie. And it is the language not of philosophers only,

¹ Psalm lxii. 9.

² Plotin. En. ii. 1, 6.

but of the Holy Ghost concerning all the nations of men: 'They are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.'¹ What a scarcity then, and penury of being, must we suppose in each individual! especially if we look alone upon the outer part, or rather the umbrage or shadow of the man.

2. The instability and fluidness of it. The visible and corporeal being of man hath nothing steady or consistent in it. Consider his exterior frame and composition, he is no time all himself at once. There is a continual defluence and access of parts; so that some account, each climacteric of his age changes his whole fabric. Whence it would follow, that besides his statique individuating principle, (from which we are now to abstract,) nothing of him remains: he is another thing; the former man is vanished and gone; while he is, he hastens away, and within a little is not. In respect to the duration as well as the degree of his being, he is next to nothing. 'He opens his eye, and is not.'² Gone in the twinkling of an eye. There is nothing in him stable enough to admit a fixed look. So it is with the whole scene of things in this material world; as was the true maxim of an ancient, "All things flow, nothing stays; after the manner of a river:"³ the same thing which the apostle's words more elegantly express: 'The fashion of this world passeth away;'⁴ the scheme, the show, the pageantry of it. He speaks of it but as an appearance, as if he knew not whether to call it something or nothing, it was so near to vanishing into nothing. And therefore he there requires, that the affections which mutual nearness

¹ Isaiah, xl.

² Job, xxvii. 19.

³ Heracl.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii.

in relation challenges, be as if they were not; that we rejoice in reference to one another, (even most nearly related, as the occasion and scope of his discourse teach us to understand him,) but as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not: which implies, the objects merit no more, and are themselves as if they were not. Whence, therefore, a continued course of intense passion were very incongruous towards so discontinuing things. And the whole state of man being but a show, the pomp and glittering of the greatest men make the most splendid and conspicuous part of it; yet all this we find is not otherwise reckoned of, than an image, a dream, a vision of the night; every man at his best state is altogether vanity, walketh in a vain show, disquieteth himself in vain,¹ &c. Of all, without exception, it is pronounced, 'Man is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away.' As Ecclesiastes often, of all sublunary things, 'Vanity of vanities,' &c.

2. But yet there is another notion of vain, as it signifies useless, unprofitable, or to no purpose. And in this sense also, if we consider the universal mortality of mankind without respect to a future state, there was a specious ground for the expostulation, 'Why hast thou made all men in vain? Vanity in the former notion speaks the emptiness of a thing, absolutely and in itself considered; in this latter relatively, as it is referred to and measured by an end. That is, in this sense, vain, which serves to no end; or to no worthy and valuable end, which amounts to the same. For inas-

¹ Job, xx. 7, 8, 9; Psalm lxxiii. 20; xxxix. 5, 6.

much as all ends, except the last, are means also to a further end; if the end immediately aimed at be vain and worthless, that which is referred to it, as it is so referred, cannot but be also vain. Whereupon now let us make trial what end we could in this case think man made for; which will be best done by taking some view,—1. Of his nature; 2. Of the ends for which, upon that supposition, we must suppose him made.

1. Of the former (neglecting the strictness of philosophical disquisition) no more is intended to be said than may comport with the design of a popular discourse: it shall suffice, therefore, only to take notice of what is more obvious in the nature of man, and subservient to the present purpose. And yet we are here to look further than the mere surface and outside of man, which we only considered before; and to view his nature, as it is in itself, and not as the supposition of its having nothing but what is mortal belonging to it, would make it: for as the exility (and almost nothingness) of man's being, considered according to that supposition, did best serve to express the vanity of it, in the former notion that hath been given of a vain thing; so the excellency and solid substantiality of it, considered as it is in itself, will conduce most to the discovery of its vanity in this latter notion thereof. That is, if we first consider that, and then the supposition of such a creature's being only made to perish. And if what shall be said herein, do in the sequel tend to destroy that above-mentioned disposition, (as it, being established, would destroy the prime glory of human nature,) it can only be said *magna est veritas, &c.* In

the meantime we may take a view, in the nature of man,

1. Of his intellective powers. Hereby he frames notions of things, even of such things as are above the sphere of sense; of moral good and evil, right and wrong, what is virtuous and what is vicious; of abstract and universal natures; yea, and of a first being and cause, and of the wisdom, power, goodness, and other perfections, which must primarily agree to him. Hereby he affirms and denies one thing of another, as he observes them to agree and disagree, and discerns the truth and falsehood of what is spoken or denied. He doth hereby infer one thing from another, and argue himself into firm and unwavering assent to many things, not only above the discovery of sense, but directly contrary to their sensible appearances.

2. His power of determining himself, of choosing and refusing, according as things are estimated, and do appear to him. Where also it is evident how far the objects which this faculty is sometimes exercised about, do transcend the reach of all sensible nature; as well as the peculiar nobleness and excellency is remarkable of the faculty itself. It hath often for its object things of the highest nature, purely spiritual and divine; virtue, religion, God himself. So as that these (the faculty being repaired only by sanctifying grace, not now first put into the nature of man) are chosen by some, and, where it is not so, refused (it is true) by the most; but not by a mere not-willing of them, (as mere brutal appetite also doth not-will them, which no way reaches the notion of a refusal,) but by rejecting them with a positive aversion and dislike, wherein there is great iniquity and sin: which

could not be but in a nature capable of the opposite temper. And it is apparent, this faculty hath the privilege of determining itself, so as to be exempt from the necessitating influence of any thing foreign to it; upon the supposal whereof, the managery of all human affairs, all treaties between man and man, to induce a consent to this or that, the whole frame of government, all legislation and distribution of public justice, do depend. For take away this supposition, and these will presently appear most absurd and unjust. With what solemnity are applications and addresses made to the will of man upon all occasions! How is it courted, and solicited, and sued unto! But how absurd were it so to treat the other creatures, that act by a necessity of nature in all they do! to make supplications to the wind, or propound articles to a brute! And how unjust, to determine and inflict severe penalties for unavoidable and necessitated actions and omissions! These things occur to our first notice, upon any (a more sudden and cursory) view of the nature of man. And what should hinder, but we may infer from these, that there is further in his nature,

2. A capacity of an immortal state; i. e. that his nature is such, that he may, if God so please, by the concurrent influence of his ordinary power and providence, without the help of a miracle, subsist in another state of life after this; even a state that shall not be liable to that impairment and decay that we find this subject to. More is not (as yet) contended for; and so much methinks none should make a difficulty to admit, from what is evidently found in him. For it may well be supposed, that the admitting of this, at least, will seem much

more easy to any free and unprejudiced reason, than to ascribe the operations before instanced in, to alterable or perishable matter, or indeed to any matter at all: it being justly presumed, that none will ascribe to matter, as such, the powers of ratiocination or volition; for then every particle of matter must needs be rational and intelligent (a high advance to what one would never have thought at all active.) And how inconceivable is it, that the minute particles of matter, in themselves, each of them destitute of any such powers, should, by their mutual intercourse with one another, become furnished with them! that they should be able to understand, deliberate, resolve, and choose, being assembled and duly disposed in counsel together; but, apart, rest all in a deep and sluggish silence! Besides, if the particles of matter, howsoever modified and moved, to the utmost subtlety or tenuity, and to the highest vigour, shall then become intelligent and rational, how is it that we observe not, as any matter is more subtle and more swiftly and vigorously moved, it makes not a discernibly nearer approach, proportionably, to the faculty and power of reasoning? and that nothing more of an aptitude or tendency towards intelligence and wisdom is to be perceived in an aspiring flame or a brisk wind, than in a clod or a stone? If to understand, to define, to distinguish, to syllogize, be nothing else but the agitation and collision of the minute parts of rarified matter among one another, methinks some happy chemist or other, when he hath missed his designed mark, should have hit upon some such more noble product, and by one or other prosperous sublimation have caused some temporary resemblance,

at least, of these operations. Or, if the paths of nature, in these affairs of the mind, be more abstruse, and quite out of the reach and road of artificial achievement, whence is it, that nature herself (that is vainly enough supposed by some to have been so happy, as by some casual strokes to have fabricated the first of human creatures, that have since propagated themselves) is grown so effete and dull, as never since to hit upon any like effect in the like way; and that no records of any time or age give us the notice of some such creature sprung out of some Epicurean womb of the earth, and elaborated by the only immediate hand of nature so disposing the parts of matter in its constitution, that it should be able to perform the operation belonging to the mind of man? But if we cannot, with any tolerable pretence or show of reason, attribute these operations to any mere matter, there must be somewhat else in man to which they may agree, that is distinct from his corruptible part, and that is therefore capable, by the advantage of its own nature, of subsisting hereafter, (while God shall continue to it an influence agreeable to its nature, as he doth to other creatures.) And hence it seems a modest and sober deduction, that there is in the nature of man, at least, a capacity of an immortal state.

2. Now, if we yet suppose there is actually no such state for man hereafter, it is our next business to view the ends for which, upon that supposition, he may be thought to have been made: whence we shall soon see, there is not any of them whereof it may be said, this is that he was created for, as his adequate end. And here we have a double agent to be accommodated with a suitable

end;—Man now made; and—God who made him.

I. Man himself. For it must be considered, that inasmuch as man is a creature capable of propounding to himself an end, and of acting knowingly and with design towards it, (and indeed incapable of acting otherwise as a man,) it would therefore not be reasonable to speak of him in this discourse, as if he were merely passive, and to be acted only by another: but we must reckon him obliged, in subordination to his Maker, to intend and pursue, himself, the proper end for which he appointed and made him. And in reason we are to expect that what God hath appointed to be his proper end, should be such as is in itself most highly desirable, suitable to the utmost capacity of his nature, and attainable by his action; so carrying with it sufficient inducements, both of desire and hope, to a vigorous and rational prosecution of it. Thus we must, at least, conceive it to have been in the primitive institution of man's end, unto which the expostulation hath reference,—‘Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?’ And we can think of no ends which men either do or ought to propound to themselves, but by the direction of one of these principles, sense, reason, or religion.

I. Sense is actually the great dictator to the most of men, and *de facto*, determines them to the mark and scope which they pursue, and animates the whole pursuit. Not that sense is by itself capable of designing an end, but it too generally inclines and biasses reason herein. So that reason hath no other hand in the business, than only as a slave to sense, to form the design and contrive the methods which may most conduce to it, for the

gratification of sensual appetite and inclination at last. And the appetitions of sense, wherein it hath so much mastery and dominion, are but such as we find enumerated, 1 John, ii. 16: 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life.' Or, if we understand the apostle to use the name of lust objectively, the objects sufficiently connote the appetitions themselves. All which may fitly be referred to sense: either the outward senses, or the fancy or imagination, which as deservedly comes under the same common denomination.

Now, who can think the satisfying of these lusts the commensurate end of man? Who would not, upon the supposition of no higher, say with the Psalmist, 'Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?' To what purpose was it for him to live in the world a few years, upon this account only, and so go down to the place of silence? What is there in the momentary satisfaction of this mortal flesh! in his pleasing view of a mass of treasure, (which he never brought with him into the world, but only heaped together, and so leaves not the world richer or poorer than he found it,) what is there in the applause and admiration of fools, (as the greater part always are,) that we should think it worth the while for man to have lived for these things? If the question were put, Wherefore did God make man? who would not be ashamed so to answer it,—He made him to eat, and drink, and take his pleasure; to gather up wealth for he knows not who; to use his inventions, that each one may become a talk and wonder to the rest; and then when he hath fetched a few turns upon the theatre, and entertained the eyes of beholders, with a short scene of impertinencies, descend and never be

heard of more? What, that he should come into the world furnished with such powers and endowments for this? It were a like case, as if one should be clad in scarlet to go to plough, or curiously instructed in arts and sciences to tend hogs.

Or, 2dly, If we rise higher, to the view of such ends as more refined reason may propose, within the compass only of this present state: we will suppose that it be either the acquisition of much knowledge, the furnishing his understanding with store of choice and well-digested notions; that he may please himself in being (or in having men think him) a learned wight;—death robs away all his gain; and what is the world the better? How little shall he enrich the clods, among which he must shortly lie down and have his abode! or how little is the gain, when the labour and travail of so many years are all vanished and blown away with the last puff of his dying breath, and the fruit that remains, is to have it said by those that survive, “There lies learned dust!” That any part of his acquisitions, in that kind, descends to others, little betters the case, when they that succeed are all hastening down also into the same ignoble dust; besides, the increase of sorrow, both because the objects of knowledge do but increase the more he knows, do multiply the more upon him, so as to beget a despair of ever knowing so much as he shall know himself to be ignorant of; and a thousand doubts, about things he hath more deeply considered, which his more confident (undiscovered) ignorance never dreamt of or suspected; and thence an unquietness, an irresolution of mind, which they that never drove at any such mark are (more contentedly) unacquainted

with. And also, because that by how much knowledge hath refined a man's soul, so much it is more sensible and perceptive of troublesome impressions from the disorderly state of things in the world; which they that converse only with earth and dirt, have not spirits clarified and fine enough to receive. So that, except a man's knowing more than others were to be referred to another state, the labour of attaining thereto, and other accessory disadvantages, would hardly ever be compensated by the fruit or pleasure of it; and unless a man would suppose himself made for torment, he would be shrewdly tempted to think a quiet and drowsy ignorance a happier state.

Or if that man's reason, with a peculiarity of temper, guide him to an active negotiating life, rather than that of contemplation; and determine him to the endeavour of serving mankind, or the community to which he belongs; by how much the worthier actions he performs, and by how much more he hath perfected and accomplished himself with parts and promptitude for such actions, the loss and vanity is but the greater thereby, since he and those he affected to serve are all going down to the silent grave. Of how little use are the politician, the statesman, the senator, the judge, or the eloquent man, if we lay aside the consideration of their subserviency to the keeping the world in a more composed and orderly state, for the prosecution of the great designs of eternity, when ere long all their thoughts shall perish? What matter were it what became of the world, whether it be wise or foolish, rich or poor, quiet or unquiet, governed or ungoverned? Whoever should make their order and tranquillity their study, or that should intend their thoughts and endeavours to the finding out the ex-

actest methods and rules of government and policy, should but do as they that should use a great deal of pains and art in the curious adorning and trimming up of a dying person; or as if some one, among many condemned persons, should be very solicitous to have them march with him in very exact order to the place of execution. If the world be not looked upon as a tiring room to dress one's self in, for an appearance on the eternal stage; but only as a great charnel-house, where they undress and put off themselves, to sleep in everlasting darkness; how can we think it worth a thought, or to be the subject of any rational design or care? Who would not rather bless himself in a more rational neglect and regardlessness of all human affairs; and account an unconcerned indifferency the highest wisdom?

Yea, 3dly, If we suppose religion (which we need not, because it is mentioned in this order, conceive exclusive of reason, but rather perfective of it; reason having first found out God, religion adores him) to become with any the ruling principle, and to have the direction and government of the man, as to his way and end, how would even that languish with the best, were the consideration of a future state laid aside, which with so few, notwithstanding it, hath any efficacy at all to command and govern their lives! Religion terminates upon God; and upon him under a double notion, either as we design service and honour to him, or as from him we design satisfaction and blessedness to ourselves. Now if a man's thoughts and the intention of his mind be carried towards God under the former notion, how great an allay and abatement must it needs be to the vigour and zeal of

his affection, who shall, with the most sincere devotedness, apply himself to serve his interest and glory, to reflect upon the universal mortality of himself and mankind, without any hope of compensation to it by a future immortality!

It is agreed on all hands, that the utmost contributions of creatures can add nothing to him; and that our glorifying him doth only consist, either in our acknowledging him glorious ourselves, or representing him so to others. But how little doth it signify, and how flat and low a thing would it seem, that I should only turn mine eye upwards and think a few admiring thoughts of God this hour, while I apprehend myself liable to lose my very thinking power and whole being the next! Or if we could spread his just renown, and gain all the sons of men to a concurrence with us in the adoring of his sovereign excellencies, how would it damp and stifle such loyal and dutiful affection, to consider, that the universal testimony, so deservedly given him, shall shortly cease for ever, and that infinitely blessed Being be ere long (again, as he was from eternity before) the only witness of his own glory! And if the propension of a man's soul be towards God under the latter notion also, in order to a satisfaction that shall thence accrue to himself, (which design, both in the pursuit and execution of it, is so conjunct with the former that it cannot be severed,) it cannot but be an unspeakable diminution and check to the highest delights in this kind, to think how soon they shall have an end; that the darkness and dust of the grave shall shortly obscure and extinguish the glory of this lightsome scene.

To think every time one enters that blessed pre-

sence, for aught I know I shall approach it no more!—this is possibly my last sight of that pleasant face, my last taste of those enravishing pleasures!—what bitterness must this infuse into the most delicious sweetness our state could then admit! And by how much more free and large grace should be in its present communications, and by how much any soul should be more experienced in the life of God and inured to divine delights, so much the more grievous and afflictive resentments it could not but have of the approaching end of all; and be the more powerfully tempted to say, Lord, why was I made in vain? How faint and languid would endeavours be after the knowledge of that God whom I may but only know and die! How impotent and ineffectual would the attractions of this end be to man in this terrene state, to raise him above the world, and rescue him from the power of sensible things, to engage him in the pursuit of that sanctity and purity which alone can qualify him for converse with God, to bear him out in a conflict against the (more natural) inclinations of sense, when if, with much labour and painful striving, much self-denial and severity to the flesh, any disposition should be attained to relish divine pleasures, it be considered all the while, that the end of all may be as soon lost as it is gained; and that possibly there may be no more than a moment's pleasure to recompense the pains and conflicts of many years! Although, in this case, the continual hope and expectation of some further manifestation and fruition might much influence a person already holy, and a great lover of God, unto a steadfast adherence to him; yet how little would it do to make men such, that are yet unsuitable

and disaffected to him ! or even to recover such out of their lapses and drowsy fits, that are not altogether so !

And it is further to be considered, that since God hath given man a being capable of subsisting in another state ; (as doth appear by what hath been already said ;) and since he is therefore capable of enjoying a greater happiness than his present state can admit of ; that capacity will draw upon him a most indispensable obligation to intend that happiness as his end. For admit that there be no future state for him, it is however impossible any man should know there is none ; and upon an impartial view of the whole case, he hath enough to render it (at least) far more likely to him that there is. And certainly he cannot but be obliged to pursue the highest good (even by the law of nature itself) which his nature is capable of ; which probably he may attain, and which he is nowhere forbidden by his Creator to aspire unto. Whence therefore, if we now circumscribe him within the limits of this present mortal state ; or if, for argument's sake, we suppose eventually there is no other ; we must not only confess that capacity to be given him in vain, but that he is obliged also to employ the principal endeavours of his life and all his powers in vain ; (for certainly his principal endeavour ought to be laid out in order to his principal end ;) that is, to pursue that good which he may attain, but never shall ; and which is possible to him, but not upon any terms future. And if it be admitted, that the subject state of man must silence all objections against any such inconsistencies, and make him content to act in pure obedience to his Maker, (whether he signify his

will by the law of nature only, or by any positive precept,) though he shall not hereafter enjoy any permanent state of blessedness as the consequent reward; that virtue and goodness, a holy rectitude of inclinations and actions, are reward enough to themselves; that there is that justice and sweetness in religion, to oblige him to love and reverence and adore the Divine Majesty this moment, though he were sure to perish for ever and be reduced to nothing the next:—I say, admitting all this, yet,

2. Since the blessed God himself is to be considered as the principal Agent and Designer in this inquiry, ‘Why hast thou made all men in vain?’ it is with modest and humble reverence to be considered, What end worthy of that infinitely perfect Being, he may be supposed to have propounded to himself in forming such a creature of so improvable a nature, and furnished with so noble faculties and powers, for so transient and temporary a state? and how well it will consist with the most obvious and unquestionable notions we can have of an absolutely perfect being and the attributes which he most peculiarly challenges and appropriates to himself, (so as not only to own, but to glory in them,) that he should give being, not to some few only, but to the whole species of human creatures, and therein communicate to them a nature capable of knowing, of loving, and enjoying himself in a blessed eternity, with a design to continue them only for some short space on earth, in a low imperfect state, wherein they shall be liable to sink still lower, to the vilest debasement of their natures; and yet not for their transgression herein, (for it is the mortality of man, not by sin, but by creation or the design of the Creator only, that is

now supposed,) but for his mere pleasure to bereave them of being, and reduce them all again to nothing? It is to be considered, Whether, thus to resolve and do, can any way agree to God, according to our clearest and most assured conceptions of him; not from our reasoning only, but his discovery of himself? For otherwise we see the imputation falls where we should dread to let it rest, of having made man in vain.

He is, in common account, said to act vainly, who acts beneath himself, so as to pursue an end altogether unworthy of him, or none at all. It is true, that some single acts may be done by great persons as a divertisement, without dishonourable reflection, that may seem much beneath them. And if any do stoop to very mean offices and employments to do good, to help the distressed and relieve the miserable, it is a glorious acquiescence; and the greater they are, the higher is the glory of their condescending goodness. Benignity of nature and a propension to the most unexpected acts of a merciful self-depression, when the case may require it, are the most comely ornaments of princely greatness, and outshine the glory of the richest diadem. But a wonted habitual course of mean actions in great persons, that speak a low design, or no design at all, but either a humour to trifle, or a mischievous nature and disposition, would never fail to be thought inglorious and infamous; as may be seen in the instances of Sardanapalus's spinning, and Domitian's killing of flies.

When wisdom and goodness are in conjunction with power and greatness, they never persuade a descent but upon such terms and for such purposes that a more glorious advancement shall ensue;

wisdom foreseeing that end, and goodness readily taking the way, (which though it were most undesigned, or not aimed at as an end) could not fail to effect it. Nor are any attributes of the Divine Being more conspicuous than these; more testified by himself, or more generally acknowledged by all men that have not denied his existence. Or if any have done that violence to their own minds, as to erase and blot out thence the belief of an existing Deity, yet at least, while they deny it, they cannot but have this notion of what they deny, and grant that these are great perfections, and must agree to God, upon supposition that he do exist. If therefore he should do any thing repugnant to these, or we should suppose him to do so, we should therein suppose him to act below a God, and so as were very unworthy of him. And though it becomes us to be very diffident of our own reasonings concerning the counsels and designs of that eternal Being; so, as if we should find him to assert any thing expressly of himself, which we know not how to reconcile with our preconceived thoughts, therein to yield him the cause, and confess the debility of our understandings; yet certainly, it were great rashness, and void of all pretence, to suppose any thing which neither he saith of himself, nor we know how, consistently, to think. Nor are we, in judging of his designs, to bring him down to our model, or measure him by man, whose designs do for the most part bespeak only his own indigency, and are levelled at his own advantage and the bettering some way or other of his present condition. Whatsoever the great God doth towards his creatures, we must understand him to do, though with

design, yet from an exuberant fulness of life and being, by which he is incapable of an accession to himself. And hence that he can, in reference to himself, have no other inducement to such action, besides the complacency which he takes in diffusing his free communications, (for he exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, because he delighted in these things,¹) and the maintaining the just honour and reputation of his government over his creatures, who, as they are of him, and through him, must be all to him, that he may have glory for ever.²

Now, though it be most undoubtedly true, that the sovereignty of his power and dominion over his creatures (of which he hath no need, and to whom he so freely gave being) is so absolute and unlimited, that if we consider that only, we must acknowledge, he might create a man or an angel, and annihilate him presently; yea, that he might, if he so pleased, raise up many thousand worlds of intelligent and innocent creatures into being in one moment, and throw them into nothing again the very next moment; yet how unwarrantably should we main the notion of God, if we should conceive of him only according to one attribute, secluding the consideration of the rest! How misshapen an idea should we bear of him in our minds! and how would it deform the face of providence, and spoil the decorum of his administrations, if they should be the effects of one single attribute only, the other having no influence on the affairs of the world! If nothing but mercy

¹ Jer. ix. 24.

² Rom. xi. 36.

should appear in his dispensations towards sinful man, so that every man might do what were good in his own eyes, without cause of fear to be called to account; if the most dissolute and profane were equally assured of his favour, with those who are most holy and strictly regular in all their conversation, what would be thought of God and religion? Or how should we savour the notion of an impure deity, taking pleasure to indulge the wickedness of men? And if justice alone have the whole management of affairs, and every act of sin be followed with an act of sudden vengeance, and the whole world become a flaming theatre, and all men held in a hopeless expectation of fiery indignation, and of judgment without mercy, what would become of that amiable representation, and the consolatory thoughts we have of God, and of that love and duty which some souls do bear towards him? Or if power should affect daily to show itself in unusual appearances and effects, in changing every hour the shapes of the terrestrial creatures, in perpetual quick innovations of the courses of the celestial, with a thousand more kinds of prodigious events that might be the hourly effects of unlimited power, how were the order of the world disturbed, and how unlovely an idea would it beget in every intelligent creature of him that made and rules it! Yet is it from no defect of mercy, that all men are not equally favoured and blessed of God; nor of justice, that a speedy vengeance is not taken of all; nor of power, that the world is not filled with astonishing wonders every day; but rather from their unexcessiveness, and that they make that blessed temperature where

they reside, and are exercised in so exact proportion, that nothing is ever done unworthy of him, who is, at once, both perfectly merciful, and just, and powerful, and wise, and hath all perfections eminently comprehended and united in his own most simple being. It were therefore besides the purpose to insist only what sovereign power, considered apart, might do; but we are to consider what may be congruous to him to do, who is infinitely wise and good, as well as powerful.

1. And, first, let it be weighed, how it may square with the divine wisdom, to give being to a world of reasonable creatures, and giving them only a short time of abode in being, to abandon them to a perpetual annihilation. Wisdom in any agent must needs suppose the intention of some valuable end of his action. And the divine wisdom, wherein it hath any end diverse from that which his pure goodness and benignity towards his creatures would incline him to, (which also we must conceive it most intent to promote and further,) cannot but have it chiefly in design; it being determined that his goodness should open itself and break forth into a creation, and that of reasonable creatures, so to manage his government over these (which indeed are the only subjects of government in the strict and proper notion of it) as may most preserve his authority, and keep up his just interest in them, both by recommending him to their fear and love; to possess them with that due and necessary reverence of him that may restrain them from contemptuous sinning; and so endear his government to them, as to engage them to a placid and free obedience. But how little

would it agree with this design of the divine wisdom, to have made man only for this temporary state! For,

1. How little would it tend to the begetting and settling that fear of God in the hearts of men, that were necessary to preserve his authority and government from a profane contempt; whereas daily experience shows, that there is now no difference made between them that fear God and them that fear him not, unless wherein the former are worse dealt with and more exposed to sufferings and wrongs: that, at least, it is often (yea for the most part) so, that to depart from iniquity is to make oneself a prey; that those who profess and evidence the most entire devotedness to God, and pay the greatest observance and duty to him, become a common scorn upon this very account, and are in continual danger to be eaten up as bread by those that call not upon God; while in the meantime the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, are not plagued as other men, nor in trouble as other men; and judgment is not here executed for wicked works in this world. If also nothing is to be expected, either of good or evil, in another, who is likely to be induced, in this case, to fear God or to be subject to him? And how unlike is this to the wisdom of the Supreme Ruler, to expose his most rightful and sovereign authority to the fearless and insolent affronts of his own revolted creatures, without any design of future reparation to it: as if he had created them on purpose only to curse him and die! But he hath prevented the occasion of so reproachful a censure, and thought fit to fill his word and the consciences of guilty sinners with threats and dreadful presages

of a future judgment and state of punishment ; to which he is no less concerned, both in point of wisdom and veracity, (and I may add of legal justice,) to make the event correspond, that he may neither be found to have omitted any due course for preventing or redress of so great an evil ; and that, if the threatening do not effectually overawe sinners, the execution may at least right himself : and that, in the meantime, he do not (that which would least of all become him, and which were most repugnant to his nature) made use of a solemn fiction to keep the world in order, and maintain his government by falsehood and deceit ; that is, by threatening what he knows shall never be.

2. Nor were there (in the case all along supposed) a more probable provision made, to conciliate and procure to the divine majesty the love which it is requisite he should have from the children of men. And this cannot but be thought another apt method for his wisdom to pitch upon, to render his government acceptable, and to engage men to that free and complacential subjection which is suitable to God. For how can that filial and dutiful affection ever be the genuine product or impress of such a representation of the case between God and them ; that is, that they shall be most indispensably obliged to devote their whole being and all their powers entirely to his service and interest ; exactly to observe his strictest laws, to keep under the severest restrain their most innate, reluctant inclinations ; and in the meantime expect the administrations of providence to be such, towards them, that they shall find harder usage all their days than his most insolent and irreconcilable enemies, and at last lose their very beings,

they know not how soon, and therewith (necessarily) all possibilities of any future recompence? Is this a likely way to procure love, and to captivate hearts into an affectionate and free obedience? Or what is it probable to produce, but a sour and sullen despondency, the extinction of all generous affection, and a temper more agreeable to a forced enthralment to some malignant, insulting genius, than a willing subjection to the God of all grace and love? And every one will be ready to say, There is little of wisdom in that government, the administration whereof is neither apt to beget fear nor love in those that are subject to it; but either through the want of the one to be despised, or to be regretted through the want of the other. And this being the very case, upon supposition of no future state, it seems altogether unworthy of the Divine wisdom, that such a creature should ever have been made as man, upon which no end is attainable, (as the course of providence commonly runs in this world,) in comparison whereof, it were not better and more honourable to his Maker, (whose interest it is the part of his wisdom to consult,) that he had never been. And therefore, as to God and the just and worthy designs of his glory, he would seem, upon this supposition, wholly made in vain.

2. And secondly, How congruous and agreeable would this supposition prove to the goodness of God? As that other attribute of wisdom doth more especially respect his own interest, so doth this the interest of his creatures: that is, if it be understood, not in a metaphysical, but in a moral sense; as it imports a propensity and steady bent of will unto benefaction, according to that of the

Psalmist, 'Thou art good and dost good.'¹ And this free and generous principle it is, which gives the first rise and beginning to all the designs any way respecting the well-being and happiness of creatures; which then infinite wisdom forms and manages to their full issues and accomplishment, guiding (as it were) the hand of almighty power in the execution of them.

That there should be a creation, we may conceive to be the first dictate of this immense goodness, which afterwards diffuses itself through the whole, in communications agreeable to the nature of every creature. So that even this inferior and less noble part, the earth, is full of the goodness of the Lord.² It creates first its own object, and then pours forth itself upon it with infinite delight, rewarding the expense with the pleasure of doing good. Now if we should suppose such a creature as man made only for that short time and low state which we see to be allotted him in this world, it were neither difficult nor enough to reconcile the hypothesis with strict justice, which upon the ground of absolute dominion may do what it will with its own; but the ill accord it seems to have with so large and abounding goodness, renders it very unlike the dispensation of the blessed God; no enjoyment being in that case afforded to this sort of creatures, agreeable to their common nature and capacity, either in degree or continuance.

Not in degree: for who sees not, that the nature of man is capable of greater things than he here enjoys? And where that capacity is rescued from the corruption that narrows and debases it, how

¹ Psalm cxix. 68.

² Ibid. xxxiii. 5.

sensibly do holy souls resent and bewail their present state, as a state of imperfection! With how fervent and vehement desires and groans do they aspire and pant after a higher and more perfect! 'We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed,' (that is not enough—to be delivered out of the miseries of life, by laying down this passive part, is not that which will terminate their desires,) 'but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.'¹ 'Theirs are not brutal groans, the complaint of oppressed sensitive nature under a present evil; but rational and spiritual, the expressions of desire strongly carried to pursue an apprehended suitable good. The truest notion we can yet have of the primitive nature and capacity of man, is by beholding it in its gradual restitution. And is it agreeable to the goodness of God, to put such a nature into any, and withhold the suitable object? As if it were a pleasure to him to behold the work of his hands spending itself in weary strugglings towards him, and vexed all the while it continues in being, with the desire of what it shall never enjoy; and which he hath made it desire, and therein encouraged it to expect?

Nor in continuance: for I suppose it already evident, that the nature of man is capable (in respect of his principal part) of perpetuity, and so of enjoying a felicity hereafter that shall be permanent and know no end. And it seems no way congruous to so large goodness, to stifle a capacity whereof it was itself the author, and destroy its own work. For if the being of man is intended for so

¹ 2 Cor. v. 4.

short a continuance, either he may have the knowledge of this determination concerning him, or not. If he cannot have the knowledge of it, why should any one say what they cannot know ; or put such a thing upon God, that is so vilely reflecting and dishonourable to him ? If he may have the knowledge of it, then doth he seem a creature made for torment, while by an easy reflection upon himself he may discern, he is not incapable of a perpetual state, and is yet brought forth into the light to be ere long extinguished and shut up in everlasting darkness. And who can think this a thing worthy of infinite and eternal goodness ? Besides, (as hath been insisted before,) that this torture, proceeding from so sad an expectation, cannot but be most grievous and afflictive to the best. Whence the apostle tells us, that Christians, if in this life only they had hope, were of all men most miserable :¹ so that it were more desirable never to have been. If any yet fall hereafter into a state to which they would prefer perpetual annihilation, inasmuch as it is wholly by their own default, it no way reflects upon Divine goodness. But it would be a dishonourable reflection rather upon that Author and Fountain of all goodness, if he should not express himself wise and just as well as good ; as it would upon a man, especially a ruler over others, if that which we call good nature were conjunct with stolidity, or an insensibleness of whatsoever affronts to his person and government. Upon the whole, therefore, it seems most repugnant to these great attributes of the Divine Being, to have made man only for this present state ; that to think so, were to

conceive unworthily of him, as if he had acted much beneath himself, and done a vain thing in making such a creature, no end being attainable by it, which we can suppose either his wisdom or goodness to aim at.

If any would imagine to themselves an expedient, by supposing an eternal succession of human generations, upon whom the wisdom and goodness of God might have a perpetual exercise in the government and sustentation of them for their appointed times, this would be far from satisfying as to either, but would rather increase the difficulty; for there would be the same temptation upon all the individuals, to contemn or regret the government of their Maker. So that he should hereby even eternize his own reproach; and should always, in every succession, have still the same craving appetites returning, and expectations never to be satisfied, which were as repugnant to all he hath discovered to us of his nature, as any thing we can suppose. Though some persons of a light and desultory humour, might imagine to themselves a pleasure in it, if they had the power to make such a rotation of things, rising and falling, coming and passing away, at their beck and command; and such as were of a sanguinary temper, might sport themselves in raising up and lopping off lives at pleasure, with an arbitrary hand: yet sure they would never gain by it the esteem of being either wise or good; and would, it is like, in time grow weary of the sport. But to form to ourselves such ideas of the blessed God, were an injury not inferior to the very denial of his being.

His providence towards the inferior creatures hath no resemblance of any such thing; whom his

bounty sustains agreeably to their natures, who have no foresight of their own cessation from being, to keep them in a continual death by the expectation of it; and who serve to valuable and reasonable purposes while they are continued; for they are useful, partly to the sustentation of man, and partly to his instruction, in order to his higher ends. And though each individual of them do not actually so, it is sufficient that the several kinds of them are naturally apt thereto, which are propagated according to a settled course and law of nature, in their individuals. And if all immediately serve not man, yet they do it mediately, in serving those that more immediately do. Besides, that when such a work was to be done, as the furnishing out and accomplishing this lower world, it was meet all things should be in number, weight, and measure, and correspond in every part. As if one build a house for entertainment, though the more noble rooms only do come in view, yet all the rest are made answerably decent, on supposition that they may. It was becoming the august and great Lord of this world, that it have in it, not only what may sustain the indigent, but gratify the contemplative by fresh variety; who would be apt to grow remiss by conversing only with what were of every day's observation. Nor was that a low end, when such contemplation hath so direct a tendency to raise a considering mind to the sight, and love, and praise of the Supreme Being, that hath stamped so lively signatures and prints of his own perfections upon all his works. If it be said, man might be in the same kind serviceable to the contemplation of angels, though he were himself never to know any other

than this mortal state; it is true that he might so; but yet the incongruities were no way salved, of God's putting a capacity and expectation into his nature of a better state; of his dealing so hardly with them, that he hath procured to love him; of his never vindicating their high contempt that spent their days in rebellion against him: besides, that these were ill precedents, and no pleasant themes for the view of an angelical mind. And if they see a nature extinct, capable of their state, what might they suspect of their own? So that, which way soever we turn our thoughts, we still see that man's mortality and liableness to an unavoidable death, abstracted from the thoughts of another state, carry that constant aspect, as if all men were made in vain.

What remains then, but that we conclude hence, we ought not too much, or too long, thus to abstract, nor too closely confine our eye to this dark and gloomy theme, death and the grave, or withhold it from looking further. For far be it from us to think the wise and holy God hath given being to man—and consequently exercised a long-continued series of providence, through so many successive ages towards him, in vain. Nothing but a prospect of another state can solve the knot and work through the present difficulty, can give us a true account of man and what he was made for. Therefore since it would be profane and impious, sad and uncomfortable, a blasphemy to our Maker, a torture to ourselves, to speak it as our settled apprehension and judgment, that God hath made man to no purpose; we are obliged and concerned, both in justice to him and compassion to ourselves, so to represent the case, as that we may be able to

remove so unworthy and black a thought to the greatest distance from us, both in itself and whatsoever practice would be consequent thereto: that is, to conclude, that certainly there must be another state after this, and accordingly steer our course. The improvement then of the foregoing discourse will have a double aspect:—on our judgments and practice.

I. On our judgments; to settle this great principle of truth in them:—the certain futurity of another state after this life is over, unto which this present state is only preparatory and introductive. For whereas we can never give a rational account why such a creature as man was made, if we confine all our apprehensions concerning him to his present state on earth: let them once transcend those narrow limits, fly over into eternity and behold him made for an everlasting state hereafter, and the difficulty now vanishes, the whole affair looks with a comely and befitting aspect.

For we may now represent the case thus to ourselves:—that man was put into this terrestrial state and dwelling, by the wise and righteous designation of his great Creator and Lord, that his loyalty to him, amidst the temptations and enticements of sensible things, might be tried awhile; that revolting from him, he is only left to feel here the just smart of his causeless defection; that yet such further methods are used for his recovery, as are most suitable to his so impaired state. An allayed light shines to him in the midst of darkness, that his feebler eye may receive a gradual illumination, and behold God in those more obscure discoveries which he now vouchsafes of himself, till by degrees he be won to take up good thoughts of him, and

return into an acquaintance and friendship with him; which once begun here, shall be hereafter perfected in eternal fruitions. The offence and wrong done to his Maker, he in a strange unthought-of way makes compensation of to himself; and testifies his reconcileableness, and persuades a reconciliation upon such terms, and by so endearing mediums, as might melt and mollify hearts of adamant; and shall effectually prevail with many to yield themselves the subjects and instances of his admired goodness for ever; while others lie only under the natural consequents and just resentments of their unremedied enmity and folly. So are the glorious issues of God's dispensation towards man, and the wise and merciful conduct of his equal government, worthily celebrated through the days of eternity with just acclamation and praises. We can fasten upon nothing exceptionable or unaccountable, yea, or that is not highly laudable and praiseworthy, in this course of procedure. Therefore, though now we behold a dark cloud of mortality hanging over the whole human race; though we see the grave still devouring and still unsatisfied, and that all are successively drawn down into it; and we puzzle ourselves to assign a reason why such a creature was made a reasonable being, capable of an everlasting duration, to visit the world only and vanish, to converse a short space with objects and affairs so far beneath it, and retire we know not whither: if yet our eye follow him through the dark paths of the region of death, till at the next appearance we behold him clothed with immortality, and fitted to an endless state, the wonder is over, and our amazement quickly ceases.

Wherefore let us thus bethink ourselves, and consider: Surely he that made this great universe, and disposed all the sorts, stations, and motions of creatures in it in so exquisite order and method, cannot but be a most perfectly wise and intellectual agent, and therefore cannot be supposed to have done any thing to no purpose; much less when all the inferior creatures have ends visibly answering the exigency of their natures, to have made so excellent a creature as man, the nobler part of his lower creation, in vain; that he only should be without his proportionable end, and after a short continuance in being, return to nothing, without leaving it conjecturable what he was made for. This were so intolerable an incongruity, and so unlike the footsteps that every where else appear in the Divine wisdom and goodness, that we cannot but inquire further into this matter, and conclude at last, that he was made for some higher purposes than are within the reach of our sight, and hath his principal part yet to act upon another stage, within the veil, that shall never be taken down. The future immortality of man seems, therefore, so certainly grounded upon what is discovered and generally acknowledged touching the nature of God and his most peculiar and essential perfections, that unless we were further put to prove the existence of a God, which to them that are rational need not, and to them that are not were in vain, there can no reasonable doubt remain concerning it.

2. Wherefore the further use we have to make of the matter proposed, is in reference to our practice; which it may fitly serve both to correct and reprove, and also to direct and guide.

1. It administers the ground of just rebuke, that since, if we terminate our thoughts and designs upon things only on this side the grave, it would seem we were wholly made in vain; and we do yet so generally employ our cares and endeavours about such things, and even the vilest and most despicable of these; and so live not to our own dishonour only, but to the reproach of our Maker, as if he made us for no more worthy ends. And let us but impartially debate the matter with ourselves. Can we, in sober reason, think we were made only for such ends as the most only pursue? have we any pretence to think so? or can it enter into our souls to believe it? Would not men be ashamed to profess such a belief; or to have it written in their foreheads, these are the only ends they are capable of? Then might one read, such a man was born to put others in mind of his predecessor's name, and only lest such a family should want an heir: such a one to consume such an estate, and devour the provenue of so many farms and manors: such a one to fill so many bags and coffers, to sustain the riot of him that succeeds: some created to see and make sport; to run after hawks and dogs, or spend the time which their weariness redeems from converse with brutes, in making themselves such, by drinking away the little residue of wit and reason they have left; mixing with this genteel exercise, their impure and scurrilous drolleries, that they may befriend one another with the kind occasion of proving themselves to be yet of human race, by this only demonstration remaining to them, that they can laugh; which medium, if the wisdom of the just were known, would be found so pregnant as

to afford them a double conclusion, and be as effectual, oftentimes, to prove them fools as men. Others one might read born to trouble the world, to disquiet the neighbourhood, and be the common plague of all about them; at least, if they have any within their reach and power that are wiser and more sober than themselves, or that value not their souls at so cheap a rate as they: others made to blaspheme their Maker, to rent the sacred name of God, and make proof of their high valour and the gallantry of their brave spirits, by bidding a defiance to Heaven, and proclaiming their heroic contempt of the Deity and of all religion. As if they had persuaded themselves into an opinion, that because they have had so prosperous success in the high achievements of conquering their humanity and baffling their own fear, and reason, and conscience, death also will yield them as easy a victory, or be afraid to encounter men of so redoubted courage; that the God of heaven, rather than offend them, will not stick to repeal his laws for their sakes, or never exact the observance of them from persons of their quality; that they shall never be called to judgment, or be complimented only there with great respect, as persons that bore much sway in their country, and could number so many hundreds or thousands a year; that at least, the infernal flames will never presume to touch so worthy personages; that devils will be awed by their greatness, and fear to seize them, lest they should take it for an affront. No conceit can be imputed to these men absurd enough to overmatch the absurdity of their practice. They can themselves think nothing more gross and shameful than what they daily are not ashamed to act. For what

absurdity can be compassed in a thought greater than what appears in a course of life managed in perpetual hostility to all principles of reason and humanity? And either they must own all the impious folly of such thoughts, or confess upon other accounts, an equal infatuation in their thinking faculty itself. For either they think their course justifiable, or they do not. If they do, how fatally are all things inverted in their depraved minds! Wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, good and evil, seem to them transformed into one another, and are no longer to be known by their own names. The common notions of all mankind are but blind fancies in comparison of their later and clearer illumination; and the ancient religious sentiments of all former ages, dreams and follies to their admired new light. Their wise and rare discoveries, that they and all things came by chance, that this world hath no owner or Lord, (because they never had wit or patience to consider the nonsense of them; and though they never, any of them, had the luck to see one clod of earth, or grain of sand, start up into being out of nothing; much less ground to think, that such a world should of itself do so,) are reason enough with them, to mock at the Eternal Being, and attempt to jeer religion out of the world, and all other men out of their reason and wits, as they have themselves. And sure this must be their only pretence, and their atheism the best reason, upon which to justify their constant practice: for who can think, while he sees them not yet in chains, they should be so perfectly mad, as to acknowledge only such a Deity, the author and

ruler of all things, whose favour were worth nothing, or to be procured by affronts; to whom contempt were a sacrifice, and the violation of whatsoever is sacred, the most effectual propitiation? or acknowledge him for a God, whom they hope to overpower, and to prosper in a war against him?

And if they acknowledge none at all, and this be the fundamental article of their creed, that there is indeed none; then can no man charge them with any thought more grossly foolish than their own; nor can they devise to say any thing, by which more certainly to argue themselves bereft of the common understanding of men. For who that is not so, if he only take notice of his own being, may not as certainly conclude the existence of a God, as that two and two make four? Or what imagination can be too absurd to have place in that mind, that can imagine this creation to be a casualty? He would be thought beside himself that should say the same of the composition of a clock or a watch, though it were a thousand times more supposable. But if they do not justify themselves, to what purpose is it further to press them with absurdities, that persist in constant self-contradiction; or that have not so much left them of rational sensation, as to feel in their own minds the pressure of the very greatest absurdity? If they only presume they do well, because they have never asked themselves the question, or spent any thoughts about it; this speaks as much a besotted mind as any of the rest, and is as unworthy of a reasonable creature. Why have they the power of thinking? Or who do in any case more generally

incur the censure of imprudence and folly, than they who have only this plea for their actions, that they did not consider? especially when the case is so plain, and the most sudden reflection would discover the iniquity and danger of their course. And one would think nothing should be more obvious, or more readily occur to the mind of a man, than to contemplate himself; and taking notice there is such a creature in the world, furnished with such abilities and powers, to consider, what was I made for? what am I to pitch upon as my proper end? nor any thing appear more horrid to him, than to cross the very ends of his creation.

2. It may also be improved to the directing of our practice. For which purpose we may hence take this general rule, that it be such as becomes the expectation of a future state: for what else is left us, since in our present state we behold nothing but vanity? We see thus stands our case, that we must measure ourselves by one of these apprehensions—either we are made in vain, or we are made for a future state. And can we endure to live according to the former, as if we were impertinencies in the creation, and had no proper business in it? What ingenuous person would not blush to be always in the posture of a useless hang-by; to be still hanging on, where he hath nothing to do; that if he be asked, Sir, what is your business here? he hath nothing to say? Or can we bear it, to live as if we came into the world by chance, or rather by mistake, as though our creation had been a misadventure, a thing that would not have been done had it been better thought on? And that our Maker had overshot himself, and been guilty of an oversight in giving us such a

being? Who, that hath either just value for himself, or any reverence for his Maker, could endure either to undergo the reproach, or be guilty of the blasphemy, which this would import? And who can acquit himself of the one or the other, that lives not in some measure agreeably to the expectation of somewhat beyond this present life? Let us, therefore, gird up the loins of our minds, and set our faces as persons designing for another world; so shaping our course, that all things may concur to signify to men the greatness of our expectations. We otherwise proclaim to the world (to our own and our Creator's wrong) that we have reasonable souls given us to no purpose. We are, therefore, concerned and obliged both to aim at that worthy end, and to discover and make it visible that we do so.

Nor is a design for an immortal state so mean and inglorious, or so irrational and void of a solid ground, that we have any cause either to decline or conceal it; either not to retain, or to be ashamed of our hope. Nor is there any thing to be done in prosecution of it, so unworthy as to need a corner, or merit to be done as a work of darkness. Neither yet is it a vain-glorious ostentation, or the affectation of making show of an excellency above the vulgar pitch, that I persuade to; but a modest sober avowing of our design and hope; neither making any near approach to a proud arrogance on the one hand, nor a mean pusillanimity on the other. Truly great and generous spirits know how to carry under secular honour with that prudent and graceful decorum, as shall signify a just owning of themselves without insolence towards others. Real worth, though it do not vaunt, will show it-

self; and while it doth not glare, yet cannot forbear to shine. We should endeavour the excellency of a spirit refined from earth and dross, and aspiring towards a state of immortality, may express itself, and shine in its native lustre; with its own, not with borrowed beams; with a constant, even, natural, not an unequal artificial light; that all that will may see, by the steady tendency of our course, that we are aiming at the great things of another world; though we all the while are not so much solicitous to have our end and purpose known, as to obtain it.

And, verily, since the vile sons of the earth, the men of sense, that aim at no other end than to gratify their brutal appetite with such pleasure as is only to be compassed within a short life's time in this world, and who live to the reproach of their Maker and of mankind; do not go about to hide the infamy of their low design, or conceal the degenerate baseness of their mean spirits; but while they make their belly their God, and only mind earthly things, do also glory in their shame; how much were it beneath the state and spirit of the sons of God, that are worthily designing for a glorious immortality, to be ashamed of their glory, or think of stealing a passage to heaven in the dark! No: let them know, it is not only too mean a thing for them to involve themselves in the common spirit of the sensual world, but even to seem to do so: and that this is so foul and ignominious a thing, as whereof they are concerned, not to be free from the guilt only, but the suspicion. Those worthy souls that in former and darker days were engaged in seeking the heavenly country, thought it became them to confess themselves pilgrims and

strangers on the earth;¹ and therein to declare plainly, that they were seeking that better country. Which confession and plain declaration we need not understand to be merely verbal, but practical and real also; such as might be understood to be the language of their lives, and of a constant uniform course of actions agreeable to such a design.

Let us, therefore, bethink ourselves, what temper of mind and manner of life may be most conformable to this design, and best become persons pretending to it; whereupon we should soon find our own thoughts instructing us, that such things as these would be most becoming and fit in reference thereto; and which we may therefore take as so many particular directions how to govern our spirits, and behave ourselves answerably to so great an expectation.

1. That we endeavour for a calm indifferency and dispassionate temper of mind towards the various objects and affairs that belong to this present life. There are very narrow limits already set, by the nature of the things themselves, to all the real objective value that such things have in them; and it is the part of wisdom and justice to set the proportionable bounds to all the thoughts, cares, and passions we will suffer to stir in our minds in reference to them. Nothing is a more evident acknowledged character of a fool, than upon every slight occasion to be in a transport. To be much taken with empty things betokens an empty spirit. It is a part of manly fortitude to have a soul so fenced against foreign impressions, as little to be moved with things that have little in

¹ Heb. xi.

them; to keep our passions under a strict and steady command, that they be easily retractable and taught to obey; not to move till severe reason have audited the matter, and pronounced the occasion just and valuable. In which case the same manly temper will not refuse to admit a proportionable stamp and impress from the occurring object. For it is equally a prevarication from true manhood to be moved with every thing and with nothing: the former would speak a man's spirit a feather, the latter a stone. A total apathy and insensibleness of external occurrents hath been the aim of some, but never the attainment of the highest pretenders. And if it had, yet ought it not to have been their boast; as upon sober thoughts it cannot be reckoned a perfection. But it should be endeavoured, that the passions which are not to be rooted up, (because they are of nature's planting,) be yet so discreetly checked and depressed, that they grow not to that enormous tallness as to overtop a man's intellectual power, and cast a dark shadow over his soul. A rational authority must be maintained, a continency and dominion of one's-self, that there be not an impotent profusion, and we be never so affected with any thing, but that the object may still be able to warrant and justify the affection, both for the nature and degree of it. Which rule, if we strictly observe and apply it to the present case, we shall rarely meet with any temporal concern that ought to move us much, both for the littleness of such things themselves, and that we have so unspeakably greater things in our view and design.

In conformity, therefore, to our so great expectation, we ought more particularly to watch and repress our inclinations, appetites, and affections

towards each several sort and kind of objects, which time and this present state hath within the confines of it. As, how contemptuously should we look upon that empty vanity of being rich! How coldly and carelessly should we pursue, how unconcernedly should we lose, any thing that might entitle us to that name! The pursuit of so despicable a trifle, with violent and peremptory desire, so as hereby to suffer a diversion from our design for another world, as to make our eternal hope less than nothing, (for to any man's calm and sober thoughts, this will be found as little,) and so will amount to a total quitting of all our pretensions to a better, future state; that is, when so we indulge this odd, irrational, this wildly fanciful, and purely humoursome appetite, (of which no man can give any tolerable account,) that it becomes ravenous, when it devours a man's time, his thoughts, the strength and vigour of his spirit, swallows up his nobler designs, and makes an idle doting about he knows not what, or why, his main business. Especially when conscience itself becomes a sacrifice to this impure unhallowed idol; and the question is wholly waved, "Is this thing just and honest?" and nothing is considered, but that it is commodious and gainful. Yet, (if herein we will take upon us to pass a judgment upon other men,) it will be no way ingenuous or just, that in smaller and disputable matters, we make our own apprehensions a measure and standard to them. They are commonly aptest to do so, who have least studied the matter, and have nothing but their ignorant confidence to entitle them to the dictator's chair; where, however, having placed themselves, they liberally bestow their censures and reproaches on all that think it not fit to throw

away their own eyes, and see with their bad ones ; and conclude them to have no conscience, who go not according to theirs ; and that they cannot but have some base design, who in any thing presume to swerve from their judgment, especially if the advantage, in any temporal respect, happen to lie on that side from which they dissent.

Nothing can indeed so comport with the spirit and design of one who believes himself made for another world, as a brave and generous disdain of stooping to the lure of present emolument, so as thereby to be drawn into any the least thing which he judges not defensible by the severest rules of reason and religion ; which were to quit a serene heaven for mire and dirt. There is nothing in this world of that value, or worthy to be bought so dear, as with the loss and forfeiture of the rest and repose of a mind, quiet, benign, peaceful, and well pleased with itself. It is enough, if one find himself, by difficulties which he cannot master, constrained to dissent from persons above exception wise and pious, placidly, and without unbecoming confidence, to go on in the way which his present judgment allows, carrying with him a modest sense of human infirmity, and how possible it is, the error may lie on his own part ; having yet to relieve him against that supposition, the clearness of his own spirit, the conscience of his innocency of any ill disposition or design, of his instructibleness and preparedness to admit a conviction if he err. And be he never so fully persuaded about the thing in difference, yet to consider the smallness of it, and how little cause he hath of glorying, if he know in this matter more than others, who possibly know ten times more than he, in far greater

and more important matters. But, in matters clearly determined by common agreed principles, to prevaricate out of an indulgence to mere appetite, to give up oneself to practices apparently immoral and flagitious, only to comply with, and lest he should not satisfy sensual desires, is the character of one who hath abandoned the common hope of all good men; and who, that he may have his lot with beasts in this world, dreads not to have it with devils in the other. And it is upon the same ground, equally unbecoming them that pretend to this hope, to be visibly concerned and discomposed for losses and disappointments they may meet with in this kind, when unexpected events withstand their having much of this world, or deprive them of what they have. It becomes them that reckon their good things are to come hereafter, to show by their equal deportment and cheerful aspect in any such case, that they apprehend not themselves touched in their most considerable interests. Yea, though they suffer not losses only, but injuries; and besides that they are damnified, (as much as such things can signify,) they find themselves wronged; and though further trouble and danger threaten them in the same kind, they should evidence how much it is above the power either of chance or malice, not only to make them miserable, but even to disturb or make them sad; that they are not happy by a casualty; and that their happiness is not in the command of them who cannot command their own; that it only depends on the inward constitution and frame of their own spirits, attempered to the blessed objects of the invisible world, whereby they have the assurance of enjoying them fully hereafter, and the

present grateful relishes thereof in the meantime. And hence, that they can be happy without the world's kindness, and in despite of its unkindness; that they have somewhat within them, by which they are enabled to rejoice in tribulation; being troubled on every side, yet not to be distressed; to "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing within themselves they have in heaven a better and enduring substance;" not to suffer or discover any perturbation or disquiet; not to have their souls ruffled, or put into disorder; nor let any cloud sit on their brow, though dark and dismal ones seem to hang over their heads.

And the same absurdity it would be to indulge to themselves an unbounded liberty of sensual pleasures. For that looks like a despair of futurity; as if a day were a mighty gain for eating and drinking, because to-morrow we must die. An abstemious shyness here is comely; a tasting only the delights, whereof others suffer themselves to be ingulfed; a prudent reservedness and restraint, so as that what shall cause with others an unbecoming transport and diffusion of themselves, be entertained not with a cynical morosity, but a pleasant composure and well-ordered complacence; keeping a due and even distance between levity and sourness. Yet there is a natural retiredness in some men's tempers; and in others an aversion to pleasures, proceeding only of a rational estimate of their emptiness and vanity in themselves, which may, however, much fall short of what the present case requires; the exigency whereof is no way satisfied, but where such a moderation is the product of a comparative judgment between the delights of the present and those of the future

state; when one so enjoys any thing in this world, as to be under the power of nothing because of the more prevailing influence he is under from the power of the world to come; when his faith is the parent of his sobriety, and his denial of worldly lusts flows from the expectation of the blessed hope; when, because he more highly prizes, and lest he forfeit eternal pleasures, he so behaves himself towards all temporary ones, as neither to abuse those that are lawful, nor to be abused by the unlawful; not to exceed in the one, nor to touch with the other.

Thus also ought we to look upon secular honours and dignity; neither to make them the matter of our admiration, affectation, or envy. We are not to behold them with a libidinous eye, or let our hearts thirst after them; not to value ourselves the more for them, if they be our lot, nor let our eye be dazzled with admiration, or distorted with envy, when we behold them the ornaments of others. We are not to express that contempt of them, which may make a breach on civility, or disturb the order and policy of the communities whereto we belong. Though this be none of our own country, and we are still to reckon ourselves but as pilgrims and strangers while we are here; yet it becomes not strangers to be insolent or rude in their behaviour, where they sojourn, how much soever greater value they may justly have of their own country. We should pay to secular greatness a due respect, without idolatry, and neither despise nor adore it; considering, at once, the requisite-ness of such a thing in the present state, and the excelling glory of the other. As, though in prudence and good manners we would abstain from

provoking affronts towards an American sachim, or sagamore, if we did travel or converse in their country; yet we could have no great veneration for them, having beheld the royal pomp and grandeur of our own prince; especially he who were himself a courtier and favourite to his much more glorious sovereign, whom he is shortly to attend at home, could have no great temptation to sue for offices and honours, or bear a very profound intrinsic homage, to so mean and unexpressive an image of regality.

It can surely no way become one who seeks and expects the honour and glory which is conjunct with immortality,¹ to be fond of the airy titles that poor mortals are wont to please themselves with; or to make one among the obsequious servile company of them whose business it is to court a vanishing shadow, and tempt a dignified trifle into the belief it is a deity; to sneak and cringe for a smile from a supercilious brow, and place his heaven in the disdainful favours of him, who, it may be, places his own as much in thy homage, so that it befalls into the supplicant's power to be his creator, whose creature he affects to be. What eye would not soon spy out the grossness of this absurdity? and what ingenuity would not blush to be guilty of it? Let then the joyful expectants of a blessed immortality pass by the busy throng of this fanciful exchange; and behold it with as little concern, as a grave statesman would the sports and ludicrous actions of little children; and with as little inclination of mind as he would have to leave his business and go play with them; bestowing there only the transient glance of a careless or a

¹ Rom. ii. 7.

compassionate eye, and still reserving their intent steady views for the glorious hope set before them. And with a proportionable unconcernedness should they look on, and behold the varied alterations of political affairs, no further minding, either the constitution or administration of government, than as the interest of the universal Ruler, the weal and safety of their prince or country, are concerned in them. But how many, under the specious pretence of a public spirit, make it their whole business to inspect and pry into these affairs, even with a most meanly private and interested one; watching over the public beyond the bounds of their own calling; and with no other design, than to catch at an opportunity of serving their own turns! How many that stand perpetually at a gaze, in a suspenseful expectation how things will go; either joying or hoping to behold any favourable prognostics to the party whereto they have thought fit to addict themselves; glad or desirous to see it engross power, and grasp the sum of things, not from any sense of duties towards God's vicegerents, not from love of justice or study of public advantage, but that the happier lot may befall or remain to themselves. These men are absorbed, and swallowed up of the spirit of this world, concentered only to this sublunary region, incorporate with the earth, so as to partake in all its pangs and paroxysms, and tremulous motions. By the beating of their pulse you may know the state of things in this lower world, as if they were of the same piece, and had but one soul with it. Let them see times and a state of things on earth suitable to their genius, and you put a new life and soul into them. Reduce them to a despair

here, and (so little communion have they with the affairs of that other country) the most specious inviting representation that can be made to them of the world to come hinders not, but their hearts languish and die, and become as stones within them.

But that lofty soul that bears about with it the living apprehensions of its being made for an everlasting state, so earnestly intends it, that it shall ever be a descent and vouchsafement with it, if it allow itself to take notice what busy mortals are doing in their (as they reckon them) grand negotiations here below. And if there be a suspicion of an aptness or inclination to intermeddle in them to their prejudice to whom that part belongs, can heartily say to it, (as the philosopher to the jealous tyrant,) We of this academy are not at leisure to mind so mean things; we have somewhat else to do than to talk of you. He hath still the image before his eye, of this world vanishing and passing away; of the other, with the everlasting affairs and concernment of it, even now ready to take place and fill up all the stage: and can represent to himself the vision (not from a melancholic fancy or crazed brain, but a rational faith and a sober well-instructed mind) of the world dissolving, monarchies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones tumbling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge; the solemn state of his majestic person; the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue; the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal King; the swift flight of his royal guards,

sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal silent attention of all to that loud sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds from every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards, to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host: the judgment set, the books opened, the frightful amazed looks of surprised wretches; the equal administration of the final judgment; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; the heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up.

And now, what spirit is there any more left in him towards the trivial affairs of a vanishing world? How indifferent a thing is it with him who bears himself highest in a state of things whereof he foresees the certain hastening end! Though he will not neglect the duty of his own place, is heartily concerned to have the knowledge and fear of God more generally obtained in this apostate world, and is ready to contribute his utmost regular endeavours for the preservation of common peace and order in subserviency hereto; yet abstractedly from these considerations, and such as have been before mentioned, he is no more concerned who is uppermost, than one would, passing by a swarm of flies, which hath the longest wings, or which excels the rest in sprightliness or briskness of motion. And for himself, he can insert this amongst his most serious thanksgivings, that while the care is incumbent on others, of watching

over the public peace and safety, he may sit still and converse with God and his own more sedate thoughts. How secure is he in this, that infinite wisdom governs the world! that all things shall be disposed the best way, to the best and most valuable ends! that an afflicted state shall never befall unto good men, but when it is fittest and most conducive it should do so! that the prosperity carnal appetite covets, is never denied them, but when it would be pernicious! How calm is he in the midst of external troubles! how placid and serene a spirit inhabits his peaceful breast! When all things are shaken round about him, he is not shaken. He bears all sorts of troubles, but creates none to others, nor is disturbed by any himself. But they that delight to see this world rolling or fixed, as they most serve their private purposes, and have a perpetual quarrel with it, while it looks not kindly upon them; their life is bound up in it, and their pretences to another are but the languid, faint notions of what they never heartily believe nor desire. Upon the whole matter, nothing is more agreeable to this great expectation, than a steady restraint and moderation of our passions towards things without us; that is, all the several sorts of external objects and affairs, that so variously invite and tempt our observation and regard in this our present state.

2. I next add: a further congruity, if we pretend to this expectation, is, that we be not overmuch taken up in minding the body. For this looks like a design (or that inconsistent wish) to have our present state perpetuated; and that the thoughts are remote from us of a change for a better. As if notwithstanding all that the Divine

goodness hath promised concerning the future inheritance of the free and heaven-born seed, this did still lie nearest to our hearts, O that Ishmael might live in thy sight! and that the belief did miserably languish with us, of any better portion than what our eyes do already behold; together with the apprehension of a spiritual being in us, to be ripened into a complete and actual capacity of enjoying what is better. It is true, that all the exorbitant workings of those meaner and ignoble passions that are moved by objects and occasions without and foreign to us, have the body for their first and last, their spring and source, their centre and end. But thence it becomes the more proper and requisite, that we draw nearer this their seat and centre, and strike at the root; and in killing that inordinate love and solicitude for the body, mortify them all at once. We are indeed so far to comply with the pleasure of our Maker, as not to despise the mean abode which he hath assigned us for awhile in the body: but withal, to take heed lest we so cross and resist it, as to make caring for the body our whole business; which he hath only enjoined us in subserviency to an unspeakably greater and more important business. Its health and welfare ought, upon very valuable accounts, to be carefully preserved by all prudent means; but to indulge its slothful desires, and comply with its licentious wild cravings, is far beneath us, a base unmanning of ourselves, and would signify, as if so absurd a conceit had passed with us into a settled judgment, that a reasonable immortal spirit was created only to tend and serve a brute. It is monstrous to behold, with how common consent multitudes that professedly agree in the belief of

the immortal nature of their souls, do yet agree to debase and enslave them to the meanest servility to their mortal bodies; so as these are permitted to give laws to them, to prescribe them rules of living, and what their daily employment shall be. For observe the designs they drive, and what is the tendency of their actions and affairs, (whence the judgment is to be made concerning their inward thoughts, deliberations, and resolves,) and is not the body the measure and mark of them all? What import or signification is there in this course, of a design for futurity? And (which increases the folly of it to a wonder) they can make a shift to go on thus from year to year, and take no notice of the absurdity! They agree to justify each one himself, and one another. The commonness of the course takes away all sense of the horrid madness of it. And because each doth as the rest do, they seem to imagine they all do well, and that there is nothing exceptionable in the case; and go on, as the silly sheep, “not the way they ought, but which they see others go before them.”¹

But, if any place could be found for calm and sober thoughts, what would be reckoned a greater impertinency, than to be at so great pains for maintaining a bodily life, without considering what that life shall serve for? to employ our utmost care to live, but to live for we know not what? It becomes us to be patient of the body, not fond,—to treat and use our bodies as things shortly to be put off and laid aside,—to care for them, not for their own, but the work’s sake we have to do in them, and leave it to them to indulge and pamper the

¹ Non qua eundum est sed qua itur.—Sen.

body, who expect never to live out of it,—not to concern ourselves, that the circumstances of our bodily state be such as will gratify our appetites, but answer the ends for which our Maker thought fit we should live awhile in the body,—reckoning with ourselves, we are lodged in these mean receptacles (though somewhat commodiously, yet) but for a little while, and for great purposes; and more minding our journey and home, than our entertainment in our inn,—contentedly bearing the want of bodily accommodations that are not easily to be compassed, and the pressure of unavoidable bodily infirmities; not much pitying ourselves because of them; nor deeply regretting it, if wants and pains pinch our flesh; nay, though we see the outward man perishing, so we can but find the inward renewing day by day.

3. That we set ourselves with the whole intention of our souls, to mind the concernments of the future state, the invisible things of the other world; and direct the main stream of our thoughts, desires, hopes, and joys thitherward. For how highly justifiable and becoming is it, that we principally mind the state and things we are made for! We should therefore make these familiar to ourselves, and use our spirits to those more noble and pleasant themes; recounting often, how unworthy it is of them to grovel in the dust, or choose the objects of their converse by such measures only as are taken from sense. It is an iniquity which, though God may be so gracious to us as to forgive, we should not easily forgive to ourselves, that we have so often chosen to converse with empty trifles, while so great things have invited our thoughts in vain. Their remoteness from sense hath little of

excuse in it, and unworthy a reasonable creature. Methinks they should be ashamed to allege it, who consider themselves furnished with an intellectual power, that doth, in many other instances, control the judgment of sense, and impeach it of falsehood. Would we not blush to profess it for a principle, that there is nothing real that exceeds the sphere of our sense? We would reckon it a part of modesty not to ascribe too much to our own understandings, or presume too far upon our intellectual ability, against the judgment of sage and knowing persons. How is it then, that we think it not immodest to oppose the apprehensions of our dull and incapacious sense to the common faith and reason of all good and wise men that are or have been in the world, as well as our own? If we have not seen what the state of things is in the other world, are we not told? and have we not enough to assure us, that, it is he hath told us, whose nature cannot suffer him to impose upon us, or represent things otherwise than they are? Who else can be the author of so common a persuasion? If any man had been the first inventor of the opinion,—that there is another state of things to succeed to this, would he not have assumed it to himself, that he was so? would he not have owned it, and gloried in it? Or would not some or other of his proselyted disciples have preserved his name and memory, and transmitted them to posterity? Could so vast a sect be without a head or master, known and celebrated among men?

Less plausible opinions find some owners; why is it not said, who was the first broacher of this? And if he can find no other parent for it, but he who was the Parent of our beings, how grateful

should such a discovery be to us, both for his sake and its own? Upon his account, we should surely think it worthy to be believed; and upon its own, to be considered and seriously thought on, with greatest delight and sense of pleasure.

Many things that we reckon considerable upon much lower accounts, we so believe, as to let them engage our hearts, and influence our practice, upon much lower evidence. How entirely are men's spirits taken up many times about meaner matters, whereof they have only a (much more uncertain and fallible) report from one another? What pretence can we have, less to regard the testimony of him that made us, discovering to us things so great, so important, so rational in themselves, even though they had not been so expressly revealed? Let us therefore drive the matter to a clear and short issue, and come to a resolution with ourselves:— Have we reason to believe such things, or no? If we can so far impose upon ourselves, as to think we have not; or be tempted into so abject, so unrequired, and so unwarrantable a self-denial, so base an esteem of our own beings, as to account the things of this earth and present world have enough in them to answer any ends we can suppose ourselves made for; let us no longer mock the world, by pretending to believe what we believe not. But if this be our settled judgment, and we will avow and own it, that we believe these things; let us no longer expose and make ourselves ridiculous, by counteracting our own professed belief in matters of such moment, pretending to believe and disregarding them at the same time. It is absurd and foolish, to believe such things and not mind them much, or not let our souls and our

practice be commanded and governed by them : not to have our desires, and cares, and hopes, and joys influenced thereby to the uttermost. How rational is it, here to be deeply solicitous, that by the unsuitableness of our own spirits we defeat not our own expectations ! How pleasant and delectable (that danger being provided against) to sit down and compare our present with our expected state, what we are, with what we hope to be ere long ! to think of exchanging shortly, infirmity, pollution, darkness, deformity, trouble, complaint ; for power, purity, light, beauty, rest, and praise ! How pleasant, if our spirits be fitted to that state ! The endeavour whereof is a further congruity in the present case, viz.

4. That we make it our principal business to intend our spirits, to adorn and cultivate our inward man. What can more become us, if we reckon we have somewhat about us made for immortality, than to bestow our chief care upon that immortal part ? Therefore, to neglect our spirits, confessedly capable of so high an estate, to let them languish under wasting distempers, or lie as the sluggard's field, overgrown with thorns and briars, is as vile a slur as we can put upon ourselves and our own profession. We should therefore make this the matter of our earnest study :—what would be the proper improvements and ornaments of our spirits, and will most fitly qualify them for the state we are going into ; and of our daily observation how such things thrive and grow in us. Especially, we should not be satisfied, till we find in ourselves a refinedness from this earth, a thorough purgation from all undue degrees of sensual inclination and affection, the consumption of our dross by a sacred

fire from heaven, a spirit of judgment and of burning, an aptitude to spiritual exercises and enjoyments, high complacency in God, fervent love, a worshipping posture of soul, formed to the veneration of the eternal wisdom, goodness, power, holiness; profound humility and abnegation of ourselves, a praiseful frame of spirit, much used to gratulations and thanksgivings, a large and universal love, imitating as much as is possible the divine, a proneness to do good to all, a steady composure and serene temper of spirit, the repose and rest of a contented mind, not boisterous, nor apt unto disquiet, or to create storms to ourselves or the world, every way suitable to the blissful regions, where nothing but perfect purity, entire devotedness to God, love, goodness, benignity, well-pleasèdness, order, and peace, shall have place for ever.

This we ought to be constantly intent upon, as the business of our lives, our daily work, to get our spirits so attemperèd and fitted to heaven, that if we be asked, What design we drive? What are we doing? we may be able to make this true answer, We are dressing ourselves for eternity. And since nothing is required hereto that is simply impossible, nothing but what is agreeable to our natures, and would be a perfection to them, how worthy and commendable an ambition were it, to be always aspiring! not to rest or take up beneath the highest pitch of attainable excellency in these kinds! reckoning every degree thereof a due to our natures, and that they have not what belongs to them, while any thing of real intrinsic moral goodness is yet wanting; and not only due but necessary, and what we shall have need of in reference

to the state we are shortly to enter upon ; that except such things be in us, and abound, we cannot have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. And should we, pretending to such an expectation, omit such endeavours of preparing ourselves, it were a like thing as if an unbred peasant should go about to thrust himself, with an expectation of high honours and preferments, into the prince's court ; or as if a distracted man should expect to be employed in the greatest and most intricate affairs of state ; or an uninstructed idiot take upon him to profess and teach philosophy.

Therefore let us consider : are we conscious of no unfitness for that blessed state ? to dwell in the presence of the holy God ? to be associated with the heavenly assembly of pure intellectual spirits ? to consort and join with them in their celebrations and triumphant songs ? Can we espy no such thing in ourselves as an earthly mind, aversion to God, as pride, disdain, wrath, or envy, admiration of ourselves, aptness to seek our own things with the neglect of others, or the like ? And do not our hearts then misgive, and tell us we are unready, not yet prepared to approach the divine presence, or to enter into the habitation of his holiness and glory ? And what then have we to do, but set ourselves to our preparatory work ; to set our watches, make our observations, take strict notice of all the deflections and obliquities of our spirits, settle our methods, hasten a redress ? Do not we know this is the time and state of preparation ? And since we know it, how would the folly torture us by reflection, of having betrayed ourselves to a surprisal ! None are ever wont to enter upon any new state without some foregoing preparation. Every more

remarkable turn or change in our lives, is commonly (if at all foreknown) introduced by many serious forethoughts. If a man be to change his dwelling, employment, condition, common discretion will put him thinking how to comport with the place, business, converse, and way of living he is next to betake himself to. And his thoughts will be the more intense, by how much more momentous the change. If he be to leave his country, with no probability of returning; if he be designed to a station, the circumstances whereof carry any thing of awfulness in them; if to public business; if on court attendances; with what solemnity and address are such things undertaken! How loath and ashamed would one be to go into such a condition, being totally unapt, not at all knowing how to behave himself in it! But what so great change as this can the nature of man admit, that a soul, long shut up in flesh, is now to go forth from its earthly mansion, and return no more; expecting to be received into the glorious presence of the Eternal King, and go act its part among the perfected spirits that attend his throne! How solicitous endeavour of a very thorough preparation doth this case call for! But how ill doth the common course of men agree to this, who never have such matters in their thoughts, who so much neglect not their very hogs as they do their spirits!

5. That we have much conversation with God. He is the only full and permanent good; therefore the endeavour of becoming very inward with him, doth best agree with the expectation of a state perfectly good and happy. To expect this, and converse only with shadows and vanishing things, is to expect to be happy without happiness; or that our

happiness should betide us as a casual thing, or be forced upon us at last whether we will or no. But since our happiness in God is on his part not necessary, but vouchsafed and gratuitous, depending on mere good pleasure; is it our best way of ingratiating ourselves with him, to neglect him and live as without him in the world; to keep ourselves strangers to him all our days, with a purpose only of flying to him at last, when all things else that were wont to please us are vanished and gone? And if we could suppose his wisdom and justice to admit his forgiving so provoking contempt of him, and receiving an exiled soul forced out of its earthly abode, that to the last moment of it would never look after him, or have to do with him; yet, can it be supposed that its own habitual aversion to him could allow it to be happy in him; especially being increased and confirmed by its consciousness and sense of guilt? How can these but make it banish itself, and in a sullen enmity and despair perpetually flee the divine presence? What can in this case be more natural to it, than to give up itself to eternal solitary wanderings, as a fugitive from God; to affect to be ever inwraught in its own darkness, and hidden from his sight, and be an everlasting tormenter to itself? Can we be happy in him whom we do not love? or love whom we will not know, or be acquainted with?

What sure ground of hope can we imagine to ourselves, that our reconciliation and acquaintance with God shall ever be brought about, if it be not done while we are here in the body? Will we be so vain as to cherish a hope that not only affronts the visible import of God's revelation, but the very

reason of things, and the natural tendency of our own spirits? Nor indeed (if we would consider better) can we possibly hope for what we desire not, or whereto our hearts are in an habitual disaffection, otherwise than, in the present case, negatively, and that our infidelity permits us not to fear the contrary. Yea, and the lively hope of a blessedness in God, as it includes desire, would certainly infer that purity (the image of his own) that could never fail to incline our hearts to him, and which would habituate us to a course of walking with him in inward communion. And this were comely and agreeable to our pretences, if, while we profess ourselves made for another state, we retire ourselves from the fading things that put a vanity into this, and single out, by our own choice, the stable good which we expect ever to enjoy. How befitting is it, to pass by all things with neglect, and betake ourselves hither with this sense! "Lord, I have viewed the world over, in which thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit and the design of my creation; and can find nothing in which to rest, for nothing here doth itself rest, but such things as please me for awhile, in some degree, vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo, I come to thee, the eternal Being, the spring of life, the centre of rest, the stay of the creation, the fulness of all things! I join myself to thee; with thee I will lead my life and spend my days, with whom I am to dwell for ever; expecting, when my little time is over, to be taken up ere long into thy eternity."

And since we who live under the gospel, have heard of the Redeemer, of the dignity of his per-

son, of his high office and power, of his merciful design and great achievements for the restoring of lapsed and lost souls,

6. It is most agreeable to our apprehensions of the vanity of this present state, and our expectations for the future, that we commit ourselves to him; that with entire trust and love, devotedness and subjection, we give ourselves up to his happy conduct, to be led by him to God, and instated into that eternal blessedness which we look for. His kingdom is not of this world; as we profess not to be. We cannot be innocently ignorant, that its constitution and frame, its laws and ordinances, its aspect and tendency in itself, and the whole course of its administration, are directed to that other state. He hath overcome death, and him that had the power of it; hath brought life and immortality to light; is the first-begotten from the dead, and the first-fruits of them that slept; hath opened heaven to us, and is himself ascended and entered as our victorious, triumphant captain and forerunner. He is adorned with highest power, and hath set up a universal kingdom, extended to the utmost bounds of this apostate world, and the vaster regions of innocent and constantly loyal spirits. His proclamations are issued out, his ensigns displayed, to invite and call in whosoever are weary of the sin and vanity of this wretched world, of their alienation from the life of God, of living in the midst of death; to join themselves to him, the Prince and Lord of life, and be led by him to the immortal state. If the present state of things appear dismal to us; if we reckon it a woful spectacle to behold sin and death reigning, wickedness and immorality acting their combined parts, to

waste the world and lay it desolate; if we would deliver ourselves and escape from the common ruin, are seriously designing for heaven, and that world in which death hath no place, nor any shadow of death; let us betake ourselves to him, enrol our names, put ourselves under his banners and discipline, strictly observing the laws and following the guidance of that our invisible Lord, who will be author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, and save to the utmost all that come to God through him. How dear should he be to us! How cheerfully should we trust him, how dutifully serve him, how faithfully adhere to him, both for his own sake, and that of the design he hath in hand for us, and the pleasant savour of heaven and immortality which breathes in both! But if we neglect him, and disown our relation to him; or if we let days or years go over our heads, wherein we drowsily slumber; roll ourselves in the dust of the earth; and while we call ourselves Christians, forget the reason and importance of our own name, and think not of our being under his call and conduct to the eternal kingdom and glory; this is perversely to reject what we say (only) we seek; to disclaim and renounce our pretences to immortality; to blast and damn our own great hopes.

7. Lastly, it is congruous to our expectation of so great things after death, that we live in a cheerful, pleasant expectation of it. For what must necessarily intervene, though not grateful in itself, should be reckoned so, for the sake of that which is. This only can upon the best terms reconcile us to the grave, that our greatest hopes lie beyond it; and are not hazarded by it, but accomplished. Although, indeed, nothing were to be expected here-

after ; yet so little suitable entertainment doth this world afford to a reasonable spirit, that the mere weariness of beholding a scene of vanity and folly, might well make a recess acceptable. For is it so grateful a thing to observe the confused scramble and hurry of the world ? how almost every one makes it his business to catch from another what is worth nothing ? with what toil, and art, and violence men pursue, what when they embrace they find a shadow ?—to see deluded mortals, each one intent upon his own particular design, and most commonly interfering with another's ; some imposed upon by others' overreaching wit, and all by their own folly ; some lamenting their losses, others their short and unsatisfying acquisitions ; many pleasing themselves with being mocked, and contentedly hugging the empty cloud, till death comes and ends the story, and ceases the busy agitation ; that is, with so many particular persons, not with the world : a new succession still springing up, that continue the interlude, and still act over the same parts, *ad tedium usque !*

What serious person, who that is not in love with impertinency and foolery, would much regret it, to close his eyes, to have the curtains drawn, and bid good-night to the world without ever wishing to see the morning of such another day ? And even they that have the world most in their power, and can command what they please for the gratifying of their appetites, without the contradiction and control of others, what can they enjoy more to-morrow than they did yesterday ; or the next year than this ? Is it so much worth the while to live, to see a few more persons bow the knee ? to extend power a little further ? to make another essay,

what pleasure sense can taste in some or other hitherto unexperimented rarity? what more peculiar gusto this or that thing will afford, and try the other dish? or to renew the same relishes over again? He whose creative fancy could make him golden mountains in a dream, create him a prince of nations, give him to enjoy the most delicious pleasures of the world in idea, might, with some plausible show of reason, be deemed the happier man, than he that hath and is all this indeed; for his toil is less, and his victories unbloody, his pleasures not so impure. However, one would think, that to such whose utmost attainments end only in the pleasure of their sense, and have but this epiphonema, "Now let us sit down, eat, drink, and be merry," a little time might suffice for business of no more weight; and that no man, after he hath once seen the course of the world, and tasted of its best delicacies, should greatly wish for a renewal or long-continued repetition of so fulsome vanities.

But the most find not the world so kind, and are not so much exercised in the innovating of pleasures as miseries; (changes being their only remedies, as the moralist speaks;) or in bearing (more sadly) the same every day's burden; and drawing out the series of their calamities in the same kind through the whole course of their time. And surely, these things considered, there wants not what might persuade a sceptic, or even a perfect infidel, as to another world, not much to be in love with this: for upon the whole, let but the case be thus put—is it not as good to do nothing, as to be busy to no purpose? And again, is it not as good to be nothing, as to be, and do nothing? Sober reason would judge, at least, there were bu

little odds. But now ; if such considerations as have been mentioned, would suffice to state the matter in *æquilibrio*, to make the scales even ; ought the rational sober belief of a blessed immortality to do nothing to turn the balance ? Ought the love of God to do nothing ? The desire and hope of a state perfectly good and happy, quiet and peaceful ; of living in the region of undefiled, innocent love and pleasure ; in the communion of holy and blessed spirits ; (all highly pleased, not in their own only, but one another's happiness ; and all concentrating in the admiration and praise of their common Parent and Lord ;) ought all this nothing to alter the case with us ; or signify nothing to the inclining our minds to the so unspeakably better part ? Methinks, since we acknowledge such an order of intelligent (and already happy) creatures, we should even blush to think they should be spectators of our daily course and (too plainly discovered) inclinations, so difform and unagreeable to all the laws and dictates of reasonable nature. What censures, may we think, do they pass upon our follies ? Are those things great in their eyes, that are so in ours ? In lesser matters (as some interpret that passage¹) indecencies are to be avoided, because of those blessed spirits. May we not then be ashamed, that they should discern our terrene dispositions ; and see us come so unwillingly into their comfort and happy state ? Although our present depressing circumstances will not suffer us to be in all things, as yet, conformable to their high condition, we should however carry it as candidates thereto, studying to approve ourselves,

¹ 1 Cor. viii.

waiting and longing to be transumed and taken up into it.

And since we have so high and great an expectation, and it is understood and known, that the very perfection and end of our beings is no otherwise attainable, than by putting off our sordid flesh, and laying aside this earthly appurtenance; that yet there should be so fixed and prevailing an aversion to it, is a most unaccountable thing, and one of the greatest problems in nature. I say, prevailing; for admit, what is like to be alleged, that an addictedness to the body is by natural inclination, ought not the laws of a superior to prevail over those of the inferior nature? And is not the love of God a higher natural law than that of the body; to whom here our service is little, yea our disservice much; and from whose most desirable commerce we suffer so uncomfortable a disclusion by the sad circumstances of our bodily state? Are we more nearly allied to a piece of clay, than to the Father of our spirits? And again, is not every thing nearest to itself; and obliged to place love there, rather than on an inferior thing, at least, how nearly soever united; since there can be no pretence of any such nearer union, than of a thing with itself? And are not our souls and our bodies (though united, yet) distinct things? Why then should not our souls, that are capable of understanding their own interest, mind that first, intend most their own perfection and improvement, and begin their charity at home? It is not strange, that what is weaker and more ignoble, should affect union with what is above it, and a spring of life to it; but when it is found burdensome, nothing forbids, but that the superior being may be well con-

tent, upon fair and allowable terms, to be rid of the burden. Therefore, though flesh and blood may reluctate and shrink at it, when we think of laying it down; yet it becomes immortal spirits to consider their own affairs, and be (more principally) intent upon what will be their own advantage. If so mean a creature as a sorry flea, finding it can draw a suitable aliment from our bodies, affect to dwell there, and is loath to leave us; it were a ludicrous pity to be therefore content to endure its troublesome vellications, because we fear the poor animal should be put to its shifts, and not be otherwise able to find a subsistence.

It is true, that the great Creator and Lord of the universe hath not permitted us the liberty of so throwing off our bodies when we will, which otherwise are in dignity far more beneath our spirits than so despicable a creature is beneath them. And to his dispose that hath ordered this conjunction for a time (whether we look upon it as an effect of his simple pleasure, or of his displeasure) we must yield an awful and a patient submission, till this part of his providence towards us have run its course and attained its ends. And then, how welcome should the hour of our discharge and freedom be, from so troublesome an associate! which upon no other account, than that of duty towards the Author of our beings, one would more endure, than to have the most noisome, offensive vermin always preying upon his flesh. At least, (though the consideration of our own advantage had no place with us in this matter,) the same sense of duty towards our great Creator, which should make us patient of an abode in the body while he will have it so, should also form our spirits to a willing

departure when it shall be his pleasure to release us thence. But, that neither a regard to his pleasure, nor our own blessedness, should prevail against our love to the body, is the unaccountable thing I speak of. And to plead only, in the case, the corruption of our natures that sets us at odds with God and ourselves, is to justify the thing by what is itself most unjustifiable; or rather (as some that have affected to be styled philosophers have been wont to expedite difficulties, by resolving the matter into the usual course of nature) to resolve the thing into itself, and say, it is so because it is so, or is wont to be; and indeed, plainly to confess there is no account to be given of it: this being the very thing about which we expostulate, that reasonable nature should so prevaricate; the commonness whereof doth not take away the wonder, but rather render it more dreadful and astonishing.

The truth is, the incongruity in the present case is only to be solved by redress; by earnest strivings with God, and our own souls, till we find ourselves recovered into a right mind; into the constitution and composure whereof a generous fortitude hath a necessary ingrediency; that usually upon lower motives refuses no change of climate, and will carry a man into unknown countries, and through greatest hazards, in the pursuit of honourable enterprises of a much inferior kind. It is reckoned a brave and manly thing, to be in the temper of one's mind a citizen of the world; (meaning it of this lower one;) but why not rather of the universe? And it is accounted mean and base, that one should be so confined, by his fear or sloth, to that spot of ground where he was born, as not upon just inducement to look abroad, and go for warrantable

and worthy purposes (yea, if it were only honest self-advantage) as far as the utmost ends of the earth: but dare we not venture a little further? These are too narrow bounds for a truly great spirit. Any thing that is tinctured with earth, or savours of mortality, we should reckon too mean for us; and not regret it, that heaven and immortality are not to be attained but by dying: so should the love of our own souls, and the desire of a perpetual state of life, triumph over the fear of death. But it may be alleged by some, that it is only a solicitous love to their souls, that makes them dread this change. They know it will not fare with all alike hereafter, and know not what their own lot shall be. And is this indeed our case? Then, what have we been doing all this while? and how are we concerned to lose no more time? But too often a terrene spirit lurks under this pretence; and men allege their want of assurance of heaven, when the love of this earth, which they cannot endure to think of leaving, holds their hearts.

And, a little to discuss this matter, what would we have to assure us? Do we expect a vision or a voice? Or are we not to try ourselves; and search for such characters in our own souls, as may distinguish and note us out for heaven? Among these, what can be more clear and certain than this, that we have our hearts much set upon it? They that have their conversations in heaven, may from thence expect the Saviour,¹ who shall change their vile bodies, (the bodies of their humiliation, or low abject state,²) and make them like his own glorious body. God, who will render to every man according to his works, will give them 'that by pa-

¹ Phil. iii. 20, 21.

² Gr.

tient continuance in well doing, seek honour and glory and immortality, eternal life.'¹ They that 'set their affections (or minds) on the things above, not those on the earth; when Christ shall appear, who is their life, shall appear with him in glory.'² Mistake not the notion of heaven, or the blessedness of the other world; render it not to yourselves a composition of sensual enjoyments: understand it principally to consist in perfect holiness and communion with God; (as his own word represents it, and as reason hath taught even some pagans to reckon of it;) and you cannot judge of your own right by a surer and plainer rule, than that eternal blessedness shall be theirs, whose hearts are truly bent and directed towards it. Admit we then this principle; and now let us reason with ourselves from it. We have a discovery made to us of a future state of blessedness in God, not as desirable only in itself, but as attainable and possible to be enjoyed, (the Redeemer having opened the way to it by his blood, and given us, at once, both the prospect and the offer of it,) so that it is before us as the object of a reasonable desire. Now either our hearts are so taken with this discovery, that we above all things desire this state, or not. If they be, we desire it more than our earthly stations and enjoyments, are willing to leave the world and the body to enjoy it; and so did falsely accuse ourselves of a prevailing aversion to this change. If they be not, the thing is true, that we are upon no terms willing to die: but the cause is falsely, or partially, assigned. It is not so much because we are unassured of heaven, but (as was above suspected)

¹ Rom. ii. 6, 7.

² Col. iii. 2, 3, 4.

because we love this world better, and our hearts centre in it as our most desirable good.

Therefore we see how unreasonably this is often said,—we are unwilling to change states, because we are unassured. The truth is, they are unassured, because they are unwilling. And what then ensues? They are unwilling because they are unwilling. And so they may endlessly dispute themselves round, from unwillingness to unwillingness. But is there no way to get out of this unhappy circle? In order to it, let the case be more fully understood: either this double unwillingness must be referred to the same thing, or to divers: if to the same thing, it is not sense; they say what signifies nothing; for being to assign a cause of their unwillingness to quit the body, to say, because they are unwilling, (*viz.* of that,) is to assign no cause, for nothing can be the cause of itself: but if they refer to divers things, and say, they are unwilling to go out of the body, because they are unwilling to forsake earth for heaven; the case is then plain, but sad, and not alterable, but with the alteration of the temper of their spirits. Wherefore let us all apply ourselves (since with none this is so fully done that no more is needful) to the serious endeavour of getting our souls purged from the dross of this world, and enamoured of the purity and blessedness of heaven. So the cause and effect will vanish together; we shall find that suitableness and inclination in our spirits to that blessedness as may yield us the ground of a comfortable persuasion that it belongs to us; and then not be unwilling, though many deaths stood in our way, to break through to attain it.

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING THE

REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE
WORLD,

AND THE ENTRANCE THEREINTO BY DEATH.

SOME PART WHEREOF WAS PREACHED ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH
OF JOHN HOGHTON, ESQ. ELDEST SON OF SIR CHARLES HOGHTON,
OF HOGHTON-TOWER, IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER,
BARONET.

TO THE MOST DESERVEDLY HONOURED AND TRULY HONOURABLE

SIR CHARLES

AND THE

LADY MARY HOGHTON,

OF HOGHTON TOWER.

Grace, mercy, and peace, &c.

YOU will, I know, count it no indecency, that, when God hath so nearly, many years ago, joined you in relation, in affection, and now so lately, in the affliction equally common to you both, I do also join your names on the same paper, and make this solemn address to you together.

It is by the inestimable favour of heaven, that the mutual interest God hath given you in each other, as it obligeth, doth also (as I have great reason to hope) effectually dispose and enable you so not only to partake in the comforts, but in the sorrows, that are common to you both, as that the former shall be greatly increased, and the latter proportionably allayed and mitigated, thereby. Thus is the advantage of your conjugal state both represented in God's designation, and apprehended in your own experience.

And you are to consider the blessing of God herein as having a peculiarity in it, not being extended to all so related, neither to all that were great in this world, nor to all that were pious and good. Great worldly felicity hath been rendered insipid and spiritless, great calamities much the more bitter, by the want of a meet mutual helpfulness between such relations.

A great and a good man,¹ in his time, a prince, as he is thought to have been, in his country ; ‘ a man that was perfect, and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil ;’ when he lost not one, not the eldest only, of his numerous offspring, (as you have,) but all at once, seven sons and three daughters, with such concomitant circumstances of accumulated afflictions, as, blessed be God, are not in your case ; and might now expect some relief from his other self, the nearest and most inward companion of his life, and partaker of his joys and sorrows ; all the succour he had from her, was an impious endeavour to provoke and irritate his spirit ; that taunting scoff, ‘ Dost thou still retain thy integrity ?’ and that horrid advice, ‘ Curse God and die.’ Whereas that rational, religious, soul-composing thought, ‘ Shall we receive good things at the hand of God, and not also evil things ?’ was deeply fixed in the mind of the one : how much more effectually relieving had it been, if it had circulated between both the relatives ; and they had alternately propounded and enlarged upon it to one another !

With you, I cannot doubt, it hath been so ; and that you have made it your business to improve your mutual interest, not to aggravate, but to alleviate your affliction each to other.

You have both of you great occasion and obligation to revolve and recount to each other the many good things you have received at the hand of God, to mitigate what there is of evil in this dispensation.

Both of you have sprung of religious and honourable families, favoured of God, valued and beloved in the countries where he had planted them. They have been both seats of religion, and of the worship of God ; the resorts of his servants ; houses of mercy to the indigent, of justice to the vicious, of patronage to the sober and virtuous ; of good example to all about them.

You were both dedicated to God early, and he gave early testimony of his accepting the dedication. He began with you both betimes, blessing your education, and owning you for his, by disposing and forming your spirits to own betimes the God of

¹ Job, i. 1.

your fathers. He hath blessed you indeed, adding the spiritual blessings in heavenly things to your many earthly comforts. Which Jabez might mean, not content with a common blessing; and the more probably, from the acceptance he found, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. God granted his request, as Solomon's, when his request was as little vulgar, 1 Kings, iii. 10.

You both concurred in the dedication of this your son, as in the rest of yours; and I doubt not with great seriousness, you covenanted with God in Christ, to be his God. And if he enabled you to be in good earnest herein, even that was of special grace and favour, and ought to come into the account of the many good things you have received of God's hand; as offering to God willingly did in the estimate of David, when the oblation was of a meaner kind, 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

But then you ought to consider, what the import and meaning was of that your covenant, wherein you accepted God in Christ to be the God of your son; and dedicated him to God through Christ to be his. Was it not absolute, and without limitation, that God should be a God to him entirely and without reserve, and that he should be his absolutely, and be disposed of by him at his pleasure? Otherwise, there was a repugnancy and contradiction in the very terms of your covenant. To be a God to him! Is not God the name of a being incapable of limitation? Doth it not signify infinite, unlimited power and goodness? To be a God to any one, therefore, under restriction, is to be a God to him, and no God. And so to covenant with God, can neither have sincerity in it, nor good sense. He can be under no restraint in the exercises of his power and goodness towards any to whom he vouchsafes to be their God in covenant, but what he is pleased to lay upon himself, which must be from his own wisdom and good pleasure; to which in covenanting we refer ourselves, with particular faith—in reference to what he hath expressly promised; and with general—that all shall be well, where his promise is not express. But from ourselves, nothing can be prescribed to him. He must be our all, or nothing; in point of enjoyment, as our sovereign, all-comprehending good; in point of government, as our sove-

reign, all-disposing Lord. So we take him, in covenanting with him for ourselves and ours : for he so propounds and offers himself to us. If we accept and take him accordingly, there is a covenant between him and us ; otherwise we refuse him, and there is no covenant. When he promises, as to his part, he promises his all ; to be God all-sufficient to us ; to be ours in all his fulness, according to our measure and capacity : we are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. He undertakes to be to us, and do for us, all that it belongs to him, as a God, to be and do. To give us grace and glory,¹ about which, there can be no dispute or doubt : they are always and immutably good ; and to withhold from us no good things : here, are comprehended, with the former, inferior good things, about which, because they are but mutably, and not always good, there may be a doubt, whether now, and in present circumstances, they will be good for us, or no. And now, it belongs to him, as he is to do the part of a God to us, to judge and determine for us, (for which he alone is competent, as being God only wise, and otherwise he were not God all-sufficient,) and not to leave that to us, who are so apt to be partial and mistaken in our judgment.

But when he makes his demand from us, of what we on our part are to be, and do, he demands our all, absolutely ; that we surrender ourselves and ours, whatsoever we are and have, to his pleasure and dispose, without other exception or restriction than by his promise he hath laid upon himself.

Nor are we to think it strange there should be this difference, in the tenour of his covenant, between his part and ours. For we are to remember, that the covenant between him and us is not as of equals. He covenants as God ; we, as creatures : he, according to the universal, infinite perfection and all-sufficiency of a God : we, according to the insufficiency, imperfection, and indigency of creatures.

These things were, I doubt not, all foreknown, and I hope considered, by you, when you so solemnly transacted with God, concerning this your son ; wherein you could not but then take

¹ Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

him for your God, as well as his God. It needs now only to be applied to the present case ; and it manifestly admits this application, viz. That this his disposal of him, in taking him now up to himself, to be glorified by him, and to glorify him in the heavenly state, was a thing then agreed upon by solemn covenant, between God and you. It was done by your own virtual and unretracted consent. The substance of the thing was agreed to expressly, that God should be his God, and finally make him happy and blessed in himself. But if you say, you would only have had his complete blessedness yet awhile deferred ; I will only say, Could you agree with that God whose he was, and whose you are, about the substance of so great a transaction ; and now differ with him about a circumstance ? And besides, all circumstances must be comprehended in your agreement : for, taking him to be your God, you take him to be supreme Disposer in all things, and his will to be in every thing the rule and measure of yours ; which you have expressly consented to as often as you have prayed, either in the words, or after the tenour, of that prayer, wherein our Lord hath taught us to sum up our desires, and represent the sense of our hearts.

But besides the duty that is, both by his law and by covenant-agreement, owing to God, it is also to be considered as a high dignity put upon you, to be the covenanted parents of a glorified son ; a matter of greater boast, than if you could say, “ Our son ” (to repeat what I formerly wrote) “ is one of the greatest princes on earth ! ”

How far should paganism be outdone by Christianity, which exhibits to our view death abolished, life and immortality brought to light, by Jesus Christ, in the gospel ! 2 Tim. i. 10, which sets before us all the glories of the other world in a bright representation ! which if we believe, that faith will be to us the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not. Thus, though you saw not the kind reception and abundant entrance of this son of your delights into the everlasting kingdom, it will yet be a thing evident to you, and your faith will render it a great and most substantial reality. Pagans had but obscure glimmerings of such things ; and in such

afflicting cases, when they have occurred, comparatively lank and slender supports; yet such as were not to be despised.

Should I transcribe what I find written in way of consolation, by Plutarch to Apollonius, upon the loss of a son, you would see what would give both instruction and admiration. I shall mention some passages. He praises the young person deceased, for his comeliness, sobriety, piety, dutifulness towards parents, obligingness towards friends; acknowledges that sorrow, in the case of losing such a son, hath (*φυσικὴν ἀρχήν*) “a principle in nature,” and is of the things that are (*οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν*) “not in our power,” or which we cannot help; that to be destitute of it is neither possible nor fit; that an apathy, or insensibleness, in such a case, is no more desirable than that we should endure to have a limb, a part of ourselves, cut or torn off from us, without feeling it. But yet affirms, that immoderate sorrow, upon such an occasion, is (*παρὰ φύσιν*) “preternatural,” and hath a pravity in it, and proceeds from a misinformed mind; that we ought in any such case to be neither (*ἀπαθείς*, nor *δυσπαθείς*) “unaffected,” nor “ill affected.” He tells his friend a story (the meaning whereof is more considerable to us, than the credit of it, as perhaps it was to him) concerning two Grecian youths, Cleobis and Biton, whose mother having a duty to perform in the temple of Juno, and the mules not being at hand, in the instant when she expected, to draw her chariot thither, they most officiously drew it themselves; with which act of piety their mother was so transported, that she made her request to Juno, on their behalf, that if there were any thing more desirable unto mortals than other, she would therewith reward her sons; who, thereupon, threw them into a sleep, out of which they awaked no more: thereby signifying, that death was the best gift that could be bestowed upon persons of such supposed piety as they!

To which purpose is what he relates concerning the death of Euthynous, an Italian referred to, towards the close of the following discourse, son and heir to the ample estate of Elysus, a person of principal dignity among the Terinæans; to whom, anxiously inquiring of diviners concerning the cause of this ca-

lamity, the spectre of his son, introduced by the father of the latter, appeared in his sleep, showing him certain Greek verses, the sum whereof was, Thy inquiry was foolish.

“The minds of men are vain. Euthynous rests by a kindly decreed death,
Because his living longer had neither been good for him nor his parents.”

He afterwards adds, “A good man, when he dies, is worthy, not so much of lamentations, as of hymns and praises.”

He animadvertes upon the aptness of parents to quarrel with any circumstances of a son’s death, be they what they will. If he die abroad, then the aggravation is, that neither the father nor the mother had opportunity to close his eyes; if at home, then, How is he plucked away, even out of our hands!

He gives divers memorable instances, of sundry great persons, bearing, with strange composure of mind, the same kind of affliction. I omit what he wrote to his wife on their loss of a child; as also to recite many very instructive passages out of Seneca writing to Marcia, on the same account; viz. by way of consolation for her loss of a son; and to Helvia, for her loss in the same kind; to Polybius, having lost a near relation, &c.

But we have the oracles of God, and do, too commonly, less need to receive instruction from heathens than deserve to be reproached by them; that there is so frequent cause for the complaint of that ancient worthy¹ in the Christian church; *Non præstat fides quod præstitit infidelitas* — “the infidelity of pagans performs greater things than the faith of Christians.” Their sedate temper, their mastery over turbulent passions, may in many instances shame our impotency and want of self-government, in like cases.

For who of them have ever had, or could have, so great a thing to say, as is said to us by the word of the Lord, 1 Thess. iv. 13, for this very purpose, ‘that we may not sorrow concerning them that are asleep, even as others who have no hope:’ i. e.

¹ Jerome.

ver. 14, 'If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For (ver. 15,) this we say to you,' (and it is said by the forementioned authority; the Lord himself having revealed it to this great apostle, and directed him to say it,) 'that we who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep:' ver. 16, '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 rise first:' ver. 17, 'Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up, together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord:' ver. 18, 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

I have transcribed these few verses, that they might readily appear to present view. And because all their efficacy, and all our advantage, by them, depend upon our believing them, let us closely put the question to ourselves, Do we believe them, or do we not? The apostle seems to design the putting us upon this self-reflection, ver. 14, by inserting the supposition, 'If we believe,' q. d. This will effectually do the business of allaying all our hopeless sorrow. For if we believe that one fundamental truth, (and therefore let us see whether we do or no,) of Christ's dying and rising again, it will draw such a train of consequences, all tending to fill our souls^d with a vital joy, as will leave no place for undue sorrow any longer. That faith will be still urging and carrying us forward, will make us wholly intent upon prospect and expectation. What are we now to look for upon such a foundation, so firmly laid, and fully believed? If we believe that Jesus died! He did not submit to die without a design; and his rising again, speaks him master of his design, and that he hath it now entirely in his power. He died not for himself, but for them he was to redeem. And being now risen again, what must become of them? All that follows, is now matter of glorious triumph!

If Plato, Plutarch, or Seneca, had but once had such a revelation from heaven as this, and had that ground to believe it that we have, how full would their writings have been of it!

How had they abounded in lofty paraphrases upon every period and word of it !

The faith of such things would surely make a truly Christian heart so earnestly press forward in the expectation of the great things still to ensue, as to leave it little leisure for retrospection. And this is the source of all our intemperate sorrow, in such a case as this—our framing to ourselves pleasing suppositions of being as we were, with such and such friends and relatives about us as we heretofore enjoyed. As hope of what is future and desirable feeds our joy, so memory of good things past doth our sorrow. In such a case as this, which the apostle here speaks to, the decease of our dear friends and relatives fallen asleep, we are apt to look back with a lingering eye upon that former state of things, and to say, as he, *O mihi preteritos*, ‘O that God would recall for me the years that are gone over !’ Or, as in sacred language, ‘O that I were as in months past—when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle ; when the Almighty was yet with me ; when my children were about me !’¹

What pleasant scenes do we form to ourselves afresh, of past things, on purpose to foment present sorrow ! And whether we have that design or no, we are more prone to look back to former things we have known, than forward to future we know not ; especially, if the further we look back the less we find of trouble intermingled in our former course. A smooth and pleasant path we would go over again, if reason and the necessity of affairs do not recall us, and urge us forward.

And so, Sir, might you find matter for a very copious and not ungrateful recollection, to call over again, and revolve in your thoughts, the pleasures of your youth, (more innocent than of many others,) when you were encumbered with no cares, entertained with various delights of one sort and another, in this or that pleasant seat of your parents. But how remote is it from you, upon consideration, to wish yourself back into your juvenile state and circumstances ! How much more generous and godlike pleasure is it, to be doing good in the world, and still to abound therein ; to go forward, and do still more and more !

¹ Job, xxix. 1—5.

And, Madam, who could have a more pleasant retrospect upon former days than you ? recounting your Antrim delights, the delight you took in your excellent relations, your garden-delights, your closet-delights, your Lord's-days' delights ! But how a much greater thing is it to serve God in your present station ; as the mother of a numerous and hopeful offspring ; as the mistress of a large family ; where you bear your part, with your like-minded consort, in supporting the interest of God and religion, and have opportunity of scattering blessings round about you !

But our business is not recurring, or looking back. God is continually calling us forward. Time is a stream running on towards the vast ocean. Tending backward, is vain striving against the stream. And as it is the course and method of nature, of providence, and grace, to tend forward, and carry us from less to greater things in this world ; so do all these conspire to carry us on (because our ἀκμή), “our highest pitch,” cannot be here) to yet far greater things in the greater world. Of which vast world, it is the design of the following discourse to give you some account ; though, God knows, it is but a very imperfect one. Such as it is, if God only make it an occasion to you, of fixing your minds and hearts upon that mighty theme, you will find it easy and pleasant to you to amplify upon it and enlarge it to yourselves ; and thereby, through God's blessing, I doubt not, arrive to a fulness of satisfaction concerning this late dispensation ; which hath a gloominess upon it, but is in very deed only gloomy on one side, viz. downwards, and towards this wretched world, this region of sorrow and darkness ; but on the side upwards, and towards that other world which casts its lustre upon it, its phasis and appearance will be altogether bright and glorious. And the more you look by a believing intuition into that other world where our blessed Redeemer and Lord bears rule in so transcendent glory, the more will you be above all the cloudy darkness of this event of Providence towards yourselves and your family. Herein your perusal of this very defective essay may be of some use to you. And I reckoned it might be of more lasting and permanent use to you, and yours after you,

and to as many others into whose hands it might fall, as a little book, than as one single sermon.

You will, however, I doubt not, apprehend in it the sincere desire to assist you in this your present difficult trial; followed by the faithful endeavour of,

Most honoured in the Lord,
Your very respectful and obliged servant,
in him, and for his sake,

JOHN HOWE.

THE
 REDEEMER'S DOMINION, &c.

REV. I. 18.

— *And have the keys of hell (hades, or the unseen world) and of death.*

THE peculiar occasion of this present solemnity (I mean, that is additional to the usual business of the Lord's day) may be somewhat amusing to narrower and less considering minds; i. e. That I am now to take notice to you of what the most would call the premature or untimely death of a most hopeful young gentleman, the heir of a very considerable family, greatly prepared by parts and pious sentiments, and further preparing by study and conversation, to be useful to the age, cut off in his prime, when the mere showing him¹ to the world had begun to raise an expectation, in such as knew him, of somewhat more than ordinary hereafter from him, his future advantageous cir-

¹ Ostendunt terris hunc tantum, fata nec ultra esse sinunt.

cumstances being considered, of which you will hear further towards the close of this discourse.

Nor did I know any passage in the whole sacred volume, more apt to serve the best and most valuable purpose in such a case, than the words now read; none more fitted to enlarge our minds, to compose them, and reduce to a due temper even theirs who are most concerned, and most liable to be disturbed, or to instruct us all how to interpret and comment aright upon so perplexing and so intricate a providence as this, at the first and slighter view, may seem unto us.

In order whereto, our business must be to explain and apply this most weighty awful saying.

First, For the explication, these three things are to be inquired into.

I. Who it is that claims and asserts to himself this power here spoken of.

II. What it is about which this claimed power is to be conversant.

III. What sort of power it is that this emblematical expression signifies to belong to him.

I. Who it is that claims the power here spoken of; where the inquiry is not so much concerning the person that makes this claim, which all the foregoing context puts out of question to be our Lord Christ; but touching the special notion and capacity wherein he claims it, and according whereto it must be understood to belong to him.

And whereas he is described by very distinct titles and attributes, promiscuously interwoven in the preceding verses of the chapter, viz. that sometimes he is introduced speaking in the style of a God; (as verse 8, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which

is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty :—and again, verse 11, ‘I am Alpha and Omega ;’) but that sometimes he is represented in the form of a man, and accordingly described even from head to foot, and said to appear in the vision that exhibits him, as one like unto the Son of man, that we might certainly understand him so to be, verse 13—16 :—and such things said of him as are incident to a mortal man, the shedding of his blood, verse 5 ; and that he was dead, verse 18, former part :—yea, and expressions of this different import intermingled, that we might know it was the same person that was continually spoken of under these so vastly different characters ; as, ‘I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth and was dead,’ verse 17, 18 :—we may thereupon very reasonably conclude that he is not here to be conceived under the one notion or the other, neither as God nor as man, separately or exclusively of each other ; but as both together, as Θεάνθρωπος, as God-man, under which conjunct notion, he receives and sustains the office of our Redeemer, and Mediator between God and man.

Which will enable us the more clearly to answer the third inquiry, when we come to it, concerning the kind of that power which is here claimed ; and which, because there can be no doubt of the justice of his claim, we are hereby taught to ascribe to him.

For the management whereof, we are also hence to reckon him every way competent ; that he was *par negotio*, that it was not too big for him ; no expressions being used to signify his true humanity, but which are joined with others, as appropriate to deity. And that nothing therefore obliges us to

narrow it more than the following account imports, which we are next to inquire about; viz.

II. The large extent of the object about which the power he here claims is to be conversant; i. e. *hades* (as we read, hell, but which is truly to be read, the unseen world) and death.

The former of these we, with a debasing limitation, and (as I doubt not will appear) very unreasonably, do render *hell*.

The power belonging to Christ, we are elsewhere taught to conceive, is of unspeakably greater latitude. And here we are not taught to confine it to so vile and narrow limits, as this translation gives it. All things in the context conspire to magnify him, and, agreeably hereto, to magnify his dominion. When therefore the apparent design is to speak him great, that he should only be represented as the gaoler of devils and their companions, is, to me, unaccountable; unless a very manifest necessity did induce to it.

For the word $\alpha\delta\eta\varsigma$, there can be no pretence for it. Though it ought to be extended, it is by no means to be restrained to that sense; which as it is the ignoblest, so it will appear but a very small, minute part of its signification; whether we consider the literal import, or the common use of the word.

Literally, it signifies but what we see not, or what is out of our sight. And as the word of which it is compounded signifies also to know, as well as to see, it may further signify, that state of things which lies without the compass of our knowledge, even out of the reach of our mental sight; or concerning which, though we are to believe what is revealed, we cannot immediately or dis-

tinctly know it; and in reference whereto, therefore, we are to 'walk by faith, not by sight,' 2 Cor. v. 7.

And the common use of the word hath been very agreeable hereto, with the writers of all sorts; i. e. to signify indefinitely the unseen world; or the state of the deceased out of our world, who are, consequently, gone out of our sight, whether they were good or bad; so as not peculiarly to signify hell, or any place or state of torment only.

It were easy to abound in quotations to this purpose, if it were either needful or proper in a discourse of this nature.

What I intend in this kind, I shall only set down on the bye in the margin, upon which they that will may cast their eye;¹ that the discourse

¹ And here it may suffice to take notice, that Greek writers, poets, philosophers, historians, and other writers, that have made only occasional mention of this word *ἄδης*, or of the words next akin to it, *αἴς* or *αἰδής*, or lexicographers, that have purposely given an account of it, from Greek authors, that must be supposed best to understand the use of words in their own tongue; generally such as have not been engaged in a controversy, that obliges men usually to torture words to their own sense, or to serve the hypothesis which they had espoused, have been remote from confining this, or the cognate words, to that narrow sense as only to signify a place or state of torment for bad men, but understood it as comprehending, also, a state of felicity for the pious and good.

For such as have been concerned in interpreting this or other like words with reference to the known and famous controversy, which I need not mention, their judgments must weigh according to the reputation they are of with the reader.

The Greeks, no doubt, best understood their own language. And among them can we think that Homer in the beginning of his 1. *Iliad*, when he speaks of the many brave souls of his heroes, those *ἰφθιμοὶ ψυχαι*, which the war he is describing sent into the invisible regions, *αἰδὴ προΐαψεν*. that he ever dreamt they were all promiscuously despatched away to a place of torment? Not to mention other passages where he uses the word

be not interrupted as to others, that either have no need to be informed in this matter, having known as much before as can be now told them; or no inclination to be diverted from their present pur-
αὐτῆς to the same purpose. Divers others of the Greek poets are cited by several ready to our hands, with which I shall not cumber these pages. That one is enough, and nothing can be fuller to our purpose, which is quoted by Clem. Alexand. *Str.* l. 5, as well as by sundry others, and ascribed to the comic Diphilus, though by others to another Philemon:—

Καὶ γὰρ καθ' ἄδην δύο τριβας νομίζομεν,
 Μίαν δικαίων, κατέραν ἀσεβῶν ὁδόν.

“In *hades* we reckon there are two paths, the one of the righteous, the other of the wicked:” plainly showing that *hades* was understood to contain heaven and hell. Plato, when in his *Phædo* he tells us that he that comes into *hades*, ἀμύητος, καὶ ἀτέλεστος, not initiated and duly prepared, is thrown into Βόρβορος, a stinking lake; but he that comes into it fitly purified, shall dwell with the gods; as expressly signifies *hades* to include the same opposite states of misery and felicity. In that dialogue called *Æchiochus*, though supposed not to be his, written by one that sufficiently knew the meaning of such a word, we are told that when men die they are brought into the *Πεδίον ἀληθείας*, the field of truth, where sit judges that examine *τίνα βίον*, what manner of life every one lived while he dwelt in the body, that they who, while they lived here, were inspired by a good genius or spirit, go into the region of pious men, having before they came into *hades* been purified. Such as led their lives wickedly are hurried by furies up and down chaos, in the region of the wicked. In the third Book *de Repub.* Plato blames the poets that they represent the state of things in *hades* too frightfully, when they should μάλλον ἐπανεῖν, praise it rather. Plutarch *de Superst.* brings in Plato speaking of *hades*, as a person, or a god, *Dis*, or *Pluto*, as they frequently do, and says he is φιλόανθρωπος, benign or friendly to men; therefore not a tormentor of them only. Cælius Rhodigin. quotes this same passage of Plutarch, and takes notice that our Saviour speaks of the state of torment by another word, not *hades*, but *Gehenna*; which sufficiently shows how he understood it himself.

And whereas there are who disagree to this notation of this word, that makes it signify *unseen*, as some will fetch from the Hebrew, and go as far back as Adam in their search, alleging for this the authority of an old sibyl, will have it go for ἀηδής, and signify as ἀτερπής unpleasant; nothing

pose in reading; apprehending that what is generally told them, only concerning the usual signification of a word, is not said without some ground. And let texts of Scripture be consulted about that, how *hades*, and the correspondent word in the Old Testament, *sheol*, are used there. If we take the help of interpreters, the impartial reader is to

is plainer than that this other is the common notion, which (though fancy hath not a greater dominion in any thing than in etymology) would make one shy of stretching invention to find how to differ from the generality. Therefore Calepin, upon this word, tells us that the Greek grammarians do, against the nature of the *etymon*, (which plainly enough shows what they understood that to be,) generally direct its beginning to be written with the asper spirit, but yet he makes it signify *obscure*, or *not visible*. And though Plato is endeavoured to be hooked in to the deriving it from Adam by a very far fetch: yet it is plain that his calling it *τόπον ἀόηλον*, in a place before referred to, shows he understood it to signify *invisible*: and so lexicons will commonly derive it (*Vulgo*, says *Cælius Rhodig.*) But its extensiveness, as comprehending a state of happiness, is our principal concern, which way (as we might show by many more instances) the common stream carries it. Pausanias in his ἙΡΚΑΔΙΚΑ, speaking of Hermes (according to Homer) as *Δίος διάκονον*, and that he did lead souls *ὑπὸ τὸν ἄδην*, could not be thought to mean that they were then universally miserable. Sext. Empir. is an authority good enough for the meaning of a Greek word, when (*Adversus Mathem.*) he tells us, though by way of objection, all men have a common notion *περὶ τῶν ἐν ἄδη*, (using the genitive with *ἐν*, as Homer and others do, another word, house or abode, in the dative, being understood,) and yet, as to the thing, he afterwards distinguishes poets' fables, and what, from the nature of the soul itself, all have a common apprehension of. As also Diog. Laert. hath the same phrase, mentioning the writings of Protagoras, who, he says, wrote one book *περὶ τῶν ἐν ἄδη*, using the genitive, as here, after *ἐν*, as hath been usual, on the mentioned account. And though his books were burnt by the Athenians, because of the dubious title of one of them concerning the gods, so that we have not opportunity to know what his opinion of *hades* was, we have reason more than enough, to think he understood it not of a state of torment only for evil spirits.

judge of their fidelity and ability who go our way.¹

Upon the whole, it being most evident that hell is but a small and mean part of what is signified by *hades*, it will be very unreasonable to represent or conceive of the power here ascribed to our Lord, according to that narrow notion of it; and would be a like incongruity, as if, to magnify the person of highest dignity in the court of a mighty prince, one would say, "he is the keeper of the dungeon."

The word itself, indeed, properly taken, and according to its just extent, mightily greatens him;

¹ Primate Usher's judgment may be seen in his Answer to the Jesuits' Challenge, that this word properly signifies the other world, the place or state of the dead—so that heaven itself may be comprehended in it. Grot. on Luke xvi. 23, makes *hades* most certainly to signify a place withdrawn from our sight; spoken of the body, the grave; of the soul, all that region wherein it is separate from the body. So that as Dives was in *hades*, so was Lazarus too, but in separate regions: for both paradise and hell, or, as the Grecians were wont to speak, *Elysii*, and *Tartara*, were in *hades*. You may have in him more quotations from the poets, the sense of the Essenes from Josephus, and passages from divers of the fathers to the same purpose. Dr. Hammond's mind was the same, copiously expressed on Matt. xi. 23; but differs from Grot. in ascribing to Philemon the iambics above recited, which the other gives to Diphilus. Dr. Lightfoot is full to the same purpose, on the 4th Article of the Creed. And though Bellarmine will have this word always signify *hell*; (which, if it do, with *sheol* the correspondent word, Jacob desired to go to hell to his son, as Dr. H. argues;) Camero, as good a judge, thinks, except once, it never does. If any desire to see more to this purpose with little trouble to themselves, let them peruse Martinius's Lexic. on the word *inferus*, or *infernus*. I could refer to many more whom I forbear to mention.

Only, if any think in some or other text of Scripture this word must signify *hell* only, since it is of that latitude as to signify *heaven* in other places, an impartial view of the circumstances of the text must determine whether there it be meant of the one, or the other, or both.

i. e. it is as much as to say, his dominion is of unknown limits ; such as no eye can measure. We think with a sort of veneration, of what is represented as too big for our knowledge. We have a natural awe and reverence for unsearchable darkness. But in the meantime we herein suffer a just diminution of ourselves, that when our inquiry stops, and can proceed no further, it being but a very little part of the universe that lies within our compass, having tired our inquiring eye and mind ; upon all the rest we write, *hades* ; call it *unseen*, or *unknown*. And because we call it so, in reference to us, God himself calls it so too ; it being his way, (as is observed by that noted Jew,¹) speaking to men, to use the tongue of the children of men, to speak to them in their own language, and allow them to coin their own words : which at first they often do very occasionally ; nor, as to this, could they have a fairer or a more urgent occasion, or that is more self-justifying, than in one word to say of that other world, that it is *hades*, or *invisible*, when that is truly all that they have to say, or can have any immediate notice of about it.

It hath, therefore, its rise from ourselves, and the penury of our knowledge of things ; and is at once both an ingenuous confession, with some sort of modest cover, and excuse of our own ignorance : as with geographers, all that part of this globe which they cannot describe, is *terra incognita* ; and with philosophers, such phenomena in nature as they can give no account of, they resolve shortly and in the most compendious way into some or other occult quality, or somewhat else, as occult.

¹ Maimonides.

How happy were it, if in all matters that concern religion, and in this, as it doth so, they would shut up in a sacred venerable darkness what they cannot distinctly perceive; it being once by the undeceiving word expressly asserted that it is, without therefore denying its reality because they clearly apprehend not what it is.

With too many their religion is so little, and their pride and self-conceit so great, that they think themselves fit to be standards; that their eye or mind is of a size large enough to measure the creation, yea, and the Creator too. And by how much they have the less left them of mind, or the more it is sunk into earth and carnality, the more capable it is of being the measure of all reality, of taking the compass of all being created and uncreated. And so that of the philosopher takes place in the worst sense that can be put upon it; "To see darkness is to see nothing." All is nullity that their sense reaches not. *Hades* is, with such, indeed, empty, imaginary darkness; or in plainer English, there is neither heaven nor hell, because they see them not.

But we ought to have the greater thoughts of it, not the less for its being too big, too great, too glorious for our present view; and that it is must as yet rest as to us, and so let it rest awhile, under the name of *hades*, the unknown dominion of our great Lord; according to that most express account he at his ascension gave of the existence of both parts together, that less known to us, and that more known, Matt. xxviii. 18. All power is given to me both in heaven and earth.

That death is added, as contained also within the limits of our Lord's dominion, doth expressly

signify his custody of the passage from this visible world to the invisible, viz. as he commands the entrance into each distinct part of *hades*, the invisible world, consisting of both heaven and hell, so he hath power over death too, which is the common outlet from this world, and the passage unto both.

But it withal plainly implies his very absolute power over this visible world of ours also; for it signifies he hath the power of measuring every one's time here, and how long each inhabitant of this world shall live in it. If it belong to him to determine when any one shall die, it must by consequence belong to him to assign the portion and *dimensum* of time that every one shall live. Nor is there any conceivable moment in the time of any one's life, wherein he hath not this power of putting a period by death thereunto, at his own pleasure. He is therefore signified to have the power of every man's life and death at once: and the power of life and death is very high and great power. He therefore herein explicitly claims, what is elsewhere expressly ascribed to him, Rom. xiv. 7—9. None lives to himself, (i. e. *de jure*, no man should,) or dies to himself: for 'whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord, both of the dead and living.'

In sum, here is asserted to him a dominion over both worlds; this in which we live, and that into which we die, whether the one or the other part of it. And so in reference to men, who once have inhabited this world, the sense of this text, and

that we are insisting on, is the same. Though *hades* is of vastly larger extent than only to be the receptacle of such as have lived here; it having also, in both the parts of it, innumerable inhabitants who never had a dwelling assigned them in this world of ours at all.

But thus far we have the vast extent of our Lord Christ's dominion competently cleared to be the proper intendment of this text; and that it never meant so faint and minute a representation of it, as only to make him keeper of the bottomless pit; though of that also he hath the key, as we shall further take notice: but we are now to inquire of what will take up less time:—

III. The kind of that power over so vast a realm, or manifold realms, signified by this emblematical expression, of 'having the keys,' &c.

Every one knows that the keys are insignia: some of the tokens of power; and according to the peculiarity of the object, may be of Divine power.

The Jews, as some writers of their affairs say, appropriate the keys of three, others of four things, to God only:—of life, or the entrance into this world; of the rain, or the treasures of the clouds; of the earth say some¹ as of the granary of corn, and of the grave; "Of which," says one of their own,² "the Holy Blessed One hath the keys of the sepulchres in his hand," &c. And as we may be sure he admits thither, so he admits from thence; and as he says, "In the future age, the H. B. One will unlock the treasures of souls, and will

¹ Weems.

² Pirke. R. Eliezer. Edit. per G. H. Vorst. C. F.

open the graves, and bring every soul back into its own body," &c.

Nor is this key of the vast *hades*, when it is in the hand of our Redeemer, the less in the hand of the holy blessed One; for so he is too. But it is in his hand as belonging to his office of Mediator between God and man, as was before said. And properly the phrase signifies ministerial power, being a manifest allusion to the common usage, in the courts of princes, of intrusting to some great minister the power of the keys; as it was foretold of Eliakim, (Isa. xxii.) that he should be placed in the same high station in Hezekiah's court, wherein Shebna was, of whom so severe things are there said, and that the key of the house of David should be laid upon his shoulder, &c. verse 20—22. And the house of David being a known type of the house or church of God, and he himself of Christ, who, as the Son, hath power over the whole house, according to this typical way of speaking, our Lord is said (Rev. iii. 7,) to have the key of David, to open so as none can shut, to shut so as none can open; i. e. to have a final, decisive power in all he doth, from which there is no appeal.

Nor could any thing be more congruous, than that having the keys of the celestial house of God, the heavenly palace of the Great King, the habitation of his holiness and glory, (in which are the everlasting habitations, the many mansions, the places prepared for his redeemed,) he should also have the keys of the terrestrial Bethel; which is but a sort of portal, or *vestibulum*, to the other; 'the house of God, and the gate of heaven.' And as he is implied to have the keys of this introduc-

tive, preparatory kingdom of heaven, (as the keys of the king's palace, where is the throne or seat of government, and the keys of the kingdom, must mean the same thing,) when he is said to give them to the apostle Peter, and the other apostles; this was but a prelude, and a minute instance of his power of those keys of *hades*, and of the glorious heavenly kingdom itself contained therein, which he was not to delegate, but to manage himself immediately in his own person.

If moreover he was signified by the angel, (Rev. xx. 1,) who was said to have the key of the bottomless pit; that almost must import a power, though great in itself, very little in comparison of the immense *hades*, of which he is here said to have the keys. So remote is it, that the power ascribed to him there, should be the measure of what he here asserts to himself; and the difference must be vastly greater than it is possible for us to conceive, or parallel by the difference between having power over the palace, and all the most delightful and most spacious territories in the vastest empire of the greatest prince, and only having power over a dungeon in some obscure corner of it; which, for the great purposes whereto all this is to be applied, we can scarcely too much inculcate.

And to such application let us now, with all possible seriousness and intention of spirit, address ourselves. Which will consist in sundry inferences or deductions, laying before us some suitable matter, partly of our meditation, partly of practice; the former whereof are to prepare and lay a ground for the latter.

1. Divers things we may collect, that will be very proper for deep meditation; which I shall

propose not as things that we can be supposed not to have known before, but which are too commonly not enough thought on or considered.

And here we shall somewhat invert the order wherein things lie in the text, beginning with what is there latter and lower, and thence arising, with more advantage, to what is higher and of greater concernment; as,

1. That men do not die at random, or by some uncertain, accidental by-stroke, that, as by a slip of the hand, cuts off the thread of life; but by an act of divine determination and judgment, that passes in reference to each one's death. For as the key signifies authority and power, the turning this key of death, that gives a man his exit out of this world, is an authoritative act. And do we consider in what hand this power is lodged? We cannot but apprehend every such act is the effect of counsel and judgment.

What philosophers are wont to discourse of fortuitous events in reference to rational agents, or casual, in reference to natural, must be understood but with relation to ourselves, and signifies only our own ignorance of futurities, but can have no place in the all-comprehending mind, as if any thing were a contingency unto that. For them that live as if they thought they came into this world by chance, it is very natural to them to think they shall die and go out of it by chance too, but when as it happens. This is worse than paganism blindness; for besides what, from their poets, the vulgar have been made to believe concerning the three fatal Sisters, to whom they ascribed no less than deity concerned in measuring every one's life, the grave discourses which some of them have writ concerning Providence and its

extent to the lesser intermediate concerns of life, much more to that their final great concern of death, will be a standing testimony against the too prevailing Christian scepticism (they ought to excuse the solecism who make it) of this wretched age! But such among us as will allow themselves the liberty to think, want not opportunity and means by which they may be assured, that not an imaginary, but real deity is immediately and constantly concerned in measuring our time in this world. What an awful thought is this! And it leads to a

2. Inference. That it is a great thing to die. The Son of God, the Redeemer of man, hath an immediate presidency over this. He signalizes himself by it, who could not suppose he should be magnified by a trifle! We slightly say, Such a one is dead! Consider the matter in itself, and it is great. A reasonable soul hath changed states! An intelligent spirit is gone out of our world! The life of a gnat, a fly, (those little automata, or self-moving things,) how admirable a production is it! It becomes no man to despise what no man can imitate. We praise the pencil that well describes the external figure of such an *animalculum*, such a little creature: but the internal, vital, self-moving power, and the motion itself, what art can express! But a human life, how important a thing is it! It was one of Plato's thanksgivings, that God had made him a man! How careful a guard hath God set over every man's life, fencing it by the severest law! 'If any man sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;' and how weighty is the annexed reason:—'For in the image of God he made man.' This then highly greatens this matter. He therefore reserves it wholly to himself, as one

of his peculiarities, to dispose of such a life: 'I am he that kills and makes alive.' We find it one of high titles—'The God of the spirits of all flesh.' He had what was much greater to glory in, that he was 'the Father of spirits,' indefinitely spoken. When he hath all the heavenly regions, the spacious *hades*, peopled with such inhabitants 'whose dwelling is not with flesh;' and, for vast multitudes of them, never was, that yet, looking down into this little world of ours, this minute spot of his creation, and observing that here were spirits dwelling in flesh, he should please to be styled also the God of those spirits, signifies this to be with him too an appropriate glory, a glory which he will not communicate further than he communicates Godhead; and that he held it a divine right to measure the time unto each of them of of their abode in flesh, and determine when they shall dislodge.

This cannot be thought on aright, without a becoming most profound reverence of him on this account. How sharp a rebuke is given to that haughty prince, 'The God in whose hands thy breath is, hast thou not glorified.'¹ That would prepare the way, and we should be easily led on, were we once come to think with reverence, to think also with pleasure of this case, that our life and every breath we draw are under such a divine superintendency. The holy Psalmist speaks of it with high complacency, as the matter of his song, that he had a God presiding over his life. So he tells us he would have each *νυχθήμερον*, composed not more of night and day, than of prayer and praise, directed

¹ Dan. v. 23.

to God under this notion, as the God of his life, Psal. xlii. 8. And he speaks it not grudgingly, but as the ground of his trust and boast, Psal. xxxi. 14, 15:—‘I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand.’ That this key is in the hand of the great Emmanuel, God with us, will be thought on with frequency, when it is thought on with delight.

3. Our life on earth is under the constant strict observation of our Lord Christ. He waits when to turn the key, and shut it up. Through the whole of that time, which, by deferring, he measures out to us, we are under his eye as in a state of probation. He takes continual notice how we quit ourselves. For his turning the key at last is a judicial act; therefore supposes diligent observation, and proceeds upon it. He that hath this key, is also said in the next chapter, (verse 18,) to have eyes like a flame of fire. With these he observes what he hath against one or another, (verse 20,) and with most indulgent patience gives a space of repentance, (verse 21,) and notes it down if any then repent not, as we there also find. Did secure sinners consider this, how he beholds them with a flame in his eye, and the key in his hand, would they dare still to trifle? If they did apprehend how he, in this posture, stands over them, in all their vain dalliances, idle impertinences, bold adventures, insolent attempts against his laws and government, presumptuous affronts of his high authority; yea, or but in their drowsy slumberings, their lingering delays; did they consider what notice he takes how they demean themselves under every sermon they hear, in every prayer wherein they are to join with others, or which,

perhaps, for custom's sake, they put up alone by themselves; how their hearts are moved, or unmoved, by every repeated call that is given them to turn to God, and get their peace made by application of their Redeemer's reconciling blood; in what agonies would they be, what pangs of trembling would they feel within themselves, lest the key should turn before their great work be done!

4. Whatsoever ill designs by this observation he discovers, it is easy to him to prevent. One turn of this key of death, besides the many other ways that are obvious to him, disappoints them all, and in that day all their thoughts perish. It is not, therefore, from inadvertency, indifferency, or impotency, but deep counsel, that they are permitted to be driven on so far. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs, and he knows their day is coming. He can turn this key when he will.

5. His power as to every one's death cannot be avoided or withstood. The act of this key is definite, and ends the business. No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; nor hath he power in death, Eccl. viii. 8. It is in vain to struggle when the key is turned; the power of the keys, where it is supremely lodged, is absolutely decisive, and their effect permanent and irrevocable. That soul, therefore, for whose exit the key is turned, must thereupon then forthwith depart, willing or unwilling, ready or unready.

6. Souls that go out of this world of ours, on the turn of this key, go not out of being. He that hath this key of death, hath also the key of *hades*, a key and a key. When he uses the former to let them out from this, he uses the latter to give them their inlet into the other world, and into the one or the

other part of it ; into the upper or the lower *hades*, as the state of their case is, and doth require.

Our business is not now with Pagans, to whom the oracles of God are unknown. If it were, the best and wisest of them who so commonly speak of souls going into *hades*, never thought of their going no-whither ; nor therefore that they were nothing. They had reasons, then, which they thought cogent, that induced them, though unassisted with divine revelation, to conclude they survived their forsaken bodies. And what else could any unbribed understanding conclude or conceive? When we find they have powers belonging to them, which we can much more easily apprehend capable of being acted without help from the body than by it, we are sure they can form thoughts, purposes, desires, hopes ; for it is matter of fact they do it ; and coherent thoughts, and thoughts arising from thoughts, one from another : yea, and thoughts abstracted from any thing corporeal, the notions of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of moral good and evil, with some agreeable resolves ; thoughts quite above the sphere of matter, so as to form a notion of the mind itself of a spiritual being, as unexceptionable a one as we can form of a body ; yea, of an original self-subsistent Mind and Spirit, the Former and Maker of all other. It is much more apprehensible, since we certainly know that all this is done, that it is done without any help of the body, than how flesh, or blood, or bones, or nerves, or brains, or any corporeal thing, should contribute to such methods of thinking, or to any thought at all. And if it can be conceived that a spirit can act without dependence on a body, what should hinder but we may as well con-

ceive it to subsist and live without such dependence? And when we find this power of thought belongs to somewhat in us that lives, since the deserted carcass thinks not, how reasonable is it to suppose, that as the body lives not of itself, or life is not essential to it, for life may be retired and gone, and it remain, as we see it doth, the same body still; that the soul to which the power of thought belongs, lives of itself, not independently on the first cause, but essentially, so as to receive life and essence together from that cause, or life included in its essence, so as that it shall be the same thing to it to be and to live. And hereupon how obvious is it to apprehend that the soul is such a thing as can live in the body, which when it doth, the body lives by it a precarious, borrowed life; and that can live out of the body, leaving it, when it doth so, to drop and die.

These sentiments were so reasonable, as generally to prevail with the more deeply-thinking part of mankind, philosophers of all sorts, (a few excepted, whose notions were manifestly formed by vicious inclination,) in the pagan world, where was nothing higher than reason to govern. But we have life and immortality brought to light in the gospel,¹ and are forewarned by it that these will be the measures of the final judgment—to give eternal life at last to them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek honour, glory, and immortality;² to the rest, indignation and wrath,³ &c. because there is no respect of persons with

¹ Tim. i. 10.

² Rom. ii. 7.

³ Ib. v. 8.

God.¹ As supposing the discovery of another world, even by natural light, much more by the addition of supernatural, to be so clear, as that the rule of the universal judgment, even for all, is most righteously to be taken from hence, and that there is nothing but a resolution of living wickedly to be opposed to it.

It is also no slight consideration, that a susceptibleness of religion should, among the creatures that dwell on earth, be so appropriate and peculiar to man, and (some rare instances excepted) as far diffused as human nature; so as to induce some very considering men, of the ancients as well as moderns, both pagans and Christians, to think religion the more probable specifying difference of man than reason. And whence should so common an impression be, but from a cause as common? or how can we avoid to think that this signature upon the soul of man,—a capacity of religion,—should be from the same hand that formed the spirit of man within him, and that a natural religiousness, and human nature itself, had the same Author? But who sees not that religion, as such, hath a final reference to a future state?² He was no despicable writer, though not a Christian, that positively affirmed hope towards God to be essential to man; and that they that had it not, were not partakers of the rational nature.

It is so much the more a deplorable and monstrous thing, that so many, not only against the light of their own reason, but of divine revelation,

¹ Rom. vii. 11.

² Philo Judæus, Quod deter. potiori insid. soleat, ὡς τῶν μὴ ἐλπιζόντων ἐπὶ Θεον, λογικῆς φύσεως ἔμμοιραμένων.

are so industrious to unman themselves : and having so effectually in a great degree done it, really and in practice, aim to do it in a more compendious way, notionally and in principle too ; and make use or show of reason to prove themselves not to be reasonable creatures ; or to divest themselves of the principal dignity and distinction of the rational nature ; and are incomparably herein more unnatural than such as we commonly count felons upon themselves, who only act against their own bodily life, but these against the much nobler life of their soul ; they against the life of an individual, these against their own whole species at once. And how deplorable is their case, that count it their interest to be in no possibility of being happy ! when yet their so great dread of a future state, as to urge them upon doing the most notorious violence to their own faculties to rid themselves of it, is a very convictive argument of its reality ; for their dread still pursues and sticks close to them. This shows it lies deep in the nature of things which they cannot alter. The terrible image is still before their eyes ; and their principal refuge lies only in diverting, in not attending to it. And they can so little trust to their sophistical reasonings against it, that when they have done all they can, they must owe what they have of ease and quiet in their own minds, not so much to any strength of reason they apprehend in their own thoughts, as in not thinking. A bold jest may sometimes provoke others' laughter, when it doth not extinguish their own fear. A suspicion *a formido oppositi* will still remain ; a misgiving that they cannot nullify the great *hades*, pull down the spacious fabric of heaven, or undermine the profound abyss of hell, by a profane

scoff. They will in time discern the difference between the evanid passion of a sudden fright, that takes its rise from imagination, and the reason of things; as one may between a fright in a dream, and the dread of a condemned criminal, with whom, sleeping and waking, the real state of his case is still the same.

Nor are the things themselves remote or unconnected: God's right to punish a reasonable creature that hath lived in contempt of him, and his own reasonable apprehension hereof, of his conscience both of the fact and desert, they answer as face to face, as the stamp on the seal, and the impression on the wax. They would fain make their reason a protection against their fear; but that cannot serve both ways; the reason of the thing lies against them already, and there cannot be an eternal war between the faculty and the object. One way or other the latter will overpower the former, and draw it into consent with itself; either by letting it see there is a just, true cause of fear, or, assisted by Divine grace, prevail for the change of the sinner's course; whereupon that troublesome fear and its cause will both, upon the best terms, cease together. And that what hath been proposed to consideration under this head may be the more effectually considered, to this blessed purpose, I add that,

7. The discovery of the invisible world, and the disposal of affairs there, have a most encouraging aspect upon this world; for both the discovery and the disposal are by our blessed Redeemer, in whom mercy and might are met in highest perfection. How fragrant breathings of grace, how glorious a display of power, are there in what he here says!

‘Fear not! I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and I am alive for evermore. Amen. And I have the keys of *hades* and of death.’ He hath opened the celestial *hades* to our view, that it might be also open to our safe entrance and blissful inhabitation. He who was dead, but liveth, and had made his victorious triumphant entrance before us, and for us; he who had overcome him that had the power of death,—conquered the gigantic monster at the gate, gained the keys, and designed herein their deliverance from the fear of death, who were thereby subject to bondage; (Heb. ii. 14, 15;)—he who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel; (2 Tim. i. 10;) it is he who bids us lift up our eyes, and behold the heavens opened, and himself standing at the right hand of God. The horrid infernal *hades* he hath discovered too, only that we might fear and shun it. But yet more distinctly consider, why doth he here represent himself under this character, ‘He that liveth and was dead,’ but that he might put us in mind of that most convictive argument of his love, his submitting to die for us: ‘Greater love hath no man;’ and that he might at once put us out of doubt concerning his power, that he yet survives, and is sprung up alive out of that death, victorious over it? How amiable is the representation of such power in conjunction with such love! The same person having a heart so replenished with love, a hand so armed with power, neither capable of *unkind* design, nor unable to effect the *most kind*: behold him in their representation! Who would not now fall at his foot and adore? Who would hesitate at resigning to him,

or be appalled at his disclosure of this unknown world?

Do but consider him who makes the discovery, and who would not expect from him the utmost efforts of love and goodness? from him who is the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person? his essential Image, who is Love! From him who came into this wretched world of ours, full of grace and truth! and who could not have come but by the inducement of compassion to our miseries. From him who knows all things, and whose eye penetrates into every recess of the vast *hades*—all his own empire—in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; but who only knows not to deceive; who hath told us, in his Father's house are many mansions, and if it were not so, would have told us that, John, xiv. 2. From him into whose mouth guile never entered, but into whose lips grace was poured, and is poured out by them; so that the ear that hath heard him hath borne him witness, and filled with wonder those that heard the gracious words which came out of his mouth; who hath told us all concerning that unseen world, that in this our present state it was fit for us to know; and enough, in telling all that will be his followers, that where he is, there he will have them be, John, xvii. 24.

And consider the manifest tendency of the discovery itself:—what doth it mean or tend to, but to undeceive miserable mortals, whom he beholds from his high throne mocked with shadows, beguiled with most delusive impostures, and easily apt to be imposed upon? foolish, deceived, serving

divers lusts and pleasures; feeding upon ashes, and wearying themselves for very vanity; sporting themselves in the dust of this minute spot of earth; wasting their little inch of time, wherein they should prepare for translation into the regions of unseen glory. To these he declares he hath formed a kingdom for all that covet to mend their states, and that his kingdom is not of this world; that for such as will be of this kingdom, he will provide better, having other worlds, the many heavens, above all which he is ascended, at his dispose, Eph. iv. 10. But they must seek this kingdom and the righteousness of it in the first place, and desist from their care about other things. He counsels and warns them not to lay up their treasure on earth, but in heaven; and to let their hearts be there with their treasure. And what can withstand his power, who, having been dead, liveth victorious over him that had the power of death, and is alive for evermore, possessed of an eternal state of life?

And have we not reason to expect the most equal and most benign disposal of things in that unseen world, when he also declares, I have the keys, rightful authority, as well as mighty power, to reward and punish? None but who have a very ill mind can fear from him an ill management. He first became capable of dying, and then yielded himself to die, that he might obtain these keys for gracious purposes. He had them before to execute just vengeance, as he was originally in the form of God, and without robbery equal with God; an equal sharer in sustaining the wrong that had been done by apostate rebels, and an equal sharer in the right of vindicating it.

But that he might have these keys to open the heavenly *hades* to reduced apostates to penitent, believing, self-devoting sinners, for this it was necessary he should put on man, be found here in fashion as a man, take on him the form of a servant, become obedient to death, even that servile punishment the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 7, 8. For this he is highly exalted into this power, that every knee might bow to him, in hope of saving mercy, *v.* 9, 10, compared with Isa. xlv. 22, 23. He had the keys without this of the supernal *hades*, to shut out all offenders, and of the infernal, to shut them up for ever. But that he might have them to absolve repenting believers, admit them into heaven, and only to shut up in hell implacable enemies—for this he must die, and live again. He was to be slain and hanged on a tree, that he might be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin, Acts v. 30, 31; that to this intent he might be the Lord of the dead and the living, he must both die and rise, and live so as to die no more, Rom. xiv. 9. These keys, for this purpose, he was only to have upon these terms. He had a right to punish as an offended God, but to pardon and save as a mediating, sin-expiating God-man.

But as he was to do the part of a Mediator, he must act equally between the disagreeing parties:— he was to deal impartially on both sides; to render back entire to the injured Ruler of the world his violated rights, and to obtain for us his forfeited favour, as entire: and undertook therefore, when as a sacrifice he was to be slain, to redeem us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9; to give him back his revolted creature, holy, pure, subject, and serviceable, as by his methods he shall be at last;

and procure for him pardon, acceptance, and eternal blessedness.

When, therefore, he was to do for us the part of a Redeemer, he was to redeem us from the curse of the law, not from the command of it; to save us from the wrath of God, not from his government.¹ Had it been otherwise, so firm and indissoluble is the connexion between our duty and our felicity, that the sovereign Ruler had been eternally injured, and we not advantaged. Were we to have been set free from the preceptive obligation of God's holy law, then most of all from that most fundamental precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, soul, might, and mind.' Had this been redemption, which supposes only what is evil and hurtful, as that we are to be redeemed from? This were a strange sort of self-repugnant redemption, not from sin and misery, but from our duty and felicity. This were so to be redeemed as to be still lost, and every way lost, both to God and to ourselves for ever. Redeemed from loving God! What a monstrous thought! Redeemed from what is the great active and fruitive principle; the source of obedience and blessedness; the eternal spring, even in the heavenly state, of adoration and fruition! This had been to legitimate everlasting enmity and rebellion against the blessed God, and to redeem us into an eternal hell of horror and misery to ourselves! This had been to cut off from the Supreme Ruler of the world for ever, so considerable a limb of his most rightful dominion, and to leave us as miserable as everlasting separation from the Fountain of life and blessedness could make us.

¹ Gal. iii. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 3, 4.

When, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ was to redeem us from the curse of the law, it was that the promised Spirit might be given to us, (Gal. iii. 13, 14,) who should write the law in our hearts; (Jer. xxxi. 33; Ezek. xxxvi. 27,) fulfil the righteousness of it in us, by causing us to walk after his dictates, according to that law; regenerating us, begetting us after God's image, and making us partakers of a Godlike nature. So we through the law become dead to the malediction and curse of it, that we may live to God more devoted lives than ever, Gal. ii. 19. Thus is God's lost creature given back to him with the greatest advantage also to itself.

With this design it is apparent our Lord redeemed us, and by his redemption acquired these keys. Nor are we to doubt, but in the use of them he will dispense exactly according to this just and merciful design. And what a perverse distorted mind is that, which can so much as wish it should be otherwise! viz. that he should save us to the eternal wrong of him that made us, and so as that we should be nothing the better; i. e. that he should save us without saving us.

And hath this no pleasant comfortable aspect upon a lost world, that he who hath these keys will use them for such purposes? i. e. to admit to eternal bliss, and save to the uttermost, all that will come to God by him; (not willing to be everlastingly alienated from the life of God;) because he ever lives to make intercession, or to transact and negotiate for them, (as that word signifies,) and that in a rightful way, and even by the power of these keys!

8. That there must be some important reason

why the other world is to us unseen, and so truly bears the name of *hades*. This expresses the state of the case as in fact it is, that it is a world lying out of our sight, and into which our dim and weak eye cannot penetrate. That other state of things is spoken of therefore as hidden from us by a veil. When our Lord Jesus is said to have passed into the heavens, (Heb. iv. 14,) he is also said to have entered into that within the veil; (Heb. vi. 19, 20;) alluding to that in the temple of Solomon, and before that in Moses's tabernacle; but expressly signifying, that the holy places into which Christ entered, not those made with hands, which were the figure of the true, but heaven itself, filled with the glorious presence of God, where he appears for us, (Heb. ix. 24,) is also veiled from us. As also the glory of the other state is said to be a glory as yet to be revealed, Rom. viii. 28; and we are told, (Job, xxvi. 9,) the great God holdeth back the face of his throne; and above, v. 6, it is represented as a divine prerogative, that *sheol*, which is there groundlessly rendered hell, the vast *hades*, is only naked before him, lies entirely open to his view; and therein the dark and horrid part of it, destruction, by which peculiarly must be meant hell, is to him without a covering, not more hidden from his eye.

Which shows this to be the Divine pleasure; so God will have it be, who could have exposed all to common view, if he had pleased.

But because he orders all things according to the counsel of his will, (Eph. i. 11,) we must conceive some weighty reason did induce hereto, that whatsoever lies beyond this present state of things should be concealed from our immediate view, and

so come, *uno nomine*, to be called *hades*. And if the reason of God's conduct, and the course of his dispensation herein, had been equally hidden, as that state itself is, it had been a bold presumption to inquire and pry into it; modesty and reverence should have restrained us. But when we find it holds a manifest agreement with other parts of his counsel, that are sufficiently revealed; and that the excellency of the Divine wisdom is most conspicuous, and principally to be beheld and admired, in ordering the apt congruities and correspondencies of things with each other, and especially of the ends he proposes to himself, with the methods and ways he takes to effect them; it were very great ostentancy, and an undutiful negligence, not to observe them, when they stand in view, that we may render him his due acknowledgments and honour thereupon.

It is manifest that as God did not create man, at first, in that which he designed to be his final state; but as a probationer, in a state of trial, in order to a further state; so when he apostatized and fell from God, he was graciously pleased to order for him a new trial, and put him into the hands of his merciful Redeemer, who is intrusted with these keys, and with the power of life and death over him, to be managed and exercised according to the terms plainly set down and declared in his Gospel. Wheresoever he is with sufficient evidence revealed and made known, men immediately come under obligation to believe in him; to intrust and commit themselves into the same hands; to rely upon the truth of his word in every thing he reveals, as the ground of their submitting to his authority in every thing he requires.

What concerns their present practice he hath plainly shown them ; so much as it was requisite they should pre-apprehend of future retributions, rewards and punishments, he hath revealed also ; not that they should have the knowledge hereof by immediate inspection, but by taking his word. That as their first transgression was founded in infidelity, that they did not believe God, but a lying spirit against him ; their first step in their recovery and return to God should be to believe him, and take his word about things they have themselves no immediate sight or knowledge of. This point was by no means to be quitted to the first apostates. As if God's saying to them, " If you transgress, you shall die, or go into *hades*, was no sufficient enforcement of the precept, unless he had given them a distinct view of the state of felicity or misery, which their obedience or disobedience would lead them into. This had been to give away the whole cause to the revolted rebels, and rather to confess error and oversight in the Divine government, than impute fault to the impugners of it !

This being the state of the case, how suitable had it been to the design of this second trial to be made with men, to withdraw the veil, and let every one's own eyes be their informers of all the glories of the heavenly state ; and hereupon proclaim and preach the Gospel to them, that they should all partake herein that would entirely deny themselves, come off from their own bottom, give themselves up absolutely to the interest, love, service, and communion of their Redeemer, and of God in him ? to fortify themselves against the assaults and dangers of their earthly pilgrimage, by reversing

that rule, The just shall live by faith, even that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen ;¹ or by inverting the method, that in reference to such things we are to walk by faith, not by sight,² and letting it be, We are to walk by sight, not by faith; and that, lest any should refuse such compliance with their great Lord, whole *hades* should be no longer so, but made naked before them, and the covering of hell and destruction be taken off, and their own eyes behold the infernal horrors, and their own ears hear the shrieks and howlings of accursed creatures, that having rejected their Redeemer, are rejected by him ? We are not here to consider, what course would most certainly effect their salvation, but what most became the wise, holy God, to preserve the dignity of his own government, and save them too ; otherwise Almighty power could save all at once. As therefore we have cause to acknowledge the kindness and compassion of our blessed Lord, who hath these keys, in giving us for the kind, such notices as he hath, of the state of the things in *hades* ; so we have equal cause to admire his wisdom, that he gives us not those of another kind, that should more powerfully strike the sense and amaze us more, but instruct us less ; that continues it to be *hades* still, a state of things to us unseen as yet. As the case would have been, on the other supposition, the most generous, noble part of our religion had been sullied or lost ; and the trial of our faith, which is to be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, even upon

¹ Heb. x. ch. xi. 1.

² 2 Cor. v. 7.

this account; that they who had not seen him in his mean circumstances on earth, nor did *now* see him, amidst all the glories of his exalted state, yet *believing*, loved him, and rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. This faith, and all the glorious trials of it, with its admirable achievements and performances, whereby the elders heretofore obtained so good a report, and high renown on earth,¹ and which filled the world with wonder, had all vanished into obscurity and darkness; i. e. if they had believed no more, or no greater things, than every man besides had the immediate view of his own eye-sight.

And yet the trial had been greater, on another account, than the Divine wisdom, in conjunction with goodness and compassion, thought fit ordinarily to put sincere Christians upon. For who could with any tolerable patience have endured longer abode on earth, after they should once have had the glory of the heavenly state immediately set in view before their eyes? especially considering, not so much the sufferings, as the impurities, of their present state? What, for great reason, was a special vouchsafement to one apostle, was, for as great, to be common to all Christians. How great is the wisdom and mercy of our blessed Lord in this partial concealment of our future state, and that while so much as is sufficient is revealed, there is yet a *hades* upon it, and it may still be said, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, 1 John, iii. 2.

But as these majestic life-breathing words of our great Lord do plainly offer the things that have

¹ Heb. xi. 2.

been mentioned, and many more such that might occur to our thoughts and meditation; so will they be thought on in vain, if they be not followed and answered by suitable dispositions and actions of heart and life. Therefore the further use we are to make of this great subject will be to lay down,

2. Divers correspondent things to be practised and done, which must also suppose dispositions and frames of heart and spirit agreeable thereto.

1. Let us live, expecting a period to be ere long put to our life on earth. For remember, there are keys put into a great hand for this very purpose, that holds them not in vain. His power is of equal extent with the law he is to proceed by. And by that it is appointed for all once to die.¹ Therefore, as in the execution he cannot exceed, so he will not come short of this appointment: when that once shall be, it belongs to him to determine. And from the course we may observe him to hold, as it is uncertain to all, it can be very remote to none. How short is the measure of a span! It is an absurd vanity to promise ourselves that which is in the power of another. How wise and prudent a thing to accommodate ourselves composedly to his pleasure, in whose power we are; and to live as men continually expecting to die! There are bands of death, out of which, when they once take hold, we cannot free ourselves. But there are also bands of life, not less troublesome or dangerous. It is our great concern to be daily, by degrees, loosening and disentangling ourselves from these bands, and for preventing the necessity of a violent rupture, to be daily disengaging our hearts

¹ Heb. ix. 27.

from an ensnaring world, and the too close embraces of an over-indulged body. Tell them resolutely, I must leave them whensoever my great Lord turns the key for me; and I know not how soon that may be. It is equally unhappy and foolish to be engaged in the pursuit of an impossibility, or in a war with necessity; the former whereof cannot be obtained, the latter cannot but overcome. We owe so much to ourselves, and to the ease and quiet of our own minds, to be reconciled, at all times, to that which may befall us at any time. How confounding a thing is surprisal by that which ourselves regret and dread! How unaccountable and ignominious must it be to pretend to be surprised with what we have so great reason always to expect, and whereof we are so oft forewarned! Is it no part of Christian watchfulness to wait for such an hour? Though that waiting all the days of our appointed time, mentioned Job, xiv. 14, refers to another change than that of death, viz. (as the foregoing and following verses show,) that of the resurrection, yet it cannot but be equally requisite, upon a no less important reason. And the requests that the Lord would make us know our end, and the measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are, (Ps. xxxix. 4,) and that he would teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom, (Ps. xc. 12,) are equally monitory to the same purpose, as the most express precepts; as also the same directions we have to watch and wait for our Lord's appearance and coming are as applicable to this purpose; for, whensoever his key opens our passage out of this world and these bodies, *hades* opens too, and he particularly ap-

pears to us in as decisive a judgment of our case as his universal appearance and judgment will at last give for all. The placid agreement of our minds and spirits with divine determination, both as to the thing and time of our departure hence, will prevent the trouble and ungratefulness of being surprised; and our continual expectation of it will prevent any surprisal at all. Let this then be an agreed resolution with us, to endeavour being in a posture, as that we may be capable of saying, "Lord, whensoever thou shalt move thy key, and tell me, this night, or this hour, I will require thy soul, thou shalt not, O Lord, prevent mine expectation, or ever find me counting upon many years' enjoyment of any thing this world can entertain me with."

In further pursuance hereof,

2. Be not over-intent on designs for this present world, which would suppose you to count upon long abode in it. Let them be always laid with a supposition, you may, this way, even by one turn of this key, be prevented of bringing them about: and let them be pursued with indifferency, so as that disappointment even this way may not be a grievance. A thing made up of thought and design, as our mind and spirit naturally is, will be designing one way or other; nor ought we to attempt that violence upon our own natures, as to endeavour the stupifying of the intelligent, designing mind, which the Author of nature hath put into us. Only let us so lay our designs, as that how many soever we form that may be liable to this sort of disappointment, we may still have one greater and more important, so regularly and surely laid, that no turn of this key shall be in

any possibility to frustrate, but promote it rather. The design for the kingdom of God to be first sought, with his righteousness, (Matt. vi. 33,) or which is pursued by seeking glory, honour, and immortality, to the actual attainment of eternal life, (Rom. ii. 7,) may, if prescribed methods be duly observed, have this felicity always attending it, to be successfully pursued while we live, and effected when we die.

But this is an unaccountable vanity under the sun, that men too generally form such projects, that they are disappointed both when they do not compass them, and when they do. If they do not, they have lost their labour; if they do, they are not worth it: they dream they are eating and enjoying the fruit of their labour, but they awake, and their soul is empty. And if at length they think of laying wiser and more valuable designs, the key turns, and not having fixed their resolution, and begun aright, they and all their thoughts, foolish or more wise, perish together. Because there is a fit season for every fit undertaking, a time and judgment for every purpose, or a critical time, such as is by judgment affixed to every such purpose, (Eccl. viii. 6,) and because also men know not their time, (ch. ix. 12,) therefore their misery is great upon the earth, and as birds caught in a snare, they are snared in an evil time that falleth suddenly upon them. O miserable, miserable mortals! so are your immortal spirits mis-employed and lost!

Their most valuable design for another world is seldom thought on in season: their little designs for this world they contrive and prosecute with that confidence, as if they thought the world to be

theirs, and themselves their own, and they had no Lord over them. This rude insolence that holy apostle animadverts upon, of such as say, 'To-day or to-morrow we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain, whereas they know not what shall be on the morrow: and what is their life? A vapour,'¹ &c. So much of duty and becoming behaviour is in the meantime forgotten, as to say, "If the Lord will we shall live," &c. This is to bear themselves as absolute masters of their own lives. How bold an affront to their sovereign Lord! They feel themselves well in health, strength, and vigour, and seem resolved it shall be a trial of skill who hath the power, or to whom the keys belong, till it come to the last irrefragable demonstration, that he changes their countenance, and sends them away; (Job, xiv. 20;) and then they go, driven, plucked, and torn away from their dwelling-place, rooted out from the land of the living, Ps. lii. 5.

But if any premonitory decays make them doubt the perpetuity of their own abode here, they somewhat ease their minds by the pleasure they take in thinking, when they have filled their own bellies, (Ps. xvii. 14,) what they shall leave of their substance to their babes, and to them that shall come after. And 'their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; and they call their lands after their own names, and their posterity approve their sayings,' think and act as wisely as they. (Ps. xlix. 11, 12.) Thus they take upon them and reckon they for their time and theirs after them,

¹ James, iv. 13—15.

shall still dwell in their own. A wise thought! They are the owners, when another keeps the keys.

Several other things of like import I shall more lightly touch, that may be collected from what hath been already more largely said, and leave to be further enlarged upon in your own thoughts, and shall dilate more upon some other, as they are either more material, or less thought on by the most.

3. Be not prodigal of your time on earth, which is so little in your power. Because you are not to expect much, make the best use you can of your little. It is so precious a thing that it is to be redeemed; it is therefore too precious to be embezzled and trifled away. The connexion of those two precepts, (Eph. v. 15, 16,) of walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, and that of redeeming the time, more than intimates, that to squander time is a foolish thing. Of the several sorts of things that we make ourselves, their shape and frame show their use and end. Are we to make a less judicious estimate of the works of God? If we therefore contemplate ourselves, and consider what a sort of production man is, can we allow ourselves to think God made him a reasonable creature on purpose to play the fool? or can we live as if we thought so, without reproaching our Maker? But whereas he who hath been the Author to us of such a law, requiring us to redeem time; the reproach will be wholly turned off from him upon ourselves, and our consequent ruin be upon our own guilty heads. And he will find some among ourselves, who by the advantage only of the reasonable nature, common to us and them,

that are instructors to us not to waste our days in vanity, and will be witnesses against us if we so foolishly consume what we cannot command.

Some such have unanswerably reprehended the common folly of those that dread the thought of throwing away their whole life at once, that yet have no regret at throwing it all away by parcels and piecemeal; and have told us, "A wise man can find nothing of that value, for which to barter away his time."¹

And we are to consider, that as we are reasonable creatures, we are accountable;—that we are shut up in these bodies as in workhouses;—that when he that keeps the keys lets us out, we are to 'receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether good or evil,'² 2 Cor. v. 10;—that it belongs to him that measures our time to censure it too, and the use we have made of it.

4. Let him be at once both great and amiable in our eyes, who hath so absolute power over us, and so gracious propensions towards us; i. e. who hath these keys, and who acquired them with so merciful intentions, even upon such terms as could not but signify the greatest compassion and good will towards such as we.

Reconsider what hath been offered as matter of meditation, to both these purposes. And now, hereupon, let us endeavour to have a correspondent sense inwrought into our hearts, and to bear ourselves towards him accordingly. The power and efficacy of whole Christianity depends upon this, and do very principally consist in it. What a faint, impotent, languishing thing is our religion,

¹ Neque quicquam reperit dignum, quod cum tempore suo permutaret. Sen.

how doth it dwindle into spiritless, dead form, without it! The form of knowledge is nothing else but insipid, dead notion, and our forms of worship only fruitless, unpleasant formality, if we have not a vivid sense in our hearts both of his glorious greatness, and of his excellent loving-kindness. As much as words can signify towards the impressing such a sense into our hearts, we have in these words, uttered from his own mouth; so that he may say, as that memorable type of him once did, You may plainly perceive, ‘It is my mouth that speaketh to you.’¹ I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore:’ and hereto he now sets his solemn ratifying seal, Amen; wherewith he leaves us to pause, and collect, that thus it was brought about that he could add, ‘And I have the keys of the vast *hades*, the whole unseen world, and of death.’

And God forbid that, now, these words should be with us an empty sound, or a dead letter! Let us cast in our minds what manner of salutation this should be! Doth the Son of God thus vouchsafe to bespeak miserable objects, perishing lost wretches? How can we hereupon but bow our heads and worship? What agitations of affection should we feel within! How should all our internal powers be moved, and our whole souls made as the chariots of Amminadab! What can we be now unwilling of, that he would have us be, or do? and as that, whereof we may be assured he is most willing,

5. Let us entirely receive him, and absolutely

¹ Gen. xlv.

resign ourselves to him, as our Prince and Saviour. Who would not covet to be in special relation to so mighty and so kind a Lord? And can you think to be related to him upon other terms? And do you not know that upon these you may, when in his gospel he offers himself, and demands you? what can that mean, but that you are to receive him, and resign yourselves? The case is now brought to this state, that you must either comply, or rebel. And what! rebel against him who hath these keys, who is in so high authority over the whole unseen world, who is the head of all principality and power, who is gone into the heavens, the glorious upper *hades*, and is at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, powers, being made subject to him! 1 Pet. iii. 22. We little know or can conceive, as yet, the several orders and distinctions of the celestial inhabitants, and their great and illustrious princes and potentates, thrones, dominions, &c. that all pay him a dutiful and a joyful subjection and obedience. But do we not know God hath given him a name above every name? and that in his name, or at it, as it may be read, i.e. in acknowledgment of his sovereign power, every knee must bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under earth, and all confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God the Father? And who art thou, perishing wretch! that darest dispute his title? or that, when all the creation must be subject to him, wilt except thyself?

And when it cost him so dear, that his vast power might be subservient to a design of grace, and thou must at last be saved by him, or lost for

ever, what can tempt thee to stand out against such power and such grace?

If thou wert to gratify thy ambition, how glorious a thing is it to be a Christian, a subject, a devoted homager, to so mighty a Prince! If to provide against thy necessity and distress, what course can be so sure and successful, as to fly for refuge to so compassionate a Saviour? And dost thou not know there must be, to this purpose, an express transaction between him and thee? Wonder he will condescend to it! To capitulate with dust and ashes! To article with his own creature, with whom he may do what he will! But his merciful condescension herein is declared and known! If there shall be a special relation settled between him and thee, he hath told thee in what way it must be, i. e. by way of covenant-transaction and agreement, as he puts his people of old in mind his way was with them: 'I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine,' Ezek. xvi. 8. This I insist upon and press, as a thing of the greatest importance imaginable, and the least thought of: nor the strange incongruity animadverted on, viz. that we have the seals of such a covenant among us; but the covenant itself slips through our hands. Our baptism soon after we were born, with some federal words then, is thought enough, as if we were a nation of always minors. Whoever therefore thou art, that hearest these words, or readest these lines, know that the great Lord is express towards thee in his gospel proposal, "Wilt thou accept me for thine, and resign thyself as mine?" He now expects and requires thy express answer. Take his gospel as from the cross, or take it as from the throne, or as from both, it is the same gospel, in-

terwoven of grace and authority; the richest grace, and the highest authority, at once inviting and requiring thee to commit and submit thyself unto him. Take heed lest his key turn before thou hast given thy complying answer, importing at once both thy trust and thy subjection.

Give not over pleading with thyself, with thy wayward stupid heart, till it can say to him, "Lord, I yield; thou hast overcome;"—till with tender relentings thou hast thrown thyself at his feet, and told him, "Lord, I am ashamed, I am confounded within myself, that thou shouldst die upon a cross to obtain thy high power, and that thou art not now ready to use it for the saving so vile a miscreant as I: that when thou hast so vast an unknown world, so numberless myriads of excellent creatures in thy obedience, thou shouldst yet think it worth thy while to look after me; and that I should so long have withstood thy kind and gracious overtures and intendments! O forgive my wicked aversion! I now accept and resign."

And now this being sincerely done, with fulness of consent, with deep humility, with yearning bowels, with unfeigned thankfulness, and an inward complacency and gladness of heart;

6. Let your following course in this world be ordered agreeably hereto, in continued dependence and subjection. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we are to walk in him, Col. ii. 6. Take him according to the titles here given him, as Christ, a Person anointed, authorized, qualified to be both Jesus, a Saviour, so we are to walk, according to our first reception of him, in continual dependence on his saving mercy, and to be a Lord, or, as it is here expressed, with eminency, the Lord,

so we are to walk in continual subjection to his governing power. Otherwise our receiving him, at first, under these notions, hath nothing in it but mockery and collusion.

But if his obtaining these keys, upon the terms here expressed, as having been dead, and now living, and having overcome death, as it is also Rom. xiv. 9, did signify his having them for saving purposes, as it must, since for other purposes he had them sufficiently before; and if we reckon this a reasonable inducement to receive him, and commit and intrust ourselves to him as a Saviour, that he died, and overcame death; (for his grace in yielding to die, had not rendered him a competent object of trust, otherwise than in conjunction with his power in overcoming death, and so gaining into his hands these keys;) then, the same reason still remaining, how constant an encouragement have we to continue accordingly walking in him all our days! How potent an argument should it be to us, to live that life which we live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us! (Gal. ii. 20,) i. e. inasmuch as having been crucified with him, (which is also there expressed,) we feel ourselves to live nevertheless; yet so as that it is not so much we that live, as Christ that liveth in us, who could not live in us, or be to us a spring of life, if he were not a perpetual spring of life in himself.

And consider, how darest thou live otherwise in this flesh, in this earthly house, whereof he keeps the keys, and can fetch thee out at his pleasure? when he hath warned thee to abide in him, that when he shall appear, thou mayst have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming, 1 John, ii. 28,

He will certainly then appear, when he comes to open the door, and dislodge thee from this flesh ; (though there be here a further and final reference to another appearance and coming of his ;) and if he then find thee severed and disjoined from him, (thy first closure with him not having been sincere, truly unitive and vital,) how terribly will he look, how confoundedly wilt thou look, in that hour !

Neither hast thou less reason to live in continual subjection to him, considering that as he died, and overcame death, that he might have these keys, so he now hath them, and thou art under his governing power. The more thou considerest his right to govern, the less thou wilt dispute it. When he was spoken of as a Child to us born, that he might become a Man of sorrows, and be sorrowful unto the death, and have all the sorrows of death come upon him, he is at the same time said to be the mighty God, and it was declared the government should be upon his shoulders.¹ As he was the first-begotten from the dead, viz. both submitting to death, and conquering it; so he was the Prince of the kings of the earth, (a small part of his kingdom too,) his throne being founded on his cross, his governing power in his sacrifice ; i. e. the power whereby he so governs, as that he may also save ; making these two things, the salving the rights of the Godhead, injured by sin, and the delivering of the sinner from an eternal ruin, to agree and consist with one another.

What an endearing obligation is this to obey ! —that he will be the author of eternal salvation to

¹ Isa. ix. 6.

them that obey him! inasmuch as, while our obedience cannot merit the least thing from him, yet his vouchsafing to govern us doth most highly merit from us. For he governs by writing his law in the heart, which makes our heart agree with the law; and by implanting divine love in us, which vanquishes enmity and disaffection, and virtually contains in itself our obedience, or keeping his commandments, John, xiv. 15, 23, and 1 John, v. 3. Therefore this government of his, over us, is naturally necessary to our salvation and blessedness, and is the inchoation and beginning of it; as our perfected love to God, and conformity to his nature and will, do involve and contain in themselves our complete and perfect blessedness, with which a continued enmity, or a rebellious mutinous disposition against God, is naturally inconsistent, and would be to us, and in us, a perpetual, everlasting hell.

There can therefore be no enthralling servitude in such obedience, but the truest liberty, that by which the Son makes us free indeed, John viii. 36. Yea, a true sort of royalty: for hereby we come, in the most allowable sense, to live as we will, our will being conformed to the will of God. Whereupon that was no high extravagant rant, but a sober expression, "We are born in a kingdom; to serve God is to reign."

And we know this to be the will of God, that all should honour the Son, as they honour the Father.¹ Herewith will the evangelically obedient comport with high complacency; accounting him most highly worthy that it should be so. Wherein

¹ John, v. 23.

therefore the Christian law seems strictest and most rigorous in the enjoined observance of our Lord Christ, herein we shall discern an unexceptionable reasonableness, and comply with a complacential approbation. And let us put our own hearts to it, and see that without regret or obmurmuration they can readily consent to the equity of the precept.

It is enjoined us, constructively at least, that because Christ died for us, when we were dead, quite lost in death, we that live, hereupon should settle this with ourselves as a fixed judgment, and upon that intervening judgment yield to the constraint of his love, so as henceforth no more to live to ourselves: q. d. God forbid we should henceforth be so profane! We must now for ever have done with that impious, unlawful way of living. What! after this, that we have so fully understood the state of our case, that we should be so assuming as ever again to offer at such a thing as living to ourselves, to make ourselves deities to ourselves; or to live otherwise than unto him who died for us, and rose again! 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. This is high and great, and may seem strict and severe. What! to have the whole stream of all the actions and aims, the strength and vigour of our lives, to be carried in one entire, undivided current unto him, and (as it must be understood, Gal. ii. 19,) to God in him, so as never more to live to ourselves, a divided, separate life apart from him, or wherein we shall not finally and more principally design for him! How high is his claim, but how equal and grateful to a right mind! With what a plenitude of consent is every Divine command (taking this into the account) esteemed to be right

in all things! So as that whatsoever is opposite, is hated as a false way, Psal. cxix. 128. And as the precept carries its own visible reason, the keeping of it carries its own reward in itself, Psalm xix. 11. And is it too much for him who bears these keys, and obtained them on such terms, and for such ends, to be thus affected towards him?

We are required, without exception, without limitation or reserve, whatsoever we do, whether in word or work, to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Col. iii. 17.

Inquire we, Do our hearts repine at this law? Do not we, doth not this world, owe so much to him? Why are we allowed a place and a time here? Why is not this world a flaming theatre? Is it not fit every one should know under whose government they live; by whose beneficence, under whose protection, and in whose name they may act so or so, and by whose authority; either obliging, or not restraining them, requiring, or licensing them to do this or that? Doth this world owe less to him that bears these keys, than Egypt did to Joseph, when thus the royal word went forth in reference to him, 'I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt!' How pleasant should it be to our souls, often to remember and think on that name of his which we bear, (Isa. xxvi. 8, Mal. iii. 16,) and draw in as vital breath, the sweet odours of it,¹ Cant. i. 3. How glorious a thing should we count it, because he is the Lord our God, to walk in his name for ever and ever! as all people will walk every one in the name of their god, Mic. iv. 5.

¹ Psalm xlv. 6—11; John, xx. 28.

And then we shall account it no hard law, whatever we do, to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him, and for him; blessing God every day, that we are put by him under the mild and merciful government of a Redeemer. Then we shall rejoicingly avow, as the apostle doth, (1 Cor. ix. 21,) that we are not without law to God, but under law to Christ.

Whereupon, when you find your special relation is thus settled and fixed unto the great Lord both of this present visible world and of *hades*, or the invisible world, also by your solemn covenant with him, and evidenced by the continued correspondence of your heart and life, your dispositions and actions, thereunto.

7. Do not regret or dread to pass out of the one world into the other at his call, and under his conduct, though through the dark passage of death; remembering the keys are in so great and so kind a hand; and that his good pleasure herein is no more to be distrusted, than to be disputed or withstood. Let it be enough to you, that what you cannot see yourself, he sees for you. You have oft desired your ways, your motions, your removals from place to place, might be directed by him in the world. Have you never said, if thou go not with me, carry me not hence? How safely and fearlessly may you follow him blindfold or in the dark any whither; not only from place to place in this world, but from world to world; how lightsome soever the one, and gloomy and dark the other may seem to you. Darkness and light are to him alike. To him *hades* is no *hades*, nor is the dark way that leads into it to him an untrodden path. Shrink not at the

thoughts of this translation, though it be not by escaping death, but even through the jaws of it.

We commonly excuse our aversion to die, by alleging that nature regrets it: but we do not enough consider, that in such a compounded sort of creature as we are, the word *nature* must be ambiguous. There is in us a sensitive nature that regrets it; but taking the case as it is now stated, can we think it tolerable, that it should be regretted by the reasonable nature? unto which, if we appeal, can we suppose it so untrue to itself, as not to assert its own superiority? or to judge it fit that an intelligent, immortal spirit, capable of so great things in another world, should be content with a long abode here, only to keep a well-figured piece of flesh from putrefying, or give it the satisfaction of tasting meats and drinks that are grateful to it for a few years? and if for a few, why not for many? and when those many were expired, why not for as many more? and the same reason always remaining, why not for always? The case is thus put, because the common meaning of this allegation, that nature regrets or abhors this dissolution, is not that they are concerned for their souls how it may fare with them in another world, which the most little mind or trouble themselves about; but that they are to have what is grateful to them in this world. And was this the end a reasonable spirit was made for, when, without reason, sense were alike capable of the same sort of gratifications? What law, what equity, what rule of decency, can oblige the soul of a man, capable of the society and enjoyment of angels, to this piece of self-denial, for the sake of his incomparably baser body? or can make it fit that the nobler

and more excellent nature should be eternally subservient to the meaner and more ignoble? Especially, considering that if, according to the case supposed, the two last foregoing directions be complied with, there is a sort of divine nature superadded to the whole human nature, that cannot but prompt the soul ennobled by it, to aspire to suitable, even to the highest operations and enjoyments whereof it is capable, and which are not attainable in this present bodily state.

And if there were still a dispute between nature and nature, it is enough that the great Lord of *hades*, and of this present sensible world too, will determine it. In a far lower instance, when the general of an army commands it upon an enterprise, wherein life is to be hazarded, it would be an ill excuse of a cowardly beginning, to say, their nature regrets and dreads the adventure. The thing is necessary. Against what is so unavoidable as death, that is an abject mind that reluctates.¹

Come, then, let us embolden ourselves; and, when he brings the key, dare to die. It is to obey and enjoy him, who is our life and our all. Say we cheerfully each of us, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; into thy hands I commit it, who hast redeemed it.

8. Let us quietly submit to divine disposal, when our dear friends and relatives are by death taken away from us: for, consider into what hands this affair is put, of ordering every one's decease, and removal out of this into the other world, and who hath these keys. It is such a one, whose right, if we use our thoughts, we will not allow ourselves

¹ Miser est quicumque non vult, Mundo secum moriente, mori.—Sen. *Tr.*

to dispute; or to censure his administration. His original right is that of a Creator and a God: 'For all things were created for him, and by him,' Col. i. 16; 'and without him was nothing made that was made,' John, i. 3. He is 'the first and the last' to all things, Rev. i. 17.

His supervening right was that of a Redeemer, as hath been already noted from this context, and as such he had it by acquisition; dying to obtain it, and overcoming death! 'I am he that liveth and was dead.' And then, as he elsewhere declares, by constitution, 'All power is given me both in heaven and on earth,' Matt. xxviii. 18. The word *ἐξουσία* imports 'rightful power.' And who are we, or any relatives of ours, whom all the power of heaven and earth hath no right to touch? What exempt jurisdiction can we pretend ourselves to belong unto?

Or will we adventure to say, not denying his right, he did not use it well in this case? Who is more fitly qualified to judge, than he that hath these keys? And let this matter be yet more thoroughly discussed. What is it that we find fault with in the removal of this or that person, that was near and delightful to us? Is it that he was to die at all? or that he died so soon? If we say the former; do we blame the constitution appointing all men once to die, by which this world is made a portal to another, for all men; and whence it was necessary none should stay long in this, but only pass through, into that world wherein every one is to have his everlasting abode? or is it that, when we think it not unfit this should be the general and common course, there should yet have been a particular dispensation for this friend or relation of mine?

Let the former be supposed the thing we quarrel at, and consider the intolerable consequences of the matter's being otherwise, as the case is with this apostate sinful world. Such as upon second, better-weighed thoughts, we would abhor to admit into our minds, even as the matter of a wish. What! would we wish to mankind a sinning immortality on this earth, before which a wise heathen¹ professed to prefer one day virtuously spent? Would we wish this world to be the everlasting stage of indignities and affronts to him that made it? Would we wish there should never be a judgment-day, and that all the wise and righteous counsels of heaven should be transversed and overturned, only to comport with our terrene and sensual inclinations? Is this our dutifulness and loyal affection to our blessed Lord, the author of our beings, and the God of our lives, whose rights and honours should be infinitely dearer to us than ourselves? Is it our kindness to ourselves, and all others of our kind and order, that are all naturally capable, and many, by gracious vouchsafement, fitly qualified, to enjoy a perfect felicity in another world, that we would have altogether confined for ever to this region of darkness, impurity, and misery?

Or if it displease us, that our relatives are not, by some special dispensation, excepted from the common law of mortality, we would surely as much have expected an exemption ourselves; otherwise, our dying away from them, would make the so much regretted separation, as well as theirs from us. And what then, if we were required to draw up our petition, to put it into express words,

¹ Cicero.

to turn our wish for ourselves, and all our relatives and peculiar friends, into a formed, solemn prayer, to this effect, that we are content the law stand in force, that all the world should die, with only the exception of some few names, viz. our own, and of our kindred and more inward friends? What ashamed confounded creatures should we be upon the view of our own request! Would we not presently be for quelling and suppressing it, and easily yield to be nonsuited, without more ado? What pretence can we have not to think others as apt to make the same request for them and theirs? And if all the rest of the world shall die, would we and our friends dwell here alone, or would we have this world be continued habitable only on this private account, to gratify a family? And if we and our friends be holy, heavenly-minded persons, how unkind were it to wish to ourselves and them, when fit for the society of angels and blessed spirits above, a perpetual abode in this low earthly state! Would we not now, upon riper, second thoughts, rather be content that things should rest as they are, and he that hath these keys, use them his own way?

But if by all this we are put quite out of conceit with the desire of a terrestrial immortality, all that the matter finally results into is, that we think such a relative of ours died too soon. We would not have coveted for him an eternity on earth, but only more time. And how much more? or for what? If we were to set the time, it is like that when it comes, we should be as averse to a separation, if coexistent, then, as now; and so we revolve into the exploded desire of a terrestrial immortality back again at last. If we were to assign the rea-

son of our desire, that would seem, as in the present case, a plausible one to some, which is mentioned by Plutarch in his consolation to Apollonius for the loss of his son, concerning another such case, (as he instances in many,) of one Elysius an Italian, whose loss of his son Euthynous was much aggravated by this, that he was a great heir. But what was said to that, there, and what is further to be said to any thing of that kind, I shall reserve to a more proper place.

It is a more weighty allegation, and of more common concernment, when a useful person is gone, and one very capable of becoming very eminently so. And this requires deeper consideration, and sundry things ought to be considered, in order to the quieting their minds, who are apt to behold such darker dispensations, in the course of providence, with amazement and disturbance of spirit, i. e. when they see persons of excellent endowments and external advantages beyond the most, cut off in their prime, while the world is cumbered with drones never likely to do good, and pestered with such as are like to prove plagues to it, and do great hurt and mischief to the age wherein they live: an ancient and not uncommon scruple to pious observers heretofore. 'Wherefore,' says holy Job, 'do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight,' ch. xxi. 7, 8, when his seed was cut off before his eyes. And here let us consider,

1. That this world is in apostacy from God; and though he is pleased to use apt means for its recovery, he doth what he thinks fit herein, of mere grace and favour, and is under no obligation to do all that he can. His dispensation herein must cor-

respond to, and bear upon it, the impress of other divine perfections, his wisdom, holiness, justice, as well as grace. And for grace itself, whereas all since the apostacy lie together in a fearful gulf of impurity and misery ; and some, made more early sensible hereof than the most, do stretch out a craving hand, and cry for help ; if now a merciful hand reached down from heaven take hold of them, and pluck them sooner out ; is this disagreeable to the God of all grace, to make some such instances, and vouchsafe them an earlier deliverance ; though they might, being longer delayed, be some way helpful to others, that continue stupid and insensible ?

2. When he hath done much, in an age still obstinately unreclaimable, he may be supposed to let one appear, only with a promising aspect, and in just displeasure presently withdraw them, that they may understand they have forfeited such a blessing to this or that country, as such a one might have proved.

3. This may awaken some, the more to prize and improve the encouragements they may have from such as remain, or shall spring up in their stead, who are gone ; and to bless God that the weight of his interest, and of the cause of religion, doth not hang and depend upon the slender thread of this man's life. 'The God of the spirits of all flesh' can raise up instruments as he pleases ; and will, to serve his own purposes, though not ours.

4. He will have it known, that though he uses instruments, he needs them not. It is a piece of divine royalty and magnificence, that when he hath prepared and polished such a utensil, so as to be

capable of great service, he can lay it by without loss.

5. They that are most qualified to be of greatest use in this world, are thereby also the more capable of blessedness in the other. It is owing to his most munificent bounty, that he may vouchsafe to reward sincere intentions, as highly as great services. He took David's having it in his heart to build him a house, as kindly as Solomon's building him one: and as much magnifies himself in testifying his acceptance of such as he discharges from his service here, at the third hour, as of them whom he engages not in it till the eleventh.

6. Of their early piety he makes great present use in this world, testifying his acceptance of their works, generally in his word, and particularly by the reputation he procures to them in the minds and consciences of such as were best able to judge, and even of all that knew them, which may be truly accounted a divine testimony; both in respect of the object, which hath on it a divine impress, and speaks the self-recommending power of true goodness, which is the image of God, and in respect of the subject, shows the dominion God hath over minds; engaging not only good men to behold with complacency such pleasant, blooming goodness, correspondent to their own, but even bad men to approve in these others what they entertain not in themselves. 'The same things are accepted with God, and approved of men,'¹ Rom. xiv. 18, 'Thus being dead, they, as Abel, yet speak.'

7. And it is a brighter and more unsullied testi-

¹ Heb. xi. 4.

mony, which is left in the minds of men, concerning such very hopeful persons as die in their youth. They never were otherwise known, or can be remembered, than as excellent young persons. This is the only idea which remains of them. Had they lived longer, to the usual age of man, the remembrance of what they were in youth would have been in a great degree effaced and worn out by latter things; perhaps blackened, not by what were less commendable, but more ungrateful to the greater part, especially if they lived to come into public stations. Their just zeal and contestations against the wickedness of the age, might disoblige many, and create them enemies, who would make it their business to blast them, and cast upon their name and memory all the reproach they could invent. Whereas the lustre of that virtue and piety which had provoked nobody, appears only with an amiable look, and leaves behind nothing of such a person but a fair, unblemished, alluring, and instructive example; which they that observed them might, with less prejudiced minds, compare with the useless, vicious lives of many that they see to have filled up a room in the world, unto extreme old age, either to no purpose, or to very bad. And how vast is the difference in respect of usefulness to the world, between a pious young gentleman dying in his youth, that lived long in a little time, untainted by youthful lusts and vanities, and victorious over them, and an accursed sinner of a hundred years old; (Isa. lxx. 20,) one that was an infant of days, and though an hundred years old, yet still a child, that had not filled up his days with any thing of real value or profit to himself or others, (as some very judicious expositors understand that text,)

that, as he aptly speaks, "had nothing besides grey hairs and wrinkles to make him be thought a long liver;"¹ but who might truly be said not to have lived long, but only to have been long in the world. How sweet and fragrant a memory doth the one, how rotten and stinking a name doth the other leave behind him to survivors!

Therefore such very valuable young persons as are taken hence in the flower of their age, are not to be thought, upon that account of usefulness to this world, to have lived in it that shorter time in vain.

They leave behind them that testimony which will turn to account, both for the glory of God's grace, which he hath exemplified in them, and which may be improved to the good of many who shall have seen that a holy life, amidst the temptations that the youthful age is exposed to, is no impracticable thing; and that an early death is as possible also to themselves.

But, besides their no little usefulness in this world which they leave, we must know,

8. That the affairs and concernments of the other world, whither they go, are incomparably greater every way, and much more considerable. And to this most unquestionable maxim must be our last and final resort in the present case. All the perturbation and discomposure of mind which we suffer upon any such occasion, arises chiefly from our having too high and great thoughts of this world, and too low and diminishing thoughts of the other; and the evil must be remedied by

¹ Non est quod quenquam propter canos aut rugas, putes diu vixisse. Non ille diu vixit, sed diu fuit.—Sen.

rectifying our apprehensions in this matter. Because that other world is *hautes*, unseen, and not within the verge of our sense, our sensual minds are prone to make of it a very little thing, and even next to nothing, as too many will have it to be quite nothing at all. We are concerned, in duty to our blessed Redeemer and Lord, and for his just honour, to magnify this his prefecture, and render it as great to ourselves as the matter requires, and as our very narrow minds can admit; and should labour to correct it as a great and too common fault, a very gross vulgar error, to conceive of persons leaving this world of ours, as if they hereby became useless; and, upon the matter, lost out of the creation of God. So is our fancy prepossessed and filled with delusive images, that throng in upon it through our unwary senses, that we imagine this little spot of our earth to be the only place of business, and all the rest of the creation to be mere vacuity, vast empty space, where there is nothing to do, and nothing to be enjoyed. Not that these are formed positive thoughts, or a settled judgment with good men, but they are floating imaginations, so continually obtruded upon them, from (what lies next) the objects of sense, that they have more influence to affect the heart, and infer suitable, sudden, and indeliberate emotions of spirit, than the most formed judgment, grounded on things that lie without the sphere of sense, can outweigh.

And hence when a good man dies, elder or younger, the common cry is, among the better sort, (for the other do less concern themselves,) "O what a loss is this! Not to be repaired! not to be borne!" Indeed this is better than the com-

mon stupidity, not to consider, not 'to take it to heart, when the righteous man perisheth, or is taken away.' And the law of our own nature obliges and prompts us to feel and regret the losses which afflict us. But such resentments ought to be followed and qualified by greater thoughts, arising from a superior nature, that ought presently to take place with us, of the nobler employments which God calls such unto, 'of whom this world was not worthy,' Heb. xi. 38; and how highly his great and all-comprehending interest is to be preferred before our own, or the interest of this or that family, country, or nation on earth!

And at once both to enlarge and quiet our minds, on such occasions, we should particularly consider,

1. The vast amplitude of the heavenly *hades*, in comparison of our minute spot of earth, or of that dark region, wheresoever it is, reserved for the just punishment of delinquents, according to such intimations as the Holy Scriptures give us hereof; which being writ only for the use of us on earth, cannot be supposed to intend the giving us more distinct accounts of the state of things in the upper world, than were necessary for us in this our present state.

But it is no obscure hint that is given of the spaciousness of the heavenly regions, when purposely to represent the Divine immensity, it is said of the unconfined presence of the great God, that even heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him, 1 Kings, viii. 27; 2 Chron. vi. 18. How vast scope is given to our thinking minds, to conceive heavens above heavens, encircling one another, till we have quite tired our faculty, and

yet we know not how far short we are of the utmost verge! And when our Lord is said to have ascended far above all heavens, (Eph. iv. 10,) whose arithmetic will suffice to tell how many they are? whose uranography to describe how far that is?

We need not impose it upon ourselves to judge their rules infallible, who, being of no mean understanding, nor indiligent in their inquiries, have thought it not improbable that there may be fixed stars within view, at that distance from our earth, that an object movable in as swift motion as that of a bullet shot from a cannon, would be fifty thousand years in passing from one to the other.¹ But how much remoter that star may be from the utmost verge of the universe is left altogether unimaginable. I have been told that a very ingenious artist going about, in exact proportions, to describe the orb or vortex to which our sun belongs, on as large a table as could be convenient for him to work upon, was at a loss to find a spot not too big, in proportion, for our earth, and big enough, whereupon to place the point, made very fine, of one foot of his compasses.

If any suspect extravagancy in our modern computations, let him take a view of what is discoursed to this purpose by a writer of most unexceptionable wisdom and sobriety, as well as most eminent sanctity, in his time.²

Now when the Lord of this vast universe beheld

¹ Computation by the Hon. Francis Roberts, Esq. Philosophical Transactions for the months of March and April, 1694.

² Bolton, in his *Four last Things*, who, speaking of heaven, directs us to guess the immeasurable magnitude of it (as otherwise, so) by the incredible distance from the earth to the starry firmament; and adds, "If I should here tell you the several computations of astronomers, in this kind, the sums would seem

upon this little spot intelligent creatures in transgression and misery, that he did so compassionately concern himself for the recovery of such as should, by apt methods, be induced to comply with his merciful design; and appoint his own eternal Son to be their Redeemer, in order where-to, as he was God with God, he must also become Man among men, one of themselves; and so, as God-man, for his kindness to some, be constituted universal Lord of all; shall mere pity towards this world greaten it above the other?

But we are not left without ground to apprehend a more immediate reason for his being, as Redeemer, made Head and Lord of all those creatures that were the original inhabitants of the invisible world. For when it had been said, (Col. i. 16,) that all things were created by him, not only the visible things on earth, but the invisible things in heaven, here is a regression to these latter, who were before, for their greater dignity, generally first mentioned, and now some enumeration given of them, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; and all things again repeated, that these might appear expressly included; said over again to be created by him, and for him, which was sufficient to express his crea-

to exceed all possibility of belief." And he annexes in his margin sundry computations which I shall not here recite: you may find them in the author himself, p. 21. And yet besides, as he further adds, the late learnedest of them place above the eighth sphere, wherein all those glorious lamps shine so bright, three moving orbs more. Now the empyrean heaven comprehends all these: how incomprehensible, then, must its compass and greatness necessarily be! But he supposes it possible, the adventure of mathematicians may be too audacious and peremptory, &c. and concludes the height and extent of the heavens to be beyond all human investigation.

tive right in them. It is presently subjoined, verse 17,) ‘And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.’ All owe their stability to him; viz. the mentioned thrones, dominions, &c. as well as other things. But how? or upon what terms? That we might understand his redemptory right was not here to be overlooked, it is shortly after added, ‘And having made peace by the blood of his cross, it pleased the Father’ (to be repeated out of what went before) ‘by him to reconcile all things to himself;’ and this ‘by him’ iterated; q. d. ‘By him shedding his blood on the cross, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven;’ lest the thrones and dominions, mentioned before, should be forgot. And a word is used accommodable enough to the several purposes before expressed, ἀποκαταλλάξαι, which doth not always suppose enmity, but more generally signifies, upon a sort of commutation, or valuable consideration to procure or conciliate, or make a thing more firmly one’s own, or assure it himself; though it is afterwards used in a stricter sense, verse 21.

I have often considered with wonder and pleasure, that whereas God is called by that higher and far more extensive name, ‘the Father of spirits,’ he is also pleased so graciously to vouchsafe, as to be styled ‘the God of the spirits of all flesh;’ and thereby to signify, that having an order of spirits so meanly lodged, that inhabit frail and mortal flesh, though he have a world of spirits to converse with whose dwelling is not with flesh, yet he disdains not a relation to so mean and abject spirits, his offspring also, in our world. And that, because this was the place of offending delinquents that he would recover, the Redeemer should

sort himself with them, and as they were partakers of flesh and blood, himself likewise take part of the same! This was great and Godlike, and speaks the largeness and amplitude of an all-comprehending mind, common to Father and Son, and capable of so applying itself to the greatest things, as not to neglect the least; and therefore so much the more magnifies God and our Redeemer, by how much the less considerable we and our world are. But that hence we should so over-magnify this world, as if nothing were considerable that lies without its compass, is most perversely to misconstrue the most amazing condescension.

The Spirit of God by holy David, teaches us to reason the quite contrary way; and from the consideration he had of the vastness and splendour of the upper world, of the heavens, the moon and stars, &c. not to magnify, but diminish, our world of mankind, and say, 'What is man?'

And let us further consider,

2. The inexpressible numerousness of the other world's inhabitants, with the excellencies wherein they shine, and the orders they are ranked into, and how unlikely is it, that holy souls that go thither should want employment! Great concourse and multitudes of people make places of business in this world, and must much more do so, where the creatures of the most spiritual and active natures must be supposed to have their residence. Scripture speaks of 'myriads,' which we read, 'an innumerable company,' of angels, besides all the spirits of just men; (Heb. xii.) who are sometimes said to be more than 'any one'—which we causelessly render 'man,' could number, Rev. vii. And

¹ ἐδεις.

when we are told of many heavens, above all which our Lord Jesus is said to have ascended, are all those heavens only empty solitudes? uninhabited glorious deserts? When we find how full of vitality this base earth of ours is; how replenished with living creatures, not only on the surface but within it; how unreasonable is it to suppose the nobler parts of the universe to be less peopled with inhabitants, of proportionable spirituality, activity, liveliness, and vigour to the several regions, which, the remoter they are from dull earth, must be supposed still the finer, and apt to afford fit and suitable habitations to such creatures? Whether we suppose pure unclothed spirits to be the natives in all those heavens, all comprehended under the one name of angels; or whether, as some think, of all created spirits, that they have all vital union with some or other vehicles, ethereal or celestial, more or less fine and pure, as the region is to which they belong, having gradually associated unto them the spirits of holy men gone from us, which are said to be *ισαγγελοι*, 'angels' fellows,' (Luke, xx. 36,) it is indifferent to our purpose.

Let us only consider them all as intelligent spiritual beings, full of holy light, life, active power, and love to their common Lord and one another; and can we imagine their state to be a state of torpid silence, idleness, and inactivity, or that they have not much higher and nobler work to do there, than they can have in such a world as this, or in such bodies as here they lug to and fro?

And the Scriptures are not altogether silent, concerning the distinct orders of those glorious creatures that inhabit all the heavens which this upper *hades* must be understood to contain;

though it hath not provided to gratify any one's curiosity, so far as to give us particular accounts of their differences and distinctions. And though we are not warrantable to believe such conjectures concerning them as we find in the supposititious Dionysius's Celestial Hierarchy, or much less the idler dreams of Valentinus and the Gnosticks about their *Æones*, with divers more such fictions; yet we are not to neglect what God hath expressly told us, viz. that, giving us some account of the creation in the *hades*, or the invisible part of it, there are thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, angels, (and elsewhere archangels,) authorities; (Col. i. 16, with 1 Pet. iii. 21,) which being terms that import order and government, can scarce allow us not to conceive, that of all those numberless multitudes of glorious creatures that replenish and people those spacious regions of light and bliss, there are none who belong not to some or other of those principalities and dominions.

Whence therefore, nothing is more obvious than to conceive that whosoever is adjoined to them, ascending out of our world, presently hath his station assigned him, is made to know his post, and how he is to be employed, in the service and adoration of the sovereign Lord of all, and in paying the most regular homage to the throne of God and the Lamb: it being still to be remembered, that God is not worshipped there or here, as an *ἐίδεής*, or as though he needed any thing, since he gives to all breath and being, and all things; (Acts xvii. ;) but that the felicity of his most excellent creatures doth in great part consist in acting perpetually according to the dictate of a just and right mind; and that therefore they take highest

pleasure in prostration, in casting down their crowns, in shrinking even into nothing, before the original, eternal, subsistent Being, that he may be owned as the All in all; because they follow herein a most satisfied judgment, and express it when they say, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created,' Rev. iv. 11; and 'worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive riches, and wisdom, and strength,' &c. ch. v. 12.

And they that rest not night or day from such high and glorious employments, have they nothing to do? Or will we say or think, because we see not how the heavenly potentates led on their bright legions, to present themselves before the throne, to tender their obeisance, or receive commands and despatches to this or that far remote dynasty; or suppose to such and such a mighty star, (whereof there are so numberless myriads; and why should we suppose them not replenished with glorious inhabitants?) whither they fly as quick as thought, with joyful speed, under the All-seeing Eye, glad to execute wise and just commands upon all occasions. But, alas! in all this we can but darken counsel with words without knowledge. We cannot pretend to knowledge in these things; yet if from Scripture intimations, and the concurrent reason of things, we only make suppositions of what may be, not conclusions of what is; let our thoughts ascend as much higher as they can. I see not why they should fall lower than all this. And because we cannot be positive, will we therefore say or think there can be no such thing, or nothing but dull inactivity, in those re-

gions? Because that other world is *hades*, and we see nothing, shall we make little or next to nothing of it? We should think it very absurd reasoning, (if we should use it in reference to such mean trifles in comparison, and say,) There is no such thing as pomp and state, no such thing as action or business, in the court of Spain or France, of Persia or Japan, because no sound from thence strikes our ear, or the beams of majesty there dazzle not our eye.

I should indeed think it very unreasonable to make mere magnitude, or vast extent of space, filled up with nothing but void air, ether, or other fine matter, (call it by what name you will,) alone, or by itself, a very considerable note of excellency of the other invisible world, above this visible world of ours. But I reckon it much more unreasonable and uninforced, (to say no more,) by any principles, either of philosophy or religion, finding this world of ours, a baser part of the creations, so full of life, and of living inhabitants, of one degree or another; to suppose the nobler parts of the universe, still ascending upwards, generally unpeopled, and desert, when it is so conceivable in itself, and so aptly tending to magnify our Creator and Redeemer, that all the upper regions be fully inhabited with intelligent creatures; whether mere spirits, unclothed with any thing material, or united with some or other matter, we need not determine.

And whereas Scripture plainly intimates, that the apostate revolted spirits that fell from God, and kept not their first stations, were vastly numerous; we have hence scope enough for our thoughts to conceive, that so spacious regions being replenish-

ed with intelligent creatures, always innocent and happy, the delinquents, compared with them, may be as despicable for their paucity, as they are detestable for their apostacy: and that the horrid *hades*, wherein they are reserved to the blackness of darkness for ever, may be no more in proportion, nay, unexpressibly less, than some little rocky island, appointed as a place of punishment for criminals, in comparison of a flourishing, vast empire, fully peopled with industrious, rich, sober-minded, and happy inhabitants.

3. The high perfection they presently attain to, who are removed, though in their younger years, out of this into that other world.

The spirits of just men are there said to be made perfect. Waving the Olympic metaphor, which is, at most, but the thing signifying; that which is signified cannot be less than the concurrence of natural and moral perfection: the perfecting of all our faculties,—mind, will, and active power, and of all holy and gracious excellencies,—knowledge, wisdom love, holiness. The apostle makes the difference be, as that of a child, and that of a man, 1 Cor. xiii. And would any one that hath a child he delights in, wish him to be a child always, and only capable of childish things? Or is it a reasonable imagination, that by how much we are more capable of action, we shall be the more useless, and have the less to do?

We may further (lastly) add, that which is not the least considerable,

4. That all the active services and usefulness we are capable of in this world, are but transitory, and lie within the compass of this temporary state of things, which must have an end. Whereas the

business of the other world belongs to our final and eternal state, which shall never be at an end. The most extraordinary qualifications for service on earth, must hereafter,—if not by the cessation of the active powers and principles themselves, as tongues, prophecies, and such knowledge as is uncommon, and by peculiar vouchsafement afforded but to a few, for the help of many,—these endowments, designed for the propagation of the Christian faith, and for the stopping the mouths of gainsayers, must in the use and exercise, at least by the cessation of the objects and occasions, fail, and cease, and vanish away, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. The like may be said of courage and fortitude to contend against prevailing wickedness; skill, ability, with external advantages, to promote the impugned interest of Christ and Christian religion; of all these there will be no further use in that other world. They are all to be considered as means to the end. But how absurd were it to reckon the means of greater importance than the end itself! The whole present constitution of Christ's kingdom on earth, is but preparatory and introductive to the celestial kingdom. And how absurd were it to prefer this temporary kingdom to the eternal one, and present serviceableness to this, to perpetual service in the other!

It is true, that service to God and our Redeemer in this present state, is necessary in its own kind, highly acceptable to God, and justly much valued by good men. And we ought ourselves willingly to submit to serve God in a meaner capacity in this world, while it is his pleasure we shall do so; especially if God should have given any signification of his mind, concerning our abode in the

flesh some longer time, as it is likely he had done to the apostle Paul, (Phil. i. 24,) because he says, he was confident and did know, that so it should be, (verse 25,) we should be abundantly satisfied with it, as he was. But to suppose an abode here to be simply and universally more eligible, is very groundless and unreasonable; and were a like case, as if a person of very extraordinary abilities and accomplishments, because he was useful in some obscure country village, is to be looked upon as lost, because his prince, being informed of his great worth, calls him up to his court, and finding him every way fit, employs him in the greatest affairs of state!

To sum up this matter, whereas the means are always, according to usual estimate, wont to derive their value from their end; this judgment of the case, that usefulness in this present state is of greater consequence and more important than the affairs of the other world, breaks all measures, overturns the whole frame, and inverts the order of things; makes the means more valuable than the end; time more considerable than eternity; and the concernments of a state that will soon be over, greater than those of our fixed, permanent, everlasting state, that will never be over.

If we would allow ourselves the liberty of reasoning, according to the measure and compass of our narrow minds, biassed and contracted by private interest and inclination, we should have the like plausible things to think, concerning such of ours as die in infancy, and that when they have but newly looked into this world, are presently again caught out of it; that if they had lived, what might they have come to! How pleasant and di-

verting might their childhood have been! how hopeful their youth! how useful their riper age! But these are commonly thoughts little wiser than theirs, and proceed from general infidelity, or misbelief, that whatsoever is not within the compass of this little, sorry world, is all emptiness and nullity! Or if such be pious and more considering, it is too plain they do not, however, consider enough, how great a part it is of Divine magnificence, to take a reasonable immortal spirit from animating a piece of well-figured clay, and presently adjoin it to the general assembly above! How glorious a change is made upon their child in a moment! How much greater a thing it is to be adoring God above, in the society of angels, than to be dandled on their knee, or enjoy the best provisions they can make for them on earth! that they have a part to act upon an eternal stage! and though they are but lately come into being, are never to go out of being more, but to be everlasting monuments and instruments of the glory of their great Creator and Lord!

Nor, perhaps, is it considered so deeply as it ought, that it hath seemed meet to the Supreme Wisdom, upon a most important reason, in the case lengthening or shortening the lives of men, not ordinarily, or otherwise than upon a great occasion, to interrupt the tendencies of natural causes; but let nature run its course: for otherwise, very frequent innovations upon nature would make miracles cheap and common, and consequently useless to their proper, great ends, which may be of greater significancy in the course of God's government over the world, than some addition to this or that life can be worth. And therefore

should this consideration repress our wonderment, why God doth not, when he so easily can, by one touch upon this or that second cause, prevent or ease the grievous pains which they often suffer that love him, and whom he loves. He reckons it fitter,—and they will in due time reckon so too themselves, when the wise methods of his government come to be unfolded and understood,—that we should any of us bear what is ungrateful to us, in point of pain, loss of friends, or other displeasing events of providence, than that he should make frequent and less necessary breaches upon the common order and course of government which he hath established over a delinquent, sinful world.

Whereupon it is a great piece of wisdom and dutifulness towards our great Lord, not to pray absolutely, peremptorily, or otherwise than with great submission and deference to his wise and holy pleasure, for our own or our friends' lives, ease, outward prosperity, or any external or temporary good thing. For things that concern our spiritual and eternal welfare, his good and acceptable will is more expressly declared, and made known already and beforehand.

But as to the particular case of the usefulness of any friend or relative of ours in this or the other state, the matter must be finally left to the arbitrement and disposal of him who hath the keys of *hades* and of death. And when by his turn of them he hath decided the matter, we then know what his mind and judgment are, which it is no more fit for us to censure, than possible to disannul. Whatever great purposes we might think one cut off in the flower of his age capable of serv-

ing in this world, we may be sure he judged him capable of serving greater in the other.

And now, by this time, I believe you will expect to have somewhat a more particular account of this excellent young gentleman, whose early decease hath occasioned my discoursing so largely on this subject; not more largely than the importance, but much less accurately than the dignity of it did challenge.

He was the eldest son of Sir Charles Hoghton, of Hoghton-Tower, in the county of Lancaster, baronet, and of the lady Mary, daughter of the late Lord Viscount Massarene, his very pious consort; a family of eminent note in that northern part of the kingdom, for its antiquity, opulency, and interest in the country where it is seated; and which hath intermarried with some or other of the nobility, one generation after another; but hath been most of all considerable and illustrious, as having been itself, long the immemorial known seat of religion, sobriety, and good order, from father to son; giving example, countenance, and patronage to these praiseworthy things to the country round about; and wherein, hitherto, through the singular favour and blessings of heaven, there hath not been that visible degeneracy that might be so plainly observed, and sadly deplored, in divers great families; as if it were an exemption from what was so anciently remarked by the poet, *Ætas parentum, pejor avis, &c.*: but, on the contrary, such as have succeeded, have, by a laudable ambition and emulation, as it were, striven to outshine such as have gone before them, in piety and virtue.

In this bright and lucid tract and line, was this

most hopeful young gentleman, now arrived to the age wherein we use to write man, beginning to stand up in view, and to draw the eyes and raise the hopes of observers and well-wishers, as not likely to come short of any of his worthy ancestors and predecessors. But heaven had its eye upon him too, and both made and judged him meet for an earlier translation, to a more eminent station there.

He was from his childhood observed to be above the common rate, docile, of quick apprehension, solid judgment, and retentive memory, and betimes a lover of books and learning.

For religion, his knowledge of the principles of it continually grew, as his capacity did more and more admit, under the eye and endeavours of his parents, and such other instructors as they took care he should never want. But his savour and relish thereof, and the impression made thereby upon his soul, was so deep, and so early, as to be apparently owing to a higher cause, the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, and a singular blessing thereby, upon his pious education. And in this way, it could not be easy to such as were his most diligent and constant observers, to conclude or conjecture when God first began to deal with his spirit.

Above ten years ago, I had opportunity, for a few days, to have some converse with him in his father's house; and as I could then perceive his spirit was much tinctured with religion, so I received information, that for a considerable time before, there constantly appeared in him such *specimina* of serious piety, as were very comfortable to

his parents, and might be instructive to others that took notice of them.

In the course of divers following years he greatly improved under domestic and private instruction, both in grammar-learning and academical studies, for which he wanted not apt helps. When there was great reason to hope he was so well established in religion and virtue as neither to be shocked by the importunate temptations of a sceptical vicious age in the general, or betrayed by the facility of his own youthful age, his prudent, worthy father judged it requisite, and not unsafe, to adventure him into a place of more hazard, but greater advantage for his accomplishment in that sort of culture and polishing that might, in due time, render him both in reality, and with better reputation, serviceable in a public station; i. e. where he might gain such knowledge of the world, of men, and of the laws of his country, as was proper for his rank, and one that was to make such a figure in the nation, as it was to be hoped he might: and upon that account, not yet a year ago, brought him up to London, entered him in the Temple, took for him convenient lodgings there, and left him settled unto mutual satisfaction.

He was little diverted by the noise, novelties, or gaieties of the town, but soon betook himself to a course of close study; discontinued not his converse with God, and thereby learned, and was enabled, to converse with men warily and with caution, so as he might be continually improving and gaining good, without doing or receiving hurt.

The substance of the following account I received from a pious intelligent young man, who several

years attended him before his coming to town, and afterwards, to the finishing of his course.

“Mr. Hoghton’s early seriousness increased with his years. His deportment was grave, composed, without any appearance of pride, which he carefully avoided. His diligence in study was unusual, and his proficiency very great: neither was this less an effect of his conscientiousness in the improvement of his time, than of his desire after knowledge.

“As to his demeanour and performance of duties towards his several relations, his self-denial, his sedateness of mind, his fear of sin, his tenderness of conscience, love of the best things, and unconcernedness about things of an inferior nature, so far as hath fallen under my observation, in near six years’ time, I believe few, if any, of his years, did exceed him.

“In his sickness he was very patient, submissively undergoing those heavy strokes it pleased God to lay upon him.

“Upon his apprehension of death, he seemed very little discouraged, but quietly resigned himself into the hands of the all-wise Disposer of all things.

“Some time before his sickness, and in the time of it, he said, afflictions were very proper for God’s children; and those that were never afflicted, had reason to question the truth of their grace, and God’s love to them; quoting that Scripture, ‘If ye are without chastening, then are ye bastards, and not sons.’

“He often repeated those words in the beginning of his illness: ‘It is a hard thing to make our call-

ing and our election sure,'—'I desire to glorify God.'

"When he understood, from some expressions of his physician, how dangerous his distemper was, he said he knew very well the meaning of his physician's words; but that however it proved, he hoped he was safe.

"He was so strict in the observation of the Lord's-day, that if he happened to lie longer than ordinary in the morning, he would continue the later in duties in the evening; saying, we ought not to make that day shorter than other days.

"Though he was very intent on his studies, yet on Saturdays he always broke them off at noon, and spent the afternoon in reading divinity, and preparing himself for the Lord's-day.

"He was always constant in his secret duties, and suffered nothing to hinder him from the performing of them.

"Before he expired, he spoke with great assurance of his future happiness, and hopes of meeting his relations in glory." Thus far goes that account.

His sickness was short. When, hearing of it, I went to visit him, I was met in an anti-chamber, by his ingenious dear brother, to whom it is no reproach to be second to him, and who, it is to be hoped, will be at least truly so: making him, though a fair example, yet not a standard; who hath for divers years been most intimately conjunct and conversant with him, known his way, his spirit, his manner of life, his purity; and may be led on and excited thereby, wherein he hath observed him to excel others, to endeavour not to

come short, but if it were possible, to excel him; remembering he is to be the next solace of his parents, hope of his family, and resort of his country, if God shall vouchsafe to continue him, in succeeding time.

From him I had little expectation of finding his sick brother in a conversable condition, the malignity of his fever having before seized his head, and very much disordered his intellectuals; but going in, I was much surprised to find it so far otherwise. He presently knew me, and his understanding, that served him for little else, failed him not in the concernments of religion and of his soul. There was not an improper or misplaced word, though the case could not admit of interchanging many, that came from him. Concerning the substance of the gospel of Christ, as it could be shortly summed up to him, he said he had no doubt: and his transactions with Christ himself, accepting him, resigning and intrusting himself absolutely and entirely to him, and God in him, were so explicit, distinct, and clear, as could leave no place of doubt concerning him. He professed his concurrence to such requests as were put up to God concerning him, and the next morning slept quietly in the Lord.

Nor now will it be unfit to shut up the discourse with some few suitable reflections upon this double subject:—the text, and this providence, taken together.

1. How happy is it, when this power of our great Redeemer and Lord, mentioned in the text, and a preparation, with cheerful willingness, dutifully to comport with it, concur and meet together, as they have done in this instance! Our Lord hath

shown his power: he asserted it in the text; in this instance he used it; giving an open testimony that he takes it to belong to him, to make such translations from one world to another, whensoever he judges it a fit season; nor is solicitous whether men acknowledge his right so to do or no; or what censures they will pass upon what he hath done. He doth his own work, and leaves men to their own talk, or mutterings, or wonder, or musings at it, as they will. So it becomes sovereign power to do, established upon the most unquestionable foundations, exercised according to the wisest and most righteous measures. He hath used his own right, and satisfied himself in the use of it. He thought not himself concerned to advise with any of us about it, who, as his counsellor, should instruct him, Isa. xl. 13; Rom. xi. 34. He owes so much to himself, to act as accountable to no one, nor liable to any one's control.

Here is most rightful, resistless power, justly and kindly used on the one hand; and on the other, how placid, how calm a resignation! Here was no striving, no crying, no reluctant motion, no querulous, repining voice; nothing but peaceful, filial submission; a willingness to obey the summons given.

This was a happy accord, the willingness of this departing soul proceeding not from stupidity, but trust in him who kept these keys; and such preparedness for removal, as the gospel required. O happy souls! that finding the key is turning, and opening the door for them, are willing to go forth upon such terms, as 'knowing whom they have believed,' &c. And that neither 'principalities or powers, life or death, &c. can ever separate them

from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord.' Life, they find, hath not separated—whereof was the greater danger; and death is so far from making this separation, that it shall complete their union with the blessed God in Christ, and lay them infolded in the everlasting embraces of Divine love! Happy they, that can hereupon welcome death, and say, 'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!' that before only desired leave to die, and have now obtained it; that are, with certainty of the issue, at the point of becoming complete victors over the last enemy, and are ready to enter upon their triumph, and take up their *ἐπινίκιον*, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Happy soul! here will be a speedy end of all thy griefs and sorrows; they will be presently swallowed up in an absolute plenitude and fulness of joy. There is already an end put to thy tormenting cares and fears; for what object can remain to thee of a rational fear, when once, upon grounds such as shake not under thee, thou art reconciled to death? This is the most glorious sort of victory, viz. by reconciliation; for so thou hast conquered, not the enemy only, but the enmity itself, by which he was so. Death is become thy friend, and so no longer to be feared; nor is there any thing else, from whence thou art to fear hurt; for death was thy last enemy, even this bodily death. The whole region beyond it is, to one in thy case, clear and serene, when to others is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. There are no terrible *ὑσερήματα*, no formidable consequences,

no reserves of misery, no treasures of wrath, to be feared by thee. To one in thy condition, may that, without hesitation be applied, *Nihil metuit, qui optat mori*,¹ "He fears nothing who desires to die." What is the product of some men's infidelity, is the genuine product of their faith: from so contrary causes may proceed the same effect. The effect, a willingness to die, or a bold adventure upon death, is the same, but only in respect of the general kind; with great differences in the special kind, according to the difference and contrariety of the causes, whereof they discernibly taste and savour. With infidels, it is a negative, dead, stupid, partial willingness, or but a non-aversion; and in a lower and much diminished degree: or if some present intolerable, disgraceful calamity urge them, a rash, obstinate, presumptuous rushing upon death; because they do not consider consequences. With believers, such as in reference to the concerns of the other world do walk by faith, while as yet they cannot walk by sight, in reference to those things, (2 Cor. v. 7,) it is a positive, vital courage,² (v. 8,) "We are confident;" and a preponderating inclination of will, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord;" because, as is manifest, they do consider consequences, and how blessed a state will certainly ensue. How vast are these special differences, of the same thing in the general—willingness to die!

O the transports of joy that do now most rationally result from this state of the case, when there is nothing left lying between the dislodging

¹ Sen. Tr.

² *Θαρρῶμεν.*

soul, and the glorious unseen world, but only the dark passage of death, and that so little formidable, considering who hath the keys of the one and the other! How reasonable is it, upon the account of somewhat common herein to the Redeemer and the redeemed, although every thing be not, to take up the following words, that so plainly belong to this very case: 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*, or *hades*; thou wilt not forsake or abandon it in that wide world, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; the path that leads unto that presence of thine, where is fulness of joy, and to those pleasures which are at thy right hand, or in thy power, and which are for evermore; and shall never admit either of end or diminution,' Psalm xvi. 9—11.

Now what do we mean to let our souls hang in doubt? Why do we not drive things for them to an issue; put them into those same safe hands that hold these keys; absolutely resign, devote, intrust, and subject them to him; get them bound up in the bundle of life; so adjoin and unite them to him, (not doubting but as we give them up, he will and doth, in that instant, take hold of them, and receive them into union with himself,) as that we may assure our hearts, that because he lives we shall live also?¹ Thus the ground of our hope becomes sure, and of that joy which springs from such a hope.² Our life, we may now say, is hid with Christ in God; even though we are, in ourselves, dead or dying creatures, Col. iii. 3. Yea,

¹ John, xiv. 19.

² Rom. v. 2.

Christ is our Life ; and when he ' who is our Life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.' v. 4. He hath assured us, that because ' he is the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in him, though he were dead, shall yet live ;' and that ' whosoever lives, and believes in him,' hath thereby a life already begun in him, in respect whereof ' he shall never die,' John, xi. 25, 26. What now can be surer than this ? So far we are at a certainty, upon the included supposition, i. e. that we believe in him.

And what now remains to be ascertained ? What ? Only our own intervening death. We must, it is true, be absent from these bodies, or we cannot, as we would, be present with the Lord. And is that all ? Can any thing now be more certain than that ? O happy state of our case ! How should our hearts spring and leap for joy, that our affairs are brought into this posture ; that in order to our perfect blessedness, nothing is further wanting but to die, and that the certainty of death completes our assurance of it ! What should now hinder our breaking forth into the most joyful thanksgivings, that it is so little doubtful we shall die ; that we are in no danger of a terrestrial immortality ; and that the only thing that it remained we should be assured of, is so very sure, that we are sure it is not in the power of all this world, to keep us always in it ; that the most spiteful enemy we have in all the world, cannot do us that spite to keep us from dying. How gloriously may good men triumph over the impotent malice of their most mischievous enemies ! viz. that the greatest mischief, even in their own account, that it can ever be in their power to do them, is to put it out of their power

ever to hurt them more ; for they now go quite out of their reach. They can (being permitted) kill the body, and after that (Luke xii. 4) have no more that they can do. What a remarkable, significant *after that* is this ! what a defiance doth it import of the utmost effort of human power and spite, that here it terminates ! It is now come to its *ne plus ultra* !

And so we are to look upon all the other trials and afflictions, that in any providential way may befall us ; we may be sick, in pain, in poverty, in disgrace, but we shall not be always in mortal flesh, which is the *substratum* and the root of all the rest. Can we be upon better terms, having but two things to be concerned about, as necessary to our complete felicity, union with Christ, and disunion from these bodies ? God is graciously ready to assist us in reference to the former, though therein he requires our care, subserviently hereto : in reference to the latter, he will take care himself, in his own fit season, without any care or concern of ours in the matter ; and only expects us to wait with patience, till that fit season come ; and come it will, perhaps sooner than we may think. He doth not always go by our measures in judging of the fit season, as this present instance shows.

2. From the text, taken in conjunction with this act of Providence, we may observe the great advantage of a pious education. Though the best means of such education do not always prove effectual ; yet this being much the more probable course upon which to expect God's blessing, than the parents' profane negligence of the souls of their children, such an example, wherein God by his blessing testified his approbation of parental care and diligence,

should greatly quicken the endeavours of parents herein; as hoping hereby to serve his great and merciful, and most principal design who hath these keys, and whose office it is to transmit souls, when they are prepared and ready, out of this world of ours into that blessed, glorious world above. And though they may think themselves disappointed when, through God's blessing upon their endeavours, they have educated one to such a pitch as this young gentleman was raised and brought up unto, with a prospect and hope of his having a long course of service to run through here on the earth, yet let parents hence learn to correct what was amiss or what was wrong, not what was right and well. Their action and endeavour were what ought to be; their error or mistake, if there were any, was more principally, as the case is here stated, about their design and end. Not that they designed such an end, for that also was very justifiable and laudable; but if they designed it as their more principal end, which the case, as it is now put, supposes; that is, that they take themselves to be disappointed; for no man complains of it as a disappointment, if he miss of an inferior end, and attain that which is far nobler and more excellent. Our great aim should be the subserving the design of the great Lord of heaven and earth, which ultimately and supremely refers to the heavenly, eternal state of things; and that souls may be ripened and fitted for that, and to do service here on earth, subordinately to the other, and while they are in preparation for the heavenly state. His principal design must be for that which is principal: and concerning that, as was formerly argued, there can be no more doubt, than whether

heaven or earth, eternity or time, a fixed, permanent, everlasting, or a temporary, transitory, vanishing state of things, be more valuable, and to be preferred.

Our Redeemer hath acquired and doth use these keys, for the translating of souls, as soon as he shall judge them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of saints in light,' Col. i. 12. Some he makes meet much earlier than others. His design, so far as it is known, or may be supposed, should give measure to ours; therefore ours must be to make them meet, as early for his purposes as possible, as knowing it cannot be too early: they were devoted to him early, and pursuantly hereto, no time should be lost from the great business of fitting and forming them for him; inasmuch also, as the same qualifications, viz. that are of highest excellency and value, do equally prepare them to serve and glorify him, in either world, as he shall choose to dispose of them. And it unquestionably belongs to him to make his choice, as it does to us to endeavour to make them ready. If any of us, having purposely educated a son for the service of his prince, and present him accordingly, we would submit it to his pleasure, to choose the station wherein he shall serve him; especially if he be a prince of celebrated wisdom and goodness. And should we complain, that he is put early into a station of much higher dignity than we thought of?

How little is this matter considered by most that go under the name of Christian parents, that are, more generally, very solicitous to have, as they call it, their children christened, but never have it in their thoughts to have them educated in the knowledge of Christ, or trained up for Christ; as

if their baptism were intended for a mockery, their education in the whole course of it, hath no such reference. It is how they may with better reputation bear up not the name of Christ but their own. Their aim looks no higher than that they may inherit their lands, maintain the honour of their families, appear, if such be their own rank, well-accomplished gentlemen; and of some of those little things that are thought requisite hereto, we may say, as our Saviour did in another case, 'These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other, the much greater things, undone.'

What should hinder, but that learning to sing, or dance, or fence, or make a modish leg, might consist with learning to know God in Christ, in which knowledge stands eternal life! Whatsoever hath real excellency, or hath any thing in it of true ornament, will no way disagree with the most serious Christianity. And how lovely is the conjunction of the well-accomplished gentleman and the serious Christian! Only sever inconsistencies, as how fashionably to curse, and swear, and damn, and debauch, which are thought to belong to good breeding in our age.

Let not religion, reason, shame, and common sense, be so totally abandoned all at once, as that the same persons shall take care to have their children baptized into Christ's name, and be taught to renounce, by their deeds, that great name, almost as soon as they can pronounce the word.

Where so direct a course is not taken to make those of the succeeding age ignominiously bad, yet how little is done towards the making of them truly and usefully good! Much care is taken to

shape and adorn the outside of the man ; how little to form and furnish their minds ! Here, if they can be brought to make or judge of a verse, or a jest, or a piece of wit it is a great attainment. Or if, at home, they can have them taught so much law as shall hereafter enable them to squeeze their tenants and quarrel with their neighbours ; or so much of behaviour as shall qualify them to keep gentlemen company ; or if, as our pious poet phrased it, they ship them over, the thing is done ; then they shall be able to talk a little of the fashions of this or that foreign country, and make much the better figure in their own.

But if, with all other parts of useful knowledge and good breeding that are thought requisite for this world, they be also well instructed touching their Redeemer's dominion over it, and the other world also ; and concerning the nature, constitution, design, laws, and privileges of his kingdom ; if it be seriously endeavoured to make them apt, and prepared instruments of serving his interest here, as long as he shall please to continue them in any station on earth ; and that they may also be made meet to be partakers at length, of a far more excellent inheritance than an earthly parent could entitle them to, that of the saints in light ; (Col. i. 12;) if they can be fitted to stand in the presence of the Eternal King, and to keep company with angels and blessed spirits above—how worthy and noble a design is this ! and with what satisfaction is it to be reflected on, if parents have ground to apprehend they are herein neither unaccepted nor disappointed !

3. It is of ill presage to our land, that when he that hath these keys, uses them in the so early

translation of so hopeful a person as this young gentleman was, so few such are observed to spring up for the support of the truly Christian interest in the succeeding generation. That the act of our great Redeemer and Lord herein was an act of wisdom and counsel, we cannot doubt. Against the righteousness of it, we can have no exception. The kind design of it towards them whom he so translates, is so evident in the visible agreement of their spirit and way with the heavenly state as their end, as puts that matter out of question. But we are so much the more to dread the consequences, and to apprehend what may make our hearts meditate terror.

By the Christian interest, I am far from meaning that of a party : but what every one must take for Christianity, that will acknowledge there is any such thing. And for the support of that, in the most principal doctrines and laws of it, what is our prospect ?

To go down here somewhat lower,

Let us suppose a rational susceptibleness, or capacity of religion, to be the difference of man, wherein the controversy may seem to admit of being compromised ; whether it be religion alone, or reason alone, of which this must be said, that it distinguishes man from the inferior creatures. And let it be reason, with this addition, an aptness, *susplicere numen*, to be impressed with some religious sentiment, or to conceive of, and adore, an original Being, the wise and mighty Author and Cause of all things. And now, how near akin are religion and humanity ?

Let us next understand Christianity to be the religion of fallen man, designing his recovery out

of a lapsed and lost state, i. e. man having violated the law of his creation, and offended against the throne and government of his Creator, the supreme and universal Lord of all, it was reckoned not becoming so great a Majesty (though it was not intended to abandon the offenders to a universal ruin, without remedy) to be reconciled, otherwise than by a mediator and a reconciling sacrifice; for which, none being found competent but the Eternal Son of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his own person, who was also the first and the last, the Lord God Almighty; and partaking with us of flesh and blood, was capable, and undertook to be both Mediator and sacrifice; it seemed meet to the offended majesty, to vouchsafe pardon and eternal life, and renewing grace requisite thereto, to none of the offenders, but through him; and accept from them no homage, but on his account; requiring, wheresoever the gospel comes, not only repentance towards God, but faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the summary of the counsel of God contained therein, (Acts, xx. 21—27,) and that all should honour the Son, as he the Father requires to be honoured, John, v. 23.

Whereas now so apt a course as this was established for restoring man to himself and to God, through the influence of the blessed Spirit, flowing in the gospel dispensation from Christ as the fountain; what doth it portend when, amidst the clear light of the gospel, that affords so bright a discovery of the glorious Redeemer, and of all his apt methods for bringing to full effect his mighty work of redemption, an open war is commenced against him and his whole design, by persons,

under seal, devoted to him! If there were but one single instance hereof in an age, who would not with trembling expect the issue?

But when the genius of a Christian nation seems, in the rising generation, to be leading to a general apostacy from Christianity, in its principal and most substantial parts; and they are only patient of some external rituals, that belong, or are made appendant to it, so as but to endure them, either with reluctancy or contempt: when the juvenile wit and courage which are thought to belong to a gentleman entering upon the stage of the world, are employed in satirizing upon the religion into which they have been baptized, in bold efforts against the Lord that bought them! whither doth this tend?

Some would seem so modest, as in the midst of their profane oaths and violations of the sacred name of God, to beg his pardon, and say, God forgive them; but so ludicrously, as he whom Cato animadverts upon, for begging pardon, that he wrote in Greek, which he was unacquainted with, saying, he had rather ask pardon than be innocent;¹ for what should induce him to do so unnecessary a thing, for which pardon should be necessary? These men think pardons very cheap things. But will God be mocked? or doth he not observe? It is the prevailing atheistical spirit we are to dread, as that which may provoke jealousy, and to make himself known by the judgments he shall execute.

There is great reason to hope God will not finally abandon England. But is there not equal

¹ Corn. Nep. Frag.

reason to fear, that before the day of mercy come, there may be a nearer day of wrath coming? a day that shall burn as an oven, and make the hemisphere about as a fiery vault! In our recovery from a lapsed state, which the religion professed among us aims at, there are two things to be effected; the restoring reason to its empire over the sensitive nature, that it may govern that, and the restoring religion and love to God to their place and power, that he may govern us. While the former is not done, we remain sunk into the low level with the inferior creatures; and till the latter be effected, we are ranked with the apostate creatures that first fell from God. The sensuality of brutes, and the enmity of devils, rising and springing up observably among us, import the directest hostility against the Redeemer's design. And them that bid this open defiance to him, he hath every moment at his mercy!

In the meantime, is this Emmanuel's land? His right in us he will not disclaim. And because he claims it, we may expect him to vindicate himself. His present patience we are to ascribe to the wisdom and greatness of an all-comprehending mind. He counts not a heap of impotent worms his match! But when the besom of destruction comes, one stroke of it will sweep away multitudes; then contempt will be answered with contempt. They cannot express higher, than to oppose and militate against a religion introduced and brought into the world by so clear, divine light, lustre, and glory, not by arguments, but by jests! O that we could but see their arguments, to dispute those keys out his hands that holds them! But do they think to laugh away the power of the Son of God?

‘ He also will laugh at their calamity,’ &c. (Prov. i.) or expose them to the laughter of men wiser than they, Psal. lii. 5, 6. It is little wit to despise what they cannot disprove. When we find a connexion between death and judgment, how will they contrive to disjoin them—They will be as little able to disprove the one, as withstand the other.

But a great residue, it is to be hoped, our blessed Redeemer will, in due time, conquer in the most merciful way, inspiring them with divine wisdom and love, detecting their errors, mollifying their hardness, subduing their enmity, making them gladly submit to his easy yoke and light burden. He is, before the world end, to have a numerous seed, and we are not to despair of their rising up more abundantly than hitherto among ourselves, so as no man shall be therefore ashamed to be thought a serious Christian, because it is an unfashionable or an ungentle thing.

Then will honour be acquired, by living as one that believes a life to come, and expects to live for ever, as devoted ones, to the Ruler of both worlds, and candidates for a blessed immortality under his dominion. Nor will any man covet to leave a better name behind him here, or a more honourable memorial of himself, than by having lived a holy, virtuous life. It signifies nothing, with the many, to be remembered when they are gone: therefore is this trust wont to be committed to marbles and monumental stones. Some have been so wise, to prefer a remembrance, among them that are so, from their having lived to some valuable purpose.

When Rome abounded with statues and memorative obelisks, Cato forbade any to be set up for

him, because (he said) he had rather it should be asked, why he had not one, than why he had.¹

What a balmy memory will one generation leave to another, when 'the savour of the knowledge of Christ shall be diffused in every place,' (2 Cor. ii. 14,) and every thing be counted as dross and dung, that is in any competition with the excellency of that knowledge; when that shall overflow the world, and one age praise his mighty works, and proclaim his power and greatness to the next: and the branches of religious families, whether sooner or later transplanted, shall leave an odour, when they are cut off, that shall demonstrate their nearer union with the true Vine, or speak their relation to the 'Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations,' even those that were deciduous, and have dropped off, may (without straining a borrowed expression) signify somewhat towards this purpose.

4. From both the mentioned subjects, good parents may learn to do God and their Redeemer all the service they can, and have opportunity for in their own time, without reckoning too much upon what shall be done, by a well-educated, hopeful son, after they had gone, unless the like dispensation could be pleaded unto that which God gave to David, to reserve the building of the temple to his son Solomon, which, without as express a revelation, no man can pretend. The great Keeper of these keys may cross such purposes, and without excusing the father, dismiss the son first. But his judgments are a great deep, too deep for our line;

¹ Plutarch de gerund. Repub.

and his mercy is in the heavens, (Psal. xxxvi.) extending from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children, Psal. ciii.

THE END.

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