

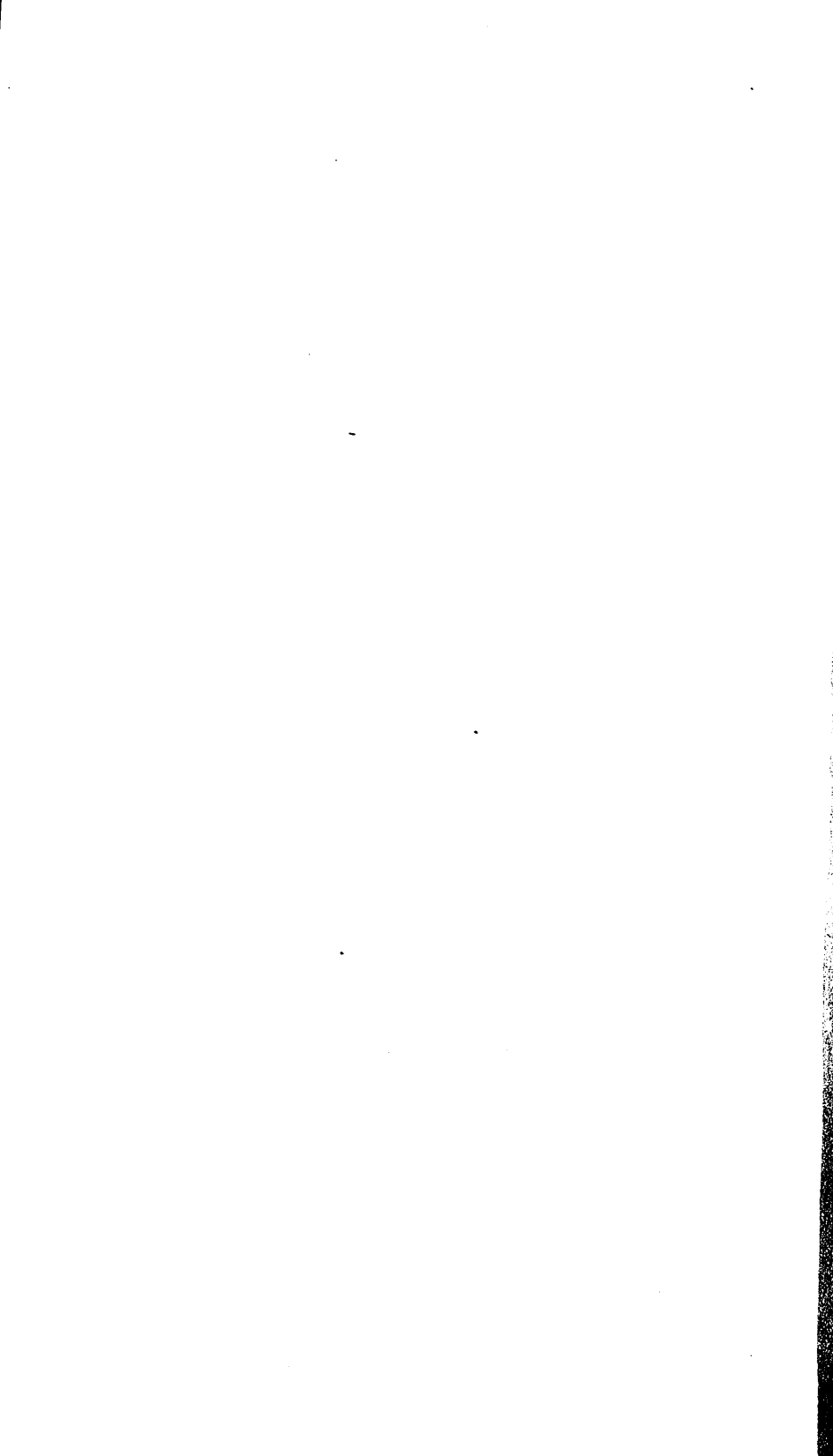


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**SELECT**  
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**OF THE**  
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**COMPRISING THE BEST PRACTICAL WORKS OF THE GREAT**  
**ENGLISH DIVINES, AND OTHER CONGENIAL**

**AUTHORS OF THAT AGE.**

**COLLECTED AND ARRANGED, WITH BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES**  
**AND OCCASIONAL NOTES,**

**BY JAMES MARSH,**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT.**

**IN FIVE VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

**CONTAINING**

**"THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS," AND**

**"THE VANITY OF MAN AS MORTAL,"**

**BY THE REV. JOHN HOWE,**

**AND**

**"DISCOURSES ON THE FOUR LAST THINGS,"**

**BY DR. WM. BATES.**

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VERMONT DISTRICT  
TO THE  
VARIABLE COACHING

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The general object aimed at, in republishing the works herewith offered to the public, is sufficiently obvious, and, it is hoped, will meet the approbation of every enlightened christian. Efforts, before unexampled in the history of the church, are made, at the present time, to promote the diffusion of the scriptures; and we hope soon, by the blessing of God, to be assured, that this most important means of grace and of spiritual improvement has been brought to the threshold of every family throughout our extended country. But, although we hold, as all protestants profess to do, that the Word of God is alone a sufficient rule of faith and practise, and though it might be wished, that every christian would so read and contemplate its instructions, as to need no other aid; experience teaches us, that even in the most enlightened communities, other aids are thought necessary and resorted to. Most christians not only depend on their appointed spiritual guide to explain to them the truths of the gospel, but in their most retired and serious hours of meditation upon those truths seek assistance from the meditations of others. Nor can it be doubted, indeed, that men of undisciplined minds are essentially benefited by such recourse to works judiciously prepared to aid their reflections, and may thereby elevate their devotional feelings and enlarge their views of spiritual things beyond what they would be able to do by their own unassisted efforts. Works of this kind have been produced in greater or less abundance, and with different degrees of excellence, in almost every age of the Church; and it needs but little consideration to be convinced, that they must exert an influence in the religious education of the community, scarcely inferior to the instructions of the pulpit itself. If such be the fact, it becomes a matter of practical importance to make a wise selection of such works, as are best fitted in this way to promote the spiritual improvement of christians, and to bring them, as far as may be, to the knowledge of the public and into general use. In contemplating the character and productions of the Church, in former periods of its history, and comparing them with those of our own age, it becomes us, as far as possible, to recall whatever of good

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has fallen into disuse or been superseded by what is inferior, to make the labors of the past contribute to the improvement of the present and the future, and thus, as successive generations pass away and their works follow them, endeavor to "hold fast that which is good," to gather and treasure up the choicest "fruits of the spirit." We cannot however suppose, that all christians would agree in their judgment of the merits of different works, or would be guided by the same taste in making a selection of this kind, and it may be proper to state more definitely the views, by which I have been determined in the choice of materials for these volumes, and the general character of the treatises which they will contain.

In examining the practical and devotional works, which have been published and most generally circulated during the last century, there has seemed to me and to many others, in whose judgment I confide, to be a great deficiency of depth and spirituality. Instead of aiding reflection and meditation, and guiding the humble christian to a spiritual acquaintance with the things of the spirit, to a knowledge of "the deep things of God," and thus carrying him in his contemplations among those appropriate objects of faith and spiritual discernment, "which eye hath not seen nor ear heard," they too often tend rather to produce low and narrow conceptions of those objects themselves, and to limit the aspirations of the mind to attainments far short of our duty and our happiness. Many of them, too, are designed with reference to the peculiarities of this or that scheme of theology, and have more influence to awaken a speculative and controversial disposition of mind, than to cherish a contemplative spirit, and fix the thoughts on those great and undisputed truths, which are, after all, most effectual in promoting spiritual growth.

Again, in contemplating the religious character of the present age, and of our own churches, with much to admire and to be thankful for in the spirit of active benevolence, which pervades them, we find not a little to regret in the superficial and inadequate views, which prevail, with regard to the nature of the Christian system, and in the want of that profound love of truth for the truth's sake, which ought to characterize the enlightened christian. We need more of that intense and sustained interest in the truths and aims of religion, of that earnest seeking after knowledge and personal holiness, which, during the 17th century not only secured the attention, but lent a fascination, to sermons and other religious exercises of such length and in such style, as could not now be hazarded even by the most able and popular preacher. It is in a word the clear conviction of many, who are well qualified to judge in matters of this sort, that while we are carrying into effect some of the benevolent principles and external duties of Christianity with a degree of enterprise and success, for which the age immediately succeeding the Reforma-



tion was unprepared, we at the same time fall far below christians of that period in their sublime views of religious truth, the extent and intimacy of their habitual intercourse with the great objects of spiritual contemplation, and in the consistent elevation and dignity of their christian character. If these views have any foundation in truth, it is an object worthy of the attention and the serious efforts of those who labor for the interests of true religion, to put again in circulation among us such works of that age, as are best calculated to exhibit and to reproduce the characteristics, in which it so much excelled.

The treatises contained in these volumes, though they may not in all cases be the best, that it would be possible under more favorable circumstances to select, it is hoped may prove a valuable contribution to the object in view, and prepare the way among those, who have the means of obtaining them, for a more extensive acquaintance with the writers of a period prolific in works of this class. I have endeavored, as far as it could be done, to confine the selection to what is purely practical and spiritual, and to avoid the introduction of any thing, that could be suspected of a design to favor the peculiarities of a party. In saying this, however, I would not be understood to mean, that no sentiments or views of religious truth will be expressed or implied, but those in which the advocates of all our various systems are agreed. It would probably be impossible to find a single treatise in the language of any value, of which this would be true. But, although in a work of a practical nature, a writer may introduce, and almost unavoidably will betray, more or less clearly the speculative system which he holds, he may not introduce it for speculative and controversial purposes, or make such use of it, as essentially to injure the practical utility of his work for those, who hold a different system.

The most general criterion of the class of works, from which the selection is made is, that they are designed not to *investigate* or *defend* the truth, but to excite and elevate the mind to the *contemplation* of truths, which both the writer and reader are supposed to admit, or which commend themselves at once to the reason of all men. It is the great excellence, if I mistake not, of the writers from whom I have selected, that their minds were raised above the narrow peculiarities of a speculative system by a more habitual contemplation of the great fundamental truths of reason and revelation. They had formed themselves, and aimed to form others, to the habit of intense and earnest *reflection* upon their own moral and spiritual being. They retired inward in order to ascend upward. They sought, not so much to gratify the pride of the understanding, by attempts to comprehend what is placed beyond its reach, as to make a direct and practical application of the acknowledged law and will of God to their own inward being, that they might experience their assimilating and

transforming influence. In their works designed for the aid of others in their spiritual improvement, although theological views of questionable authority are sometimes introduced and language employed, as it is indeed in some of the treatises in these volumes, which few if any writers of the present day would adopt, they need not, and, for a serious christian of candid and tolerant disposition, I should presume would not, much affect the influence of the more general and admitted truths with which they are associated.

In general I believe it will be felt, and acknowledged by all, who become acquainted with these writers, that they possess a depth and spirituality, which does not belong to the writers who have succeeded them, and that such a selection from their writings, as is here offered to the public, cannot fail, if generally circulated, to be a great and lasting benefit to our Churches. Could these and similar treatises gain such acceptance and such influence, as they would seem calculated to secure in a community like ours, they might be hoped to introduce along with them a more truly rational, a more elevated, and manly style of thinking and writing on subjects both of religion and philosophy.

In preparing them for the press I have made no alterations in the works selected, which in any way affects the views of the writer. The orthography, where it was obsolete, is modernized, and occasionally a note omitted, when unnecessary to explain the text of the work. My design has been in every case to publish entire treatises, and this will not probably be varied from. If in any instance in the subsequent volumes it should be thought best to vary from it, the reasons for doing so will be explained.

The biographical notices inserted will in general be brief, as they are not expected to possess any other value, than merely to gratify the general curiosity, that is felt to know something of the authors, whose works we read and admire. I hardly need to say, that in judging of the men of that age and of their works, no regard will be had to the party distinctions, which then prevailed with so much animosity, and which even to our own times too often influence our judgment respecting them. The individuals indeed, whether churchmen or dissenters, of whom I shall have occasion to speak, are for the most part such, as amidst all the violence of the times stood aloof, as far as possible, from the interests of party, and aimed at those great objects, in which all good men might unite. No candid descendant and follower of the Puritans will at this day less cordially admire Leighton, or be less benefited by his writings, because he was an Archbishop, nor will any rational and temperate churchman allow himself to indulge a prejudice against the character and the works of such a man as John Howe, because he was the chaplain of the Cromwells, and could not take the oath of conformity. Men of this stamp were even then, however divided by party

in their public relations, not unfrequently personal, and sometimes intimate friends, mutually lamenting the causes, that prevented their christian fellowship. The great characteristic principles, the sublime philosophical views, the true spirituality and aloofness from all narrow and secular views, which belong in common to many of the writings of men belonging to each of the two parties, show in a striking manner, how far the essential spirit of religion is elevated above the interests and opinions, with which it is too often associated. That these volumes may be instrumental in cherishing the same spirit among the churches of our land, enlarging their views of divine truth, building them up in the most holy faith, and imparting to them abundantly, the riches of spiritual understanding, is the earnest wish and prayer of

THE EDITOR.



**BIOGRAPHY**  
OF THE  
**REV. JOHN HOWE.**

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In giving such a sketch of the life and character of the Rev. John Howe, as corresponds with the plan of this work, I can hardly hope to satisfy the curiosity respecting him, which the following treatises will excite. The history of his life, indeed, was such as might have furnished materials for a biography excelling in its general interest that of most literary men and theological writers even of the first rank in talents and reputation. The distinguished literary men with whom he was intimately connected, at a most interesting period in the history of English literature and philosophy, and, more especially, the place which he held for so long a time at the court of the Cromwells, must have given him the means of preparing a "memoir of his own life and times," not less instructive than any other work of the kind which that age has furnished. I mention this, because it appears that he accumulated a mass of papers for an object of this sort, but unfortunately for us, when near his death, required his son to commit them to the flames. The memoirs of his life, collected by Calamy and contained in the folio edition of his works, though scanty and unsatisfying, still contain much that is valuable, and nearly all that can now be known of one of the greatest men of the age in which he lived.

The Rev. John Howe was born at Loughborough, in Leicestershire, May 17, 1630. His father was for sometime the minister of the town, a man of great piety and worth, and his mother is mentioned as a woman of distinguished abilities, whose influence was undoubtedly much felt in forming the character of her son. While he was yet very young his father, who had received the parish of Loughborough from Archbishop Laud, was ejected for siding with the Puritans, and went into Ireland with his family. After residing here for some time, and narrowly escaping with their lives during the rebellion of the Papists, the family returned and settled in Lancaster, where the subject of this memoir recei-

ved his early education and was prepared for the university. He first entered at Christ's College, Cambridge, in what year is uncertain, though it must have been at a very early age, as he took his degree and removed to Brazen Nose College, Oxford, as early as 1648, when he was but 18 years of age. Here, in the next year, he was admitted to the same degree of Bachelor of Arts, which he had taken at Cambridge, was not long after elected a fellow of Magdalen College, and took the degree of M. A. in 1652.

Soon after taking his second degree, Mr. Howe returned to the county in which his family resided, and was ordained, by Mr. Charles Herle, in what he considered the primitive mode of ordination, believing, as he said, that Mr. Herle was a scriptural bishop, and that the concurrence of the ministers, who assisted him, was the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Being now regularly devoted to the labors of the ministry, he was soon called to a distant part of the island, and settled as pastor of a congregation at Great Torrington in Devonshire. Here he devoted himself with unsparing labor and zeal and with great success to the duties of his office, and acquired the respect and confidence of the neighboring churches and clergy. Among the latter he became particularly intimate in the family of Mr. George Hughes of Plymouth, the most distinguished minister in those parts, and married his daughter March 1, 1654, a connexion which resulted it seems to his great happiness, and which he never had occasion to regret.

It could not have been long after this event, that his situation and sphere of usefulness were suddenly and unexpectedly changed. Having occasion to go to London, on business, he was detained longer than he expected, and being there on the Sabbath gratified his curiosity by going to the chapel at Whitehall. While there, "Cromwell, who," as Calamy observes, "generally had his eyes everywhere, spied out Mr. Howe in the auditory, knew him by his garb to be a country minister, and thinking he discerned something more than ordinary in his countenance, sent a messenger to him to desire to speak with him, when the worship of God was over." Such was his introduction to Cromwell, and the result of it was, that, notwithstanding his surprise and his efforts to excuse himself, his objections were overruled, and after preaching two or three times before the Protector, and much free conversation in private, he was at length prevailed upon, though with great reluctance, to leave his charge at Torrington, which Cromwell undertook to have supplied to their satisfaction, and became established as domestic chaplain, at the seat of government.

In this most trying and critical situation, considering the character of the times, Mr. Howe continued till the death of Cromwell, and through the protectorate of his son, exhibiting many

examples of that prudence, moderation and good will to all parties, so necessary in his circumstances, both for his usefulness and his personal tranquillity. Several instances are mentioned, in which he employed his influence with the court for the benefit of those who differed from him in their views of church and state, and among the rest, in 1657, Dr. Seth Ward, afterwards bishop of Exeter. As a proof of his disinterestedness, and that he used his influence more for others, than for himself, it is related that Cromwell once said to him, "Mr. Howe, you have obtained many favors for others, I wonder when the time is to come, that you will ask any thing for yourself or your own family." So little of the courtier had he indeed, that on one occasion he preached expressly against a favorite notion of Cromwell's respecting particular faith in prayer, and was supposed to have produced a coolness between himself and the Protector by so doing. Cromwell however had too high a value for his integrity and too much good sense to break with him for such a cause.

During the protectorate of Richard, Mr. Howe, assisted with Dr. Owen, and other leaders of the same persuasion, at the meeting of the Independents at the Savoy, in October, 1658. It was here that, with unexpected unanimity, they agreed upon articles of faith; which, however, were afterwards silently abandoned for the Assembly's Catechism.

On the removal of Richard Cromwell, Mr. Howe returned to his former charge at Torrington, and continued his labors in peace, till some months after the restoration. He was informed against for preaching seditious and treasonable sentiments, in October, 1660; but, proving his innocence, was discharged, and continued to preach to his people till the act of uniformity went into effect, Aug. 24, 1662. On that day he took a final leave of his congregation at Torrington, in a farewell sermon and parting addresses, deeply affecting to his congregation. Being now ejected from consecrated walls, he preached occasionally in the houses of his friends; but, a citation being out against him, he was obliged to desist, and seems to have been saved from further trouble from the citation by Dr. Ward, now bishop of Exeter, who it will be recollected had formerly been under obligations to Mr. Howe. In 1665 he took the oath under the "five mile act," but was still obliged to shift from place to place in order to avoid persecution, and it is supposed by his biographer, though he could not ascertain the circumstances of it, was imprisoned for two months, during the same year, in the isle of St. Nicholas. He still continued among his friends in the western counties, rendering himself as useful as the times would permit, and, while in this unsettled state, published, in 1668, the treatise on "the Blessedness of the Righteous," the substance of which it seems had been preached in a course of sermons at Torrington.

Being now out of regular employment, with a family dependen-

dent on him, he accepted an invitation in the year 1671, to remove to Ireland, and lived as chaplain to Lord Massarene in Antrim. Here he enjoyed the respect and confidence of all, the Metropolitan and Bishop of the diocese requiring no conformity, but giving him leave to preach in the pulpits under their control. During the first year of his residence here he published the discourse on "the Vanity of man as mortal," which, with the treatise before mentioned, is contained in this volume.

Mr. Howe continued at Antrim till December, 1675, when he was invited to take charge of a congregation in London, made vacant by the death of Dr. Seaman, a non-conformist divine. In this charge he continued till 1685, and, during this period, was much occupied, beside his regular employment as pastor, with the public interests of the dissenters, as well as some controversial discussions on doctrinal subjects, and published many both of his larger and smaller works. During much of the time, however, his situation was rendered unquiet by the spirit of persecution, so that he sometimes could not walk the streets of London in safety. At length in 1685, being worn out with the vexations, to which the dissenters were exposed, he accepted an invitation of Lord Wharton to travel with him in foreign parts, and sailed with him in August. After visiting many places on the continent, and forming many valuable acquaintances among the wise and good, he settled in Utrecht, in 1686, surrounded by English acquaintances and friends, who were there for similar reasons with himself. Here he took his turn with other English clergymen, among whom was Dr. Burnet, afterwards bishop of Salisbury, in preaching in the English church, and gave occasional instruction to the English students, who were in the University of that place. With Dr. Burnet he had occasional interviews and much conversation on the public concerns of religion in England; and on Burnet's expressing a belief, that when he, Mr. Baxter, and Dr. Bates, with a few more, should pass off the stage, nonconformity would come to an end, Mr. Howe declared his full conviction, that it did not depend on men, but on principle, and, as its present supporters passed off, others would rise up in their place, a prediction of which Burnet afterwards acknowledged the truth. While here, Mr. Howe had also frequent interviews with William, afterwards king of England, who was free in his conversation with him, and asked him many questions respecting Cromwell, of whom Mr. Howe had of course an intimate knowledge.

In 1687 king James published a "declaration for liberty of conscience," and at the earnest request of his people in London for his return to them, Mr. Howe complied, and after waiting upon the prince, who gave him very kind advice upon the occasion, returned to London, and was gladly received by his friends in May of this year. In the following year, 1688, upon the arrival of the Prince of Orange at St. James' palace, Mr. Howe had the



honor of addressing him at the head of the dissenting clergy, and expressing their views of the revolution which had taken place in his favor. It was now very naturally expected by him and his friends, that the terms of conformity would be so modified, as to give them no farther trouble; but when, to his surprise and mortification, he found that many dignitaries of the establishment were hostile to such a measure, notwithstanding the court paid to the dissenters during the reign of James, he drew up and published a piece entitled, "The case of the Protestant Dissenters represented and argued." At length in May, 1689, the Act of Uniformity gave them much of what they had desired; and, although still excluded from the establishment, they were content with toleration. Many of the Church party it seems, however, thought more severity should have been exercised; and, on the publication of some things of this sort, Mr. Howe, to prevent further collision, published an "Address to Conformists and Dissenters," in which the catholicism and benevolence of his spirit, as well as his great wisdom, are clearly exhibited. This, with the other piece just mentioned, is preserved in his memoirs by Dr. Calamy.

Not long after this, divisions arose among the dissenters themselves, which greatly tried the patience of Mr. Howe and others of a kindred spirit. An attempt it seems was made to unite more closely in one body those who were Presbyterian with those who were Congregational among them, and Mr. Howe, with others, was concerned in drawing up "Heads of Agreement," which were generally assented to by the united ministers in and about London. Some, however, refused to subscribe, and discussions were occasioned, which finally ended in breaking up the proposed union, and what was intended for concord produced greater discord. Mr. Howe in the course of these debates was drawn in to write occasionally on the matters at issue, but with a view to make peace, and cool the heat of the parties. It was with this view, that he published "The carnality of Christian contention" in two sermons, in 1693, the preface to which, as well as the sermons, breathes a heavenly charity and truly pious concern for the real interests of religion. His efforts were unavailing, and in 1694 there was a division of those who had been united in the Lecture at Pinner's Hall, a new one being established at Salters' Hall, in which Mr. Howe, Dr. Bates, and Mr. Alsop joined with Mr. Williams, who had been excluded from the other.

About the same time there was also much discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, occasioned by the writings of Dr. Wallis, Dr. Sherlock, Dr. South, and Dr. Cudworth on that subject, and Mr. Howe published "An Inquiry into the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead," which is perhaps as well deserving the attention of the student, as any thing written on the subject since.

The only public discussion which Mr. Howe seems to have engaged in after this, was that respecting occasional conformity. He was led into this by the circumstance, that Sir Thomas Abney, a member of his congregation, while Mayor of London in 1701, attending public worship sometimes in the established church and sometimes among the dissenters, was publicly assailed for so doing in a pamphlet, with a preface, in which Mr. Howe was called on either to vindicate or condemn it. A part of what he wrote on this occasion is preserved by Calamy, and shows the acuteness as well as the liberal character of his mind in his now advanced age.

But Mr. Howe, as may be supposed, was tired of the narrow-minded contentions of the world, and conscious that his own spirit was above them, and that the time of its deliverance could not be far distant, he seemed fast ripening for a better world, and impatient for that blessedness, the nature of which he so well understood. During the latter years of his life he published a number of sermons on various occasions, and in 1702 the second part of his *Living Temple*, the first part of which had been published soon after his settlement in London, in 1675, and which is the most elaborate and systematic of his theoretical works. The last work of his, published during his life, was a discourse on "Patience in expectation of future blessedness," which appeared in 1705, "and this," says Calamy, "was what he now had particular occasion for. For having employed his time, strength, and interest in the most valuable services, he by this time was wasted with several diseases, which he bore with great patience and resigned submission to the will of his heavenly Father. He discovered no fear of dying, but, even when his end drew near, was very serene and calm. He seemed indeed sometimes to have been got to heaven, even before he had laid aside that mortality, which he had been long expecting to have swallowed up of life. It was observed, and is, I believe, to this day remembered by some of his flock, that in his last illness, and when he had been declining for some time, he was once in a most affecting, melting, heavenly frame at the communion, and carried out into such a ravishing and transporting celebration of the love of Christ, that both he himself, and they, who communicated with him, were apprehensive he would have expired in that very service."

During his last sickness he was visited by many of all ranks, and conversed with them freely and cheerfully. Among the rest Richard Cromwell, now himself grown old in retirement, came to make him a last visit, and pay his respects to him before he died. There was much serious conversation between them, and the parting was very solemn and affecting to both. To the young ministers, who visited him, he talked much, and like one of another world. His strength being at length quite exhausted, he died in peace and in full expectation of the blessed-

ness of the righteous, April 2. 1705. He was buried in the parish church of St. Alhallows, Bread street, and his funeral sermon preached by his great admirer Mr. John Spademan.

Such are the leading incidents in the life of Howe, and my limits will only permit me to add a few paragraphs respecting his character. In his person he is represented by Dr. Calamy, as "very tall and exceeding graceful," and the portraits, that are preserved of him, fully correspond with what the same writer says of the expression of his countenance, as indicating something uncommonly great and tending to excite veneration.

In regard to his intellectual powers the history of his early scholarship, as well as his writings, gives proof, that they were of the highest order and applied with exemplary diligence. Before taking his second degree at the University, at the age of 22, "he had not only gone through a course of philosophy, conversed closely with the heathen moralists, read over the accounts we have remaining of Pagan theology, the writings of the school-men, and several systems and common places of the Reformers, and the divines that succeeded them, but had thoroughly studied the Sacred Scriptures, and from thence drawn up a body of divinity for himself and his own use, which he saw very little occasion afterwards to vary from." His character at the Universities, too, is indicated by the intimacy which he enjoyed with such men as Dr. Henry More and Dr. Cudworth, at Oxford, both of whom were over 30 years old, while he was but a boy; and with Mr. Gale and others, who were afterwards distinguished, at Cambridge. His distinguished Oxford friends, especially More, kept up habits of intimacy with him, frequently visiting him during his residence in London; and to his intercourse with these men has been ascribed the tincture of Platonism, which is so apparent in his writings.

His ministerial qualifications seem to have been remarkable even in that age of sound scholarship, and unsparing diligence. Such were his stores of thought, and so thoroughly were they digested, that he could preach as methodically without preparation, as others after the closest study, usually delivered his sermons without notes, and had great copiousness and fluency in prayer. The following is the account, which he gave Dr. Calamy, of his customary services in the pulpit at Torrington, on the public fasts, which, in those days, were frequent, and kept with great strictness and solemnity. He began "about nine in the morning with a prayer for about a quarter of an hour, in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day, and afterwards read and expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent about three quarters, then prayed for about an hour, preached for another hour, and prayed for about half an hour. After this he retired, and took some little refreshment, for about a quarter of an hour, or more, the people singing all the while, and then came again into the pulpit, and prayed for another hour, and gave them another

sermon of about an hour's length, and so concluded the service of the day at about four in the evening, with about half an hour or more in prayer—a sort of service," as Calamy observes, "that few could have gone through without inexpressible weariness both to themselves and their auditories."

The great firmness, consistency, and inflexible integrity of Mr. Howe's character, were exhibited on many occasions, which would have shaken men of ordinary principles. No suspicion of a self-seeking disposition appears to have attached to him during his connexion with those in power, and when upon his refusing to assent to the terms of conformity, his friend Dr. Wilkins, now bishop of Chester, expressed his surprise, that a man of his "latitude" should be scrupulous in that matter, Mr. Howe assured him, "that that latitude of his, which he was pleased to take notice of, was so far from inducing him to conformity, that it was the very thing, that made and kept him a non-conformist."

His general views of religion were, in the highest and best sense, liberal and rational. He considered Christianity, not so much a system of opinions, and a set of forms, as a divine discipline for the heart and life, a living power, which must be felt, and become the actuating principle of our own spiritual being. He seems to me to have made his views of philosophy and of Christianity a more perfectly harmonious and consistent whole, than any other distinguished theologian, even of that philosophical age. It was the largeness and comprehensiveness of his views, as well as the native temper of his mind, that made him liberal and tolerant to the views of others, and a firm and constant supporter of generous and catholic principles.

His writings are numerous, and were first collected and published in 2 vols. fol., at London, in 1724, with a dedication to the King, by Samuel Chandler, and memoirs by Dr. Calamy. Within a few years past they have been recalled into circulation, and several editions published in England, with large additions of posthumous matter. Other practical treatises, and many of his sermons are little, if at all, less worthy of a place in this selection, than those which are inserted, and my first intention was to fill the first volume from his writings. The wish to secure variety, and bring other writers into notice, has induced a different course. The late editions of his writings occupy eight octavo volumes, but large as the whole work is, there are few of the old authors, whose entire practical and theoretical works are equally deserving of a republication in this country. So profound and rational are his philosophical and theological views, and so free from the peculiar tones and phraseology of a sect, or an age, are his practical and devotional writings, that they can neither grow old by time, nor lose their power over the minds of thinking and pious men, so long as the essential principles of reason and religion remain unchanged.

THE EDITOR.

**THE**  
**BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.**

**A TREATISE**  
**ON PSALM 17: 15.**

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*When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see  
him as he is, 1. John 3. 2.*

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Ἀλλὰ τὰ κακὰ οὐ δυνατὸν ἐν θεοῖς ἵδρυσθαι· τὴν δὲ θνητὴν φύσιν, καὶ τόνδε τὸν τόπον περιπολεῖ ἐξ ἀνάγκης. Διὸ καὶ πείρασθαι χρὴ ἐνθένδε ἐκείσε φύγειν ὅτι τάχα. Φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῶν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν, ὁμοίωσις δὲ δικαίων καὶ ὁσίων μετὰ φρονησέως γένεσθαι.

*It is impossible that vice should find a place in the abode of the Gods; but it necessarily adheres to a mortal nature, and to the present world. It is therefore our duty to shun it with the utmost eagerness, or, in other words to seek the highest possible resemblance to God, which resemblance consists in rectitude, holiness and wisdom: Plat. in Theæt.*

## TO THE READER.

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I am not at all solicitous, that the world should know the history of the conception of this treatise. If there be any thing that shall recompense the pains of such as may think fit to give themselves the trouble of perusing it, in the work itself, I should yet think it too much an undervaluing of them, if I did reckon the minuter circumstances relating thereto, fit for their entertainment. Nor am I more concerned to have it known what were the inducements to the publication of it. Earnest protestations and remonstrations of our good intentions in such undertakings, as they leave men still at liberty to believe or doubt at their pleasure; so they gain us little if they be believed. It is no easy matter, to carry one even, constant tenor of spirit through a work of time. Nor is it more easy to pass a settled invariable judgment concerning so variable a subject; when a heart that may seem wholly framed and set for God this hour, shall look so quite like another thing the next, and change figures and postures almost as often as it doth thoughts. And if a man should be mistaken in judging himself, it would little mend the matter, to have deceived others also into the opinion of him. But if he can approve himself to God in the simplicity of an honest and undeceived heart, the peace that ensues, is a secret between God and him. They are theatre enough to one another, as he (Seneca) said to his friend. It is an inclosed pleasure: a joy which the stranger cannot intermeddle with.

It is therefore any man's concernment herein rather to satisfy himself than the world. And the world's rather to understand the design of the work than the author's; and whither it tends, rather than whereto he meant it. And it is obvious enough, to what good purposes discourses of this nature may serve. This is, in the design of it, wholly practical; hath little or nothing to do with disputation. If there be any whose business it is to promote a private, divided interest; or who place the sum of their religion in an inconsiderable and doubtful opinion; it doth not

unhallow their altars, nor offer any affront to their idol. It intends no quarrel to any contending, angry party : but deals upon things in the substance whereof christians are at a professed agreement. And hath therefore the greater probability of doing good to some, without the offence of any. It is indeed equally matter of complaint and wonder, that men can find so much leisure to divert from such things, wherein there is so much both of importance and pleasure, unto (what one would think should have little of temptation or allurements in it) contentious jangling. It might rather be thought its visible fruits and tendencies should 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 risen the intemperate, preternatural heats and angers that have spent its strength and spirits, and make it look with so meagre and pale a face. We have had a greater mind to dispute than live ; and to contend about what we know not, than to practice the far greater things we know ; and which more directly tend to nourish and maintain the divine life. The author of that ingenious sentence, *pruritus disputandi scabies Ecclesiæ, the itch of disputing is the distemper of the church*, (whoever he were) hath fitly expressed what is the noisome product of the itch of disputing. It hath begot the ulcerous tumors, which, besides their own offensive soreness, drain the body, and turn what should nourish that into nutriment to themselves. And its effects are not more grievous than the pleasures which it effects and pursues are uncouth and unnatural: *ut ulcera quædam nocituras manus appetunt et tactu gaudent, et fædam corporum scabiem delectat quicquid exasperat : Non aliter dixerim his mentibus in quas voluptates, velut mala ulcera eruperunt, voluptati esse laborem, vexationemque : as ulcers of a rough kind invite and are pleased with the touch of a rough and injurious hand, and as that only gratifies which irritates a body covered over with a loathsome eruption, so to those minds which are afflicted with the noxious ulcer of forbidden pleasure, labor and vexation are the only delight.* Sen: de tranquillitate animi. That only pleases which exasperates, (as the moralist aptly expresses some like disaffection of diseased minds.) What to a sound spirit would be a pain, is to these a pleasure.

Which is, indeed, the triumph of the disease, that it adds unto torment, reproach and mockery, and imposes upon men by so ridiculous a delusion (while they are made to take pleasure in punishing themselves) that even the most sober can scarce look on in a fitter posture, than with a compassionate smile. All which were yet somewhat more tolerable, if that imagined, vanishing pleasure were not the whole of their gain ; or if it were to be hoped, that so great a present real pain and smart, should



be recompensed with as real a consequent fruit and advantage. But we know, that generally by how much any thing is more disputable, the less it is necessary or conducive to the Christian life. God hath graciously provided that what we are to live by, should not cost us so dear. And possibly, as there is less occasion of disputing about the more momentous things of religion; so there may be somewhat more of modesty and awe in reference to what is so confessedly venerable and sacred, (though too many are over bold even here also) than so foolishly to trifle with such things. Therefore more commonly, where that humor prevails, men divert from those plainer things, with some slighter and superficial reverence to them, but more heartily esteeming them jejune, because they have less in them to gratify that appetite, and betake themselves to such things about which they may more plausibly contend; and then, what pitiful trifles oftentimes take up their time and thoughts; questions and problems of like weighty importance, very often, with those which, the above-named author (*Sen. de Brev. vit.*) tells us, this disease among the Greeks prompted them to trouble themselves about, as, "What number of rowers Ulysses had? which was written first, the Iliad-or the Odyssees, &c.?" So that (as he saith) they spent their lives very operously doing nothing. Their conceits being such, that if they kept them to themselves, they could yield them no fruit; and if they publish them to others, they should not seem thereby the more learned, but the more troublesome":—to this purpose he truly speaks. And is it not to be resented, that men should sell away the solid strength and vital joy which a serious soul would find in substantial religion, for such toys! Yea, and not only famish themselves but trouble the world, and embroil the church with their impertinences! If a man be drawn forth to defend an important truth against an injurious assault, it were treacherous self-love to purchase his own peace by declining it. Or if he did sometimes turn his thoughts to some of our petty questions, that with many are so hotly agitated, for recreation-sake, or to try his wit and exercise his reason, without stirring his passions to the disturbance of others or himself; it were an innocent divertisement, and the best purpose that things of that nature are capable of serving. But when contention becomes a man's element, and he cannot live out of that fire, strains his wit 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 in dissenting; disputes only that he may dispute, and loves dissension for itself: this is the unnatural humor 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, while men have equally affected to contend, and to make ostentation of their ability so to do.

And, surely, as it is highly pleasurable to retire oneself, so it is charitable to call aside others out of this noise and throng, to consider silently and feed upon the known and agreed things of our religion; which immediately lead to both the duties and delights of it. Among which there are none more evident and undoubted, none less entangled with controversy, none more profitable and pleasant than the future blessedness of the righteous, which this discourse treats of. The last end is a matter so little disputable, that it is commonly thought (which is elsewhere more distinctly spoken to) not to be the object of election, and so not of deliberation consequently, but of simple intention only, because men are supposed to be generally agreed as touching that. And the knowledge and intention of it is apparently the very soul of religion; animates, directs, enlivens, and sweetens the whole thereof. Without which, religion were the vainest, most unsavory thing in the world. For what were there left of it, but an empty unaccountable formality, a series of spiritless and merely scenical observances and actions without a design? For whereas all men's actions else, mediately tend to the last end, but that not being in view with the most, they pitch upon other intervenient ends; which, though abstracted from the last, should not be; yet they are actually to them the reason of their actions, and infuse a vigor and liveliness into them: religion aiming immediately at the last end, that being taken away, hath no rational end or design at all. And it cannot but be an heartless business, with great solemnity, in a constituted course, to do nothing but professedly trifle, or keep up a custom of certain solemn performances which have no imaginable scope or end. And because the more clearly this our last end is understood, the more powerfully and sweetly it attracts and moves the soul, this treatise endeavors to give as plain and positive a state and notion of it as the text insisted on, compared with other scriptures, would afford to so weak an eye.

And because men are so apt to abuse themselves with the vain and self-contracting hopes of attaining this end, without ever having their spirits framed for it, or walking in the way that leads thereto, as if they could come to heaven by chance, or without any design or care of theirs; the proportion is endeavored to be shewn, between that divine likeness, in the vision and participation whereof this blessedness consists, and the righteousness that disposes and leads to it. Which may it be monitory to the ungodly and profane, who hate and scorn the likeness of God wherever they behold it. And let me tell such from (better-instructed) pagans, *Nihil est Deo similius aut gratius quam vir animo perfecte bonus, &c. that there is nothing more like or more acceptable to God, than a man that is in the temper of his soul truly good, who excels other men, as he is himself excelled (pardon his hyperbole) by the immortal God.*

Apul. de Deo Socratis. *Inter bonos viros ac Deum amicitia est, conciliante virtute—amicitiam dico? etiam necessitudo, et similitudo, &c. that between God and good men there is a friendship, by means of virtue; a friendship, yea, a kindred, a likeness; in as much truly as the good man differs from God but in time (here sprinkle a grain or two) being his disciple, imitator and very off-spring.* (Sen. de pro.) *Νεμέσα γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ὅταν τις ψέγη τὸν ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιον ἢ ἐπαίνη τὸν ἑαυτῷ ἐναντίως ἔχοντα, ἐστὶ δ' οὗτος ὁ ἀγαθός.—πάντων ἱερότατόν ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ἀγαθός, καὶ μισητότατον ὁ πονηρός: that God is full of indignation against such as reproach one that is like to him, or that praise one that is contrarily affected (or unlike); but such is the good man (that is, that he is one like God.) A good man (as it shortly after follows) is the holiest thing in the world, and a wicked man the most polluted thing.—Plat. in Minoe.*

And let me warn such haters of holiness and holy men in the words of this author immediately subjoined; *Τούτου δ' ἕνεκα φράσω, ἵνα μὴ ἄνθρωπος ὢν ἄνθρωπου, εἰς ἥρω Διὸς υἱὸν λογῶ ἔξαμαρτάνῃς: and this I say for this cause, that thou being but a man, the son of a man, no more offend in speaking against a hero, one who is a son of God.*

Methinks men should be ashamed to profess the belief of a life to come, while they cannot behold without indignation, nor mention but with derision, that holiness without which it can never be attained, and which is indeed the seed and principle of the thing itself. But such are not likely much to trouble themselves with this discourse. There is little in it indeed of art and ornament to invite or gratify such as the subject itself invites not. And nothing at all but what was apprehended might be some way useful. The affectation of garnishing a margin with the names of authors, I have ever thought a vain pedantry; yet have not declined the occasional use of a few that occurred. He that writes to the world, must reckon himself debtor to the wise and unwise. If what is done shall be found with any to have promoted its proper end; his praises to God shall follow it (as his prayers do that it may) who professes himself,

A well-willer to the souls of men.

J. HOWE.



## CHRISTIAN READER.

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You whose hearts are set on heaven, who are daily laying up a treasure there, here is a welcome messenger, to tell you more than perhaps you have well considered, of the nature of your future blessedness, and to illustrate the map of the land of promise, and to bring you another cluster of its grapes : here is a useful help to make you know that holiness doth participate of glory, and that heaven is at least virtually in the seed of grace. Though this life be properly called a life of faith, as contradistinct from the intuition and fruition hereafter, as well as from the lower life of sense ; yet is it a great truth, and not sufficiently considered and improved, that we have here more than faith, to acquaint us with the blessedness expected. Between faith and glory, there is the spirit of holiness, the love of God, the heavenly desires, which are kindled by faith, and are those branches on which the happy flower and fruit must grow : they are the name and mark of God upon us : they are our earnest, our pledge and the first fruits. And is not this more than a word of promise only ? Therefore though all christians must live by faith, marvel not that I tell you, that you may, you must have more than faith. Is not a pledge and earnest, a first-fruits more ? Therefore have christians, not only a Spirit to evidence their title, but also some foretaste of heaven itself. For faith in Christ is to recover us to God, and so much as we have of God, so much of fruition ; and so much as faith hath kindled in you of the love of God, so much foretaste you have of heaven ; for you are deceived, if you think, that any one notion speaketh more to you of heaven and of your ultimate end, than *the love of God*. And though no unsound, ill-grounded faith will serve to cause this sacred love, yet when it is caused, it over-tops this cause ; and he that perceiveth the operation of a strong effectual love, hath an acquaintance with God and heaven which is above that of believing. Faith seeth the feast, but love is the tasting of it. And therefore it is, that the holiest souls stick closest unto God, because (though their reasoning faculty may be defective) they know him by the highest and most tenacious kind of knowledge which this world affordeth, (as I have lately shewed elsewhere.) Here you have described to you, the true witness of the Spirit ; not that of supposed internal voices, which they are usually most taken up with, who have the smallest knowledge and faith,

and love, and the greatest self-esteem, or spiritual pride, with the strongest phantasies and passions: but the objective and the sealing testimony, the divine nature, the renewed image of God, whose children are known by being like to their heavenly Father, even by being holy as he is holy. This is the Spirit of adoption, by which we are inclined, by holy love to God and confidence in him, to cry Abba Father, and fly unto him: the Spirit of sanctification is hereby in us the Spirit of adoption: for both signify but the giving us that love to God, which is the filial nature, and our Father's image.

And this treatise doth happily direct thee to that faithful beholding God in righteousness, which must here begin this blessed assimilation, which full intuition will forever perfect. It is a happy sign that God is about to repair our ruins and divisions, when he stirreth up his servants to speak so much of heaven, and to call up the minds of impatient complainers, and contentious censurers, and ignorant self-conceited dividers, and of worldly, unskilful, and unmerciful pastors, to look to that state where all the godly shall be one, and to turn those thoughts to the furtherance of holiness, to provoke one another to love and to good works, which too many lay out upon their hay and stubble, and to call men from judging and despising each other (and worse than both these) about their meats and drinks, and days, to study righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ (in which his kingdom doth consist) is acceptable to God, and approved of men, that are wise and good. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. While the contentious for meats will destroy the work of God, (Rom. 14. 17. 20.) the union between peace and holiness is so strict, that he that truly promoteth one promoteth both, Heb. 12. 14. Jam. 3. 17. The true way of our union is excellently described, Eph. 4. 11,—16. If any plain, unlearned readers shall blame the accurateness of the style, they must remember, that those persons have not the least need to hear of heaven, and to be drawn up from the vanities of earth who cannot digest a looser style. As God hath endued the worthy author with a more than ordinary measure of judiciousness, even soundness and accurateness, of understanding, with seriousness, spirituality, and heavenly mind; so we have for our common benefit, the effects of all these happy qualifications, in this judicious, heavenly discourse. And if my recommendations may in any measure further your acceptance, improvements and practising of so edifying a treatise, it will answer the ends of him who waiteth with you in hope for the same salvation.

RICHARD BAXTER.

THE

## BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

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PSALM XVII. 15.

*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall  
be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*

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### CHAP. I.

I. A proemial discourse. II. A reflection upon some foregoing verses of the psalm, by way of introduction to the text. III. A consideration of its somewhat various readings, and of its *literal* importance. IV. A discussion of its *real* importance so far as is necessary to the settling the subject of the present discourse.

I. The continual mixture of good and evil in this present state of things, with its uncertain fluctuations, and subjection to perpetual changes; do naturally prompt a considering mind to the belief and hope of another, that may be both more perfect, and more permanent. For certainly it could never be a design adequate (or any way agreeable) to the divine wisdom and goodness, that the blessed God should raise such a thing as this lower creation out of nothing, only to give himself the temporary pleasure of beholding the alternate joys and sorrows of (the best part thereof) his reasonable creature seated in it: nor a delight at all proportionable to an eternally happy Being, when he hath connaturalized such a creature to this sensible world; only to take notice how variously the passions he hath planted in him, may be moved and stirred by the variety of occasions which he shall thence be presented with; and what sudden and contrary impressions may be made upon his easy passive senses, by the interchanged strokes and touches of contrary objects; how quickly he can arise him into a transport of high contentment and pleasure, and then how soon he can again reduce him to a very paroxysm of anguish and despair. It would discover us to have very vile and low thoughts of God, if we did not judge

it altogether unanswerable to his perfections, to design no further thing in creating this world, and placing such a creature as man in it, than only to please himself for a while with such a spectacle, and then at last clear the stage, and shut up all again in an eternal, silent darkness. If we could suppose a man furnished with such power, he would surely add little to the reputation of his being wise or good beyond other men, by a design so to use it. Much less can we think it worthy of God to perpetuate such a state of things as this, and continue a succession of such persons and actions as we now behold in the world, through eternal generations, only to perpetuate to himself the same pleasure in the exercise of his immense power upon created natures, over which he hath so infinite advantage.

And indeed nothing can be more unconceivable, than that the great Creator and Author of all things, should frame a creature of so vast comprehension as the spirit of man, put into it a capacity of knowing and conversing with himself, give it some prospect of his own glory and blessedness; raise thereby, in many, boundless unsatisfied desires after him, and unexpressible pleasure in the pre-conceived hope of being received into the communion of that glory and blessedness; and yet defeat and blast so great an expectation, by the unsuspected reducement of the very subject of it again to nothing. Yea, and that he should deal herein (as in that case he must) the most hardly with the best: and that such souls, whose mere love and devotedness to him, had made them abandon the pleasures of this life, and run through whatsoever difficulties for his sake, should fare worse than the very worst; were beyond all the rest, most utterly unimaginable, and a thought which pagan-reason hath not known how to digest or entertain. *If* (saith one, and he speaks the sense of many others, as well as his own) *Εἰ μὲν ἐν ἅμα τοῖς σώμασι διαλυομένοις καὶ τῶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅ τι δὲ ποτε ὅ 'εἰσι ἐκεῖνο συνδιαλύεται, &c. with the dissolution of our bodies, the essence of the soul, whatsoever that be, should be dissolved too, and forever cease to be any thing; I know not how I can account them blessed, that never having enjoyed any good as the reward of their virtue, have even perished for virtue itself.* Dionys. Halicar. Antiq. Rom. lib. 8.

Wherefore it is consequent, that this present state is only intended for trial to the spirits of men, in order to their attainment as of a better state in a better world: that is, inasmuch as the infinitely wise and blessed God had given being to such a creature as man, in which both worlds (the material and the immaterial) did meet; and who, in respect of his earthly and spiritual natures, had in him somewhat suitable to each. And whereas this creature had lost (with his interest) his very inclination to the spiritual objects, enjoyments of the purer, immaterial world (wherein alone his true blessedness could con-



sist,) suffered a vile depression of his spirit unto this gross corporeal world, and hereby brought himself under a necessity of being miserable, his nobler part having nothing now to satisfy it, but what it was become unsuitable and disaffected to. His merciful Creator, being intent upon his restitution, thought fit not to bring it about by a sudden and violent hand (as it were to catch him into heaven against his will :) but to raise his spirit into its just dominion and sovereignty in him, by such gradual methods as were most suitable to a rational, intelligent nature ; that is, to discover to him, that he had such a thing as spirit about him ; whence it was fallen, how low it was sunk, to what state it was capable to be raised, and what he had designed and done for its happy recovery. And hence by the secret and powerful insinuations of his own light and grace, to awaken his drowsy and slumbering reason, and incline his perverse and wayward will to the consideration and choice of such things as that felicity consists in ; which that better world can afford, and his better part enjoy.

And while he propounds such things to him, how reasonable and agreeable was it, that he should keep him sometime under a just probation (yea, how much was there in it of a gracious and compassionate indulgence, often to renew the trial,) whether he would yet bestir himself, and (having so great hopes before him, and such helps and aids afforded him, and ready to be afforded) apply, at last, his intellectual and elective powers, to mind and close with so gracious overtures, in order to his own eternal advancement and blessedness? Nor was it an unreasonable expectation that he should do so. For, however the temporal good and evil that may constantly affect his sensitive part and powers, be present and near ; but the eternal misery or blessedness of his soul, future and remote ; yet inasmuch as he is capable of understanding the vast disproportions of time and eternity ; of a mortal flesh and an immortal spirit ; how preposterous a course were it, and unworthy of a man ; yea, how dishonorable and reproachful to his Maker, should he prefer the momentary pleasures of narrow, incapacious sense, to the everlasting enjoyments of an enlarged comprehensive spirit? Or, for the avoiding the pains and miseries of the former kind, incur those of the latter? Whence also the Holy God doth not expect and require only, that men should make that wiser choice ; but doth most justly lay the weight of their eternal states upon their doing, or not doing so. And in that day when he shall render to every one according to his works, make this the rule of his final judgment, to allot to them, who by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honor, glory, and immortality, eternal life. To the rest, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, &c. and that whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Rom. 2. 6,—9. Nor is it a new thing in the world, that some among the

children of men should in this comply with the righteous will of God, and so judge and choose for themselves, as he is pleased to direct and prescribe, it is a course approved by the concurrent suffrage of all them, in all times and ages, into whose minds the true light hath shined, and whom God hath inspired with that wisdom whereby he maketh wise to salvation. That numerous assembly of the perfected spirits of the just, have agreed in this common resolution; and did in their several generations, before they had passed this state of trial, with an heroic magnanimity trample this present world under their feet, and aspire to the glory of the world to come; relieving themselves against all the grievances they have suffered from such whose portion is in this life with the alone hope and confidence of what they were to enjoy in another.

II. And hereof we have an eminent and illustrious instance in this context, where the ground is laid of the following discourse. For introduction whereto, observe that—the title speaks the psalm a prayer of David. The matter of the prayer is, preservation from his enemies. Not to go over the whole psalm, we have in the 13 and 14 verses, the sum of his desires, with a description of the persons he prays to be delivered from: in which description every character is an argument to enforce his prayer.

*From the wicked:* as though he had said they are equally enemies to thee and me; not more opposite to me by their cruelty, than by their wickedness they are to thee. Vindicate then, at once, thyself, and deliver me.

*Thy sword, thy hand.* Thou canst as easily command and manage them, as a man may wield his sword, or move his hand. Wilt thou suffer thine own sword, thine own hand, to destroy thine own servant?

*Men of the world, which have their portion in this life:* time and this lower world, bound all their hopes and fears. They have no serious believing apprehensions of any thing beyond this present life: therefore have nothing to withhold them from the most injurious violence, if thou withhold them not; men that believe not another world, are the ready actors of any imaginable mischiefs and tragedies in this.

*Whose belly thou fillest.* That is, their sensual appetite; (as oftentimes that term is used, Rom. 16. 18. Phil. 3. 19.) *with thy hid treasures,* namely, the riches which either God is wont to hide in the bowels of the earth, or lock up in the repository of providence, dispensing them at his own pleasure.

*They are full of children.* So it appears by that which follows, it ought to be read, and not according to that gross, but easy (*ἰσὼν* for *υἰσὼν*) mistake of some transcribers of the seventy. As if in all this he had pleaded thus; “Lord, thou hast abundantly indulged those men already, what need they more? They have themselves, from thy unregarded bounty, their own vast

swollen desires sufficiently filled, enough for their own time; and when they can live no longer in their persons, they may in their posterity, and leave not strangers; but their numerous offspring, their heirs. Is it not enough that their avarice be gratified, except their malice be also? that they have whatsoever they can conceive desirable for themselves, unless they may also infer whatever they can think mischievous on me? To this description of his enemies, he, *ex opposito*, subjoins some account of himself in this his closure of the psalm: *As for me*, here he is at his statique point; and, after some appearing discomposure, his spirit returns to a consistency, in consideration of his own more happy state, which he opposes and prefers to theirs, in the following respects. That *they* were wicked, *he* righteous. "I will behold thy face in righteousness." That *their* happiness was worldly, terrene, such only as did spring from the earth; *his*, heavenly and divine, such as should result from the face and image of God. *Theirs*, present, temporary, compassed within this life; *his*, future, everlasting, to be enjoyed when he should awake. *Theirs*, partial, defective, such as would but gratify their bestial part, fill their bellies; *his*, adequate, complete (the *εὐδαιμόνια τῶ ὀννετῶ* a *happiness of proportion*) such as should satisfy the man. "I shall be satisfied, &c.

III. The variety in rendering this verse (to be seen by comparing the original and translation) need not give us any trouble, the differences not being of great moment, nor our own reading liable to exception. The word about which is the greatest diversity, hath the significancy we here give it, in the second commandment, and constantly elsewhere. And then, what more proper English can this text, be capable of, than it hath in our bibles? Each word hath its true and genuine import; and the syntax is sufficiently regular, and grammatical of the whole.

IV. In the mean time, the *real* importance of this scripture more calls for discussion than the *literal*; concerning which, a threefold inquiry will be necessary for the settling the subject of the following discourse.—What relation this *righteousness* must be understood to have to the vision of God's face, and the other consequent blessedness.—What time or state *awaking* refers to, and—What is intended by the *likeness of God*. To the *first* of these. It is only necessary to say at present, that the already noted import of the preposition *in* being supposed most suitable to this text (as apparently it is) righteousness must be looked upon in reference to this vision, not as in an idle or merely casual concomitancy, or as an unconcerned circumstance, that hath nothing to do with the business spoken of; but as in a close and intimate connexion therewith; being, first antecedent, secondly conducive, thirdly necessary thereto. Nor can I better express its place, and reference to it, generally and in one word, than in saying it qualifies for it; which how it doth, will be more proper

to consider hereafter. It may now suffice to say, those words give us the qualified subject of this blessedness "I; in righteousness," a righteous person as such. To the *Second*; Taking it for granted, that none will understand this awaking as opposed to natural sleep: in the borrowed or tropical sense, it must be understood to intend either some better state in this life, in comparison whereof the Psalmist reckons his present state but as a sleep; or the future state of blessedness in the other life. There have been some who have understood it of the former, and thought the Psalmist to speak only of an hoped freedom from his present temporal afflictions; but then, that which will be implied, seems not so specious; that trouble and affliction should be signified by the necessarily pre-supposed sleep, which sure doth more resemble rest than trouble.

I conceive it less exceptionable to refer *awaking*, to the blessed state of saints after this life. For, that saints, at that time when this was written, had the knowledge of such a state (indeed a saint not believing a life to come, is a perfect contradiction) no doubt can be made by any that hath ever so little read and compared the old and new testament. We are plainly told, that those excellent persons mentioned in the famous roll, (Heb. 11. v. 1. 16.) lived by that faith which was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. That of them, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while they lived in Canaan, yet sought a better, a heavenly country; confessing themselves pilgrims and strangers on earth. We know it was the more general belief of the Jews in our Saviour's time. And whence should they have it, but from the old Testament thither our Saviour remits them Joh. 5. 39. to search it out, and the way to it. The Apostle saint Paul, Acts 26, and 6. 7. compared with the 8. gives it as the common faith of the twelve tribes, grounded upon the promise made to their forefathers; and thence prudentially he herein states the cause wherein he was now engaged; supposing it would be generally resented, that he should be called in question for avowing (only) so known and received a truth. Sure they were beholden to these sacred writings they had then among them, for so common a belief; and since it is out of question, from our Saviour's express words, they do contain the ground of that belief; what cause have we to be so shy of so interpreting scriptures that have a fair aspect that way? Is it, that we can devise to fasten here and there another sense upon divers such? I wonder what one text can be mentioned in all the old testament to this purpose, wherein one may not do so: And what then would be the tendency of this course, but to deny in all the particulars, what, upon so clear evidence, we are in the general forced to admit? and to put Moses, and Abraham, and David, in a lower class than Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato? And I think it would not be easy to find one text in all that part

of the Bible, where both the words thereof, and the context, do more fairly comply, that in this, so as not only to admit, but even to invite that interpretation.

For the term *awake* about which the present inquiry is, how apt and obvious is the analogy between our awaking out of natural sleep, and the holy soul's rising up out of the darkness and torpor of its present state, into the enlivening light of God's presence? It is truly said so to awake, at its first quitting these darksome regions, when it lays aside its cumbersome night-vail. It doth so more perfectly, in the joyful morning of the resurrection-day when mortality is swallowed up in life, and all the yet hovering shadows of it are vanished and fled away. And how known and usual an application this is of the metaphorical terms of sleeping and awaking in holy writ, I need not tell them who have read the Bible. Nor doth this interpretation less fitly accord to the other contents of this verse: For to what state do the sight of God's face, and satisfaction with his likeness, so fully agree, as to that of future blessedness in the other world? But then the contexture of discourse in this and the foregoing verse together, seems plainly to determine us to this sense: for what can be more conspicuous in them, than a purposed comparison, an opposition of two states of felicity mutually to each other? That of the wicked, whom he calls *men of time*, and whose portion, he tells us, is in this life: and the righteous man's, his own; which he expected not to be till he should awake, that is, not till after this life.

It is further to be inquired, *thirdly*, how we are here to understand *the likeness of God*? I doubt not but we are to understand by it, his glory. And the only difficulty which it will be necessary at present to consider about it, is, whether we are to take it objectively, or subjectively; for the glory to be represented to the blessed soul, or the glory to be impressed upon it; the glory which it is to behold, or the glory it shall bear. And I conceive the difference is more easily capable of accommodation, than of a strict decision on either part. By *face* is undoubtedly meant objective glory, and that in its most perfect representation, the face being, as we know with men, the chief seat of aspectable majesty and beauty. Hence when Moses desires to see God's glory, though he did vouchsafe some discovery of it, yet he tells him his face cannot be seen. Hereupon, therefore, the next expression *thy likeness* might the more plausibly be restrained to subjective glory, so as to denote the image of God now in its most perfect impression on the blessed soul. But that I insist not on. Supposing therefore, that what is signified by *face*, be repeated over again in this word *likeness*, yet I conceive the expression is not varied in vain; but having more to say than only that he expected a state of future *vision*, namely, that he assured himself of *satisfaction* too, another word was

thought fit to be used that might signify also somewhat that must intervene in order to that satisfaction. It is certain the mere objective representation and consequent intuition of the most excellent (even the divine) glory, cannot satisfy a soul remaining disaffected and unsuitable thereunto. It can only satisfy, as, being represented; it forms the soul into the same image, and attempers it to itself, as if he had said "I expect hereafter to see the blessed face of God, and to be myself blessed or satisfied by his glory, at once appearing to me, and transfusing itself upon me." In short therefore, I understand by that term, the glory of God as transforming, or as impressive of itself. If therefore, glory, the object of the soul's vision, shall by any be thought to be intended in it, I contend not; supposing only, that the object be taken not materially, or potentially only, for the thing visibly in itself considered; but formally, and in *esse actuali objecti*; that is, as now, *actually impressing itself*, or as connoting such an impression upon the beholding soul; for so only is it productive of such a pleasure and satisfaction to it, as must ensue. As in this form of speech "such a man takes pleasure in knowledge." It is evident knowledge must be taken there both objectively, for the things known; and subjectively, for the actual perception of the things; inasmuch as, apparently, both must concur to work him delight. So it will appear, to any one that attentively considers it, glory must be taken in that passage, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5. 2. It is divine glory both revealed and received; his exhibition and communication of it, according to his *immensity*; and our participation of it, according to our *measure*, that must concur to our eternal satisfaction. Herein the platonic adage hath evident truth in it; *Voluptatis generatio est ex infiniti et finiti copulatione. Pleasure is here certainly made up of something finite and something infinite, meeting together.* It is not (as the philosopher speaks) a χωριστόν, but a κτήσόν τι, not any thing *separate* from the soul, but something it possesses, that can make it happy. It is not happy by an incommunicate happiness, nor glorious by an incommunicate glory. Indeed, the discovery of such a glory to an inglorious, unholy soul; must rather torment than satisfy. The future glory of saints is therefore called (Rom. 8. 18. εἰς ἡμᾶς, a *glory to be revealed in them* (or *into them*, as the word signifies,) And in the foregoing words, the apostle assures Christ's fellow-sufferers, that they shall be glorified together with him. Surely the notation of that word, the formal notion of glorification, cannot import so little as only to be a spectator of glory; it must signify a being made glorious.

Nor is the common and true maxim otherwise intelligible, that grace and glory differ only in degree. For certainly it could never enter into the mind of a sober man (though how dangerously some speak, that might possibly have been so if too much learn-

ing hath not made them mad, will be animadverted in its place,) that objective glory, and grace in saints, were the same specific, much less the same numerical, thing. It is true, that Scripture often expresses the future blessedness, by *vision* of God. But where that phrase is used to signify it alone, it is evident (as within the lower region of grace, words of knowledge do often imply affection, and correspondent impressions on the Soul) it must be understood of affective transformative vision, such as hath conformity to God most inseparably conjunct with it. And that we might understand so much, they are elsewhere both expressly mentioned together, as joint ingredients into a saint's blessedness; as in those words so full of clear and rich sense: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is." Which text I take for a plain comment upon this: and methinks it should not easily be supposable, they should both speak so near the same words, and not intend the same sense. You have in both; the same *season*, "when he shall appear," when I shall awake: the same *subject* the *righteous* person *born* of God (compare the close of the former chapter with the beginning of this); "and I in righteousness:" the same *vision* we shall see him as he is: "I shall behold his face:" the same *assimilation*, "We shall be like him," I shall be satisfied with his likeness; (concerning the *σχέσις* or habitude this vision and assimilation mutually have to one another, there will be consideration had in its place). I therefore conceive neither of these notions of the divine likeness, do exclude the other. If it be inquired, which is principally meant? That need not to be determined: If the latter, it supposes the former; if the former, it infers the latter. Without the first, the other cannot be; without this other, the first cannot satisfy.

If any yet disagree to this interpretation of this text, let them affix the doctrine propounded from it, to that other last mentioned (which only hath not the express mention of a consequent satisfaction, as this hath; whence therefore, as being in this respect fuller, my thoughts were pitched upon this.) Only withal let it be considered, how much more easy it is, to imagine another sense, and suppose it possible, than to disprove this, or evince it impossible. How far probable it is, must be left to the judgment of the indifferent: with whom it may not be insignificant to add, that thus it hath been understood by interpreters (I might adventure to say the generality) of all sorts.

## CHAPTER II.

I. A summary proposal of the doctrine contained in this scripture: a distribution of it into three distinct heads of discourse. *First.* The qualified subject. *Secondly.* The nature. *Thirdly.* The season of the blessedness here spoken of. II. The first of these taken into consideration, where the qualification, *righteousness*, is treated of. About which is shewn. *First.* What it is. *Secondly.* How it qualifies.

I. Now the foregoing sense of the words being supposed, it appears that the proper argument of this scripture is,—The blessedness of the righteous in the other life, consisting in the vision and participation of divine glory, with the satisfaction that resulteth thence. In which summary account of the doctrine here contained, three general heads of discourse offer themselves to our view:—The subject, the nature, and the season of this blessedness:—Or to whom it belongs,—wherein it consists, and when it shall be enjoyed.

II. We proceed to illustrate each of these.

*First.*—We begin with the consideration of the subject, unto whom this blessedness appertains. And we find it expressed in the text, in these only words, “I; in righteousness;” which amounts to as much as, a righteous person as such. They represent to us the subject of this blessedness in its proper qualifications: wherein, our business is to consider his qualification, *righteousness*, under which notion only, he is concerned in the present discourse; and about which, two things are to be inquired: namely—what it imports, and—how it qualifies.

1. What it imports. I take righteousness here to be opposed to wickedness in the foregoing verse (as was intimated before); and so understand it in an equal latitude, not of particular, but of universal righteousness. That is, not that particular virtue which inclines men to give every one their right (unless in that every one, you would include also the blessed God himself, the sovereign, common Lord of all) but a universal rectitude of heart and life, comprehending not only equity towards men, but piety towards God also. A conformity to the law in general, in its utmost extent, adequately opposite to sin (which is indeed of larger extent than wickedness; and in what different respects righteousness is commensurate to the one and the other, we shall see by and by) as that is, generally, said to be *ἀνομία*, a *transgression of the law*. (1. John, 3, 4.) Among moralists,\* such

\* Ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνην συλλήβδην πᾶς ἀρετὴ ἐστὶ. *Righteousness comprises every virtue.*



a comprehensive notion of righteousness as is inclusive of all other virtues, is not unknown. But in Scripture, it is its much more ordinary acceptation. To give instances, were to suppose too much ignorance in the reader; and to enumerate the passages in which this term is taken in that extensive sense, were too great an unnecessary burden to the writer. It were indeed to transcribe a great part of the Bible. How familiar is the opposition of *righteous* and *wicked*, and *righteous* and *sinner*s, in sacred language! And how fully co-extent *righteousness* is in the Scripture notion of it, to the whole law of God, that one passage sufficiently discovers; where it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Luke 1. 5, 6. It is true indeed, that when the words godliness or holiness are in conjunction with this term, its significancy is divided and shared with them, so as that they signify, in that case, conformity to the will of God in the duties of the *first* table, and this is confined to those of the *second*: otherwise, being put alone, it signifies the whole duty of man, as the other expressions also do in the same case especially the latter of them.

As it seems not to be within the present design of the context to take notice of any imputed wickedness of the opposite sort of persons, other than what was really in them, and whereby they might be fitly characterized: so, I conceive, that imputed righteousness is not here meant, that is inherent in the person of the Mediator; but that which is truly subjected in a child of God, and descriptive of him. Nor must any think it strange, that all the requisites to our salvation, are not found together in one text of Scripture. The righteousness of him, whom we are to adore as made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; hath a much higher sphere peculiar and appropriate to itself. This of which we now speak, in its own inferior and subordinate place, is necessary also to be both had and understood. It must be understood by viewing it in its rule, in conformity whereto it stands; which must needs be some law of God. There hath been a twofold law given by God to mankind, as the measure of a universal righteousness, the one made for innocent, the other for lapsed man; which are distinguished by the apostle under the names of the law of works, and the law of faith. Rom. 3. 27. It can never be possible, that any of the apostate sons of Adam should be denominated righteous by the former of these laws, the righteousness thereof consisting in a perfect and sinless obedience. The latter therefore is the only measure and rule of this righteousness, namely, the law of faith; or that of the gospel-revelation which contains and discovers our duty, what we are to be and do in order to our blessedness; being, as to the matter of it, the whole moral law, before appertaining to the covenant of works, attem-

pered to the state of fallen sinners, by evangelical mitigations and indulgence, by the super-added precepts of repentance and faith in a Mediator, with all the other duty respecting the Mediator, as such; and clothed with a new form as it is now taken into the constitution of the covenant of grace. This rule, though it be in the whole of it capable of coming under one common notion, as being the standing, obliging law of Christ's mediatory kingdom; yet according to the different matter of it, its obligations and annexed sanctions are different. As to its matter, it must be understood to require:

(1.) The mere being and sincerity of those gracious principles, with their essential acts (as there is opportunity) expressed therein, in opposition to the nullity and insincerity of them.

(2.) All the possible degrees and improvements of such principles and acts, in opposition to any the least failure or defect. In the former respect, it measures the very essence of this righteousness, and enjoins what concerns the being of the righteous man as such. In the latter, it measures all the super-added degrees of this righteousness (which relations, where they have a mutable foundation, admit,) enjoining what concerns the perfection of the righteous man. In the former respect, righteousness is opposed to wickedness, as in that of the Psalmist, I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God—therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness. (Ps. 18. 21. 24.) In the latter to sin, with which the apostle makes unrighteousness co-extent, in these words, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, &c. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Accordingly are its sanctions divers. For wherein it enjoins the former of these, the essence of this righteousness, in opposition to a total absence thereof, it is constitutive of the terms of salvation, and obligeth under the penalty of eternal death. So are faith, repentance, love, subjection, &c. required: If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins, He that believeth not, is condemned already.—The wrath of God abideth on him. (Joh. 8. 24. Chap. 3. 18, 36.)—If ye repent not, ye shall all likewise perish. Repent, that your sins may be blotted out.—Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins. (Luke 13. 3, 5. Act. 3. 19. c. 5. 31.) If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha. (1 Cor. 16. 22.) He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, &c. (Matt. 10. 27.) If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, (that is, as the former scripture expounds this, loves them not less than me,) he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14. 26.) that is while he remains in that temper of mind he now is of, he must

needs be wholly unrelated unto me, and incapable of benefit by me, as well as he is indocible, and not susceptible of my further instructions, neither capable of the precepts or privileges belonging to discipleship. He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, and will come in flaming fire to take vengeance of those that know not God, and obey not his Gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, &c. Heb. 5. 9. 2 Thes. 1. 8, 9. &c. Where it is only the sincerity of those several requisites, that is under so severe penalty exacted and called for; inasmuch as he that is sincerely a believer, a penitent, a lover of God or Christ, an obedient subject, is not capable of the contrary denomination, and therefore not liable, according to the tenor of this law, to be punished as an infidel, an impenitent person, an enemy, a rebel.

When it enjoins the latter, namely all the subsequent duty, through the whole course whereof the already sincere soul must be tending towards perfection; though it bind not thereto under pain of damnation, further than as such neglects and miscarriages, may be so gross and continued, as not to consist with sincerity: yet such injunctions are not wholly without penalty; but here it obliges, under less penalties, the hiding of God's face and other paternal severities and castigations. They that thus only offend, are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. 11. 32. Their iniquity is visited with the rod, and their transgression with stripes, though loving-kindness be not taken away. Ps. 89. 32, 33. Yea, and while they are short of perfect holiness, their blessedness is imperfect also; which is to be acknowledged a very grievous penalty, but unconceivably short of what befalls them that are simply unrighteous. That it obliges thus diversly, is evident; for it doth not adjudge unto eternal death without remedy, for the least defect; for then what other law should relieve against the sentence of this? or wherein were this a revealing law? Yet doth it require perfection, that we perfect holiness in the fear of God; 2. Cor. 7. 1. that we be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Mat. 5. 48. And otherwise, did it bind to no other duty than what it makes simply necessary to salvation; the defects and miscarriages that consist with sincerity, were no sins, not being provided against by any law that is of present obligation (unless we will have the law of nature to stand by itself as a distinct law, both from that of works, and of grace; which is not necessary; but as it did at first belong to the former, so it doth now to the latter, as shall further be shown by and by.) For to suppose the law of works in its own proper form and tenor, to be still obliging, is to suppose all under hopeless condemnation, inasmuch as all have sinned. And besides, it should oblige to cast off all regard to Christ, and to seek blessedness without him; yea, and it should oblige to a natural impossibility, to a contradiction,

to make that not to have been, which hath been ; a sinner to seek happiness by never having sinned. It cannot therefore entirely, in its own form, as it was at first made and laid upon man, be of present and continuing obligation to him. But in what part and respect it is or is not ; comes now more distinctly to be shown. Here know, the law of nature, with fit additions, became one formed constitution ; which being violated by the apostasy, became useless to the end it was made for, the containing of man within the bounds of such duty as should be conjunct with his blessedness. Therefore was the new constitution of the law of grace made and settled, which alters, adds to, takes from it, relaxes, or re-enforces it, according as the matter of it, the exigency of man's case, and God's gracious purpose and design could admit, and did require. For the *promise* (implied in the threatening) it ceased ; sin having disobliged the promiser. For the *precept* the expressed positive part is plainly abrogated, 1 Tim. 4. For the natural part : as it was not necessary, so nor was it possible it should be so ; its foundations being more stable than heaven and earth. For the *commination*, we must understand two things in it : first, that for every transgression, a proportionable punishment must become due : secondly, that this debt be in the event exacted : or, that God do actually inflict the deserved penalty entirely and fully upon the offending person.

The former of these is in the strictest and most proper sense natural, and therefore also unalterable. This due-ness arising immediately from the relation of a reasonable creature offending, to his Maker. Whence also it is discernible to mere natural light. Pagans are said (Rom. 1. 32.) to have known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit such things (as are there mentioned) are worthy of death. And hence was the mention and dread of a Nemesis, and an ἐκδικτικὸν ὄμμα a *vindictive Deity, and a revengeful eye* over them so frequent with them. "If therefore (as the learned Grotius speaks) there had never been a penal law ; yet a human act, having in itself a pravity, whether intrinsical, from the immutable nature of the thing ; or even extrinsical, from the contrary command of God, had deserved punishment, and that very grievous." Now what an arbitrary constitution did not create, it could not nullify ; but might add strength, and give a confirmation to it. But now for the latter, that this debt be entirely and fully exacted of the sinner himself ; though that be also natural, yet not in the strictest and most proper sense. That is, it is convenient and agreeable to the nature of the thing ; not what it doth so necessarily require, that it can upon no terms be dispensed with. It is so natural, as that the son inherit from his father, which yet may, sometimes, for just causes be ordered otherwise. It is what, if it were done, justice could not but approve : not what it doth strictly and indispensably require ; or, is a debt which it might exact, but which

may, without injustice, upon valuable considerations be remitted. The former of these, therefore, the new constitution doth no way infringe or weaken, but confirm and reinforce. The latter it so far dispenses with, as that, for the satisfaction made by the Redeemer, the debt incurred by sin, be remitted to the sinner that truly repents and believes, and continues sincerely (though imperfectly) to obey for the future. So that his after-delinquencies, consisting with such sincerity, do not actually, or in event, subject him to other penalties, than the paternal rebukes and chastenings before-mentioned. But this latter part, considerable in the commination, the determination of the full penalty, to the very person of the transgressor, it doth not dispense with to others (that is of the adult, and of persons in a present natural possibility of understanding the Law-giver's pleasure herein) than such before described; but says expressly, he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him: (Joh. 3. 36.) That indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.—Rom. 2. 8. 9.

Therefore the morally preceptive part of the law of works, is not in force as man's rule of duty, considered in conjunction with the promise; that is, it doth not now say to any man, "Do this, that is, perfectly obey without ever having sinned, that thou *may'st live.*" Both which he was obliged to eye conjunctly; the former, as containing the *rule*; the other the *end*, in part, of his obedience: but it is in force even by the new constitution itself as God's rule of judgment, considered in conjunction with the commination, upon all whom the law of grace relieves not, as not coming up to the terms of it; whom also this supervening law brings under a supervening aggravated condemnation. For where the obligation to obedience is violated, the obligation to punishment naturally takes place. We see then how far the law of works is in force, it is to be looked on as taken into the new constitution of the law of grace, is evident. For it is new modified, and hath received a new mould and stamp by this law: which is now become (so far as it is promulgate) the standing rule of government over the lapsed world. The principal modifying act herein, is *dispensation*. Now this, it is true, may be so understood, or may be taken in such a sense, as wherein it will only belong to the executive part of government: that is, when it is not the act of the same power that made the law; as where only the execution of a deserved penalty is dispensed with, which may be done, in some cases, by a Judge that is only a minister of the law, and not the maker of it; being (as may be supposed) enabled thereto by that law itself or by an authority annexed to his office; or by virtue of instructions, which leave to him some latitude of managing the affairs of his judicature in a discretionary way, as present occasions shall dictate. And yet by none of

these would any change be made in the law ; but this is dispensation in a less proper sense. In the proper and more famous sense, dispensation belongs to the legislative part of government, being the act of the same power that made the former law, now dispensed with ; and an act of the same kind, namely, legislation ; the making of a new law that alters the former which it hath relation to : whence it was wont to be reckoned amongst those things that make a change in a law. And so the case is here. (*Vid. Suarez de Legibus.*) The former law is dispensed with by the making of a new one ; which so alters and changes it in its matter and frame, and more immediate end, as hath been shewn : and a changed law is not the same.

Nor is it at all strange, that the minatory part of the law of works related to the preceptive so as with it to constitute the debt of punishment, should be now within the compass of the Redeemer's law. For by this applied, and urged on the consciences of sinners, he performs a necessary preparatory part of his work for their recovery, namely, the awakening, the humbling them ; and reducing them to a just and useful despair of relief and help, otherwise than by his merciful hand and vouchsafement ; and the rendering them hereby capable of his following applications. Cutting or lancing, with other such severities, are as proper and useful a part of the surgeon's business, as the applying of healing medicines : nor have they the same design and end for which wounds are inflicted by an enemy, the taking away of life, but the saving of it. And the matter is out of doubt that the most rigorous determination of the penalty that shall be understood duly belonging to the least sin, hath a place, and doth stand visibly extant to view in the publicly avowed declaration, and among the placita or decretals of the Redeemer. We theré read, that whosoever shall say to his brother, fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire : (*Mat. 5. 22.*) (yea, and the lower degrees of the same kind of sin, do expose to lower degrees of the same kind of punishment, as our Saviour's words must be understood if we attend the plain meaning of his allusive and borrowed phrase of speech :) That the wages of sin is death : *Rom. 6. 23.* That as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. *Gal. 3. 10. 22.* And we are told, that the Scripture (which is the word of Christ, and was written not for innocent, but lapsed man) hath concluded all under sin. Where also we find what is the true intent and end of this rough and sharp dealing with men, the shutting them up, like sentenced malefactors, as in order to execution (which seems to be the import of the word *συνέχεσθαι* here used) namely, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (or to them believing, as the words may be read.) And moreover the Spirit, which

breathes not in the law of works, as such, but in the law of grace, performs that operation which belongs to it, as it hath the name of the spirit of bondage, by applying and binding on the sentence of death, as due to the guilty person.

Therefore we must understand the Redeemer's Constitution to have two parts. First, An assertion and establishment of the ancient determined penalty due for every transgression; and to be certainly inflicted on all such as accept not the following offer of mercy upon the terms prescribed. Whereby the honor and justice of the Creator is saved and vindicated, in reference to the first covenant made with man. And the case of the sinner is plainly stated before him, that he may have a distinct and right apprehension of it. Secondly, The grant of pardon and eternal life to those that repent unfeignedly of their sins, and turn to God; believing in the Mediator, and resigning themselves to his grace and government, to be by him conducted, and made acceptable to God in their return, and that continue sincere herein to the end. Whereby the wonderful mercy of God in Christ is demonstrated, and the remedy is provided and ascertained to the, otherwise, lost and hopeless sinner. And these two parts therefore are to be looked on in this constitution, though distinctly, yet not separately. The sinner is, at once to consider the same penalty as naturally, and by divine sanction, due to him; but now graciously to be remitted; the same blessedness as justly lost, but mercifully to be restored, with a high improvement. And to own both these jointly, as the voice of the Redeemer in his gospel. Death is due to thee; blessedness forfeited by thy having sinned: but if thou sincerely repent, believe and obey for the future, thou art pardoned, and entitled to everlasting life.

It therefore now appears, that as the law or dictates of pure nature, comprehended together with other fit additional, became at first one entire constitution aptly suited to the government of man in his innocent state, unto which the title did well agree of the law or covenant of works: so the same natural dictates, transcribed and made express (because now sullied, and not so legible in the corrupted nature of man) do, with such allays and additions as the case required, compose and make up the constitution which bears the title of the law or covenant of grace, or the law of faith, or the gospel of Christ, and is only suitable to the state of man lapsed and fallen; as the measure of that righteousness which he is now to aim at, and aspire unto. The rule of this righteousness therefore being evidently the law of faith, the gospel-revelation, wherein it is preceptive of duty: this righteousness can be understood to be nothing but the impress of the gospel upon a man's heart and life: a conformity in spirit and practice to the revelation of the will of God in Jesus Christ; a collection of graces exerting themselves in suitable actions and deportments towards God and man; Christ

formed in the soul, or put on; the new creature in its being and operations; the truth learned as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new. More distinctly, we may yet see wherein it lies, upon a premised view of some few things necessary to be fore-known in order thereunto. As, that this righteousness is a renewing righteousness, or the righteousness of one formerly a sinner, a lapsed perishing wretch, who is by it restored into such a state towards God, as he was in before that lapse (in respect of certain great essentials, though as yet his state be not so perfectly good, while he is in his tendency and motion; and shall, by certain additionals, be unspeakably better, when he hath attained the end and rest he is tending to.)

That a reasonable creature, yet untainted with sin, could not have a temper of mind suitable to such apprehensions as these, namely, That as it was not the author of being to itself, so it ought not principally to study the pleasing and serving of itself, but him who gave it being; that it can no more continue and perfect itself unto blessedness, than it could create itself; and can therefore have no expectation hereof, but from the same author of its being; and hence, that it must respect and eye the great God, its Creator and Maker: as, The sovereign authority whom it was to fear and obey, and the sovereign good whom it was to love and enjoy. But because it can perform no duty to him, without knowing what he will have it to do: nor have any particular expectation of favors from him, without knowing what he will please to bestow; and is therefore obliged to attend to the revelations of his will concerning both these: it is therefore necessary, that he eye him under a notion introductive and subservient to all the operations that are to be exerted towards him, under the two former notions; that is, as the *eternal never-failing truth*, safely to be depended on, as intending nothing of deceit in any the revelations, whether of his righteous will, concerning matter of duty to be done; or of his good will concerning matter of benefit to be expected and enjoyed:—That man did apostatize and revolt from God, as considered under these several notions; and returns to him, when a holy rectitude is recovered, and he again becomes righteous, considered under the same: That it was not agreeable to God's wisdom, truth, and legal justice, to treat with man a sinner in order to his recovery, but through a mediator; and that therefore he was pleased in wonderful mercy to constitute and appoint his own Son Jesus Christ, God-man, unto that office and undertaking; that through him, man might return and be reconciled to himself, whom he causelessly forsook; designing that he shall now become so affected towards himself, through the mediator; and firstly therefore towards the mediator's own person, as he was before, and ought to have been towards himself immediately.



Therefore, whereas God was considerable in relation to man, both in his innocency and apostacy, under that fore-mentioned twofold notion of the supreme authority and goodness; He hath also set up and exalted our Lord Jesus Christ, and represented him to sinners under an answerable two-fold notion of a Prince and a Saviour. That is a mediating Prince and Saviour to give repentance first; to bow and stoop the hearts of sinners, and reduce them to a subject posture again, and then by remission of sins to restore them to favor, and save them from the wrath to come. Him hath the Father clothed with his own authority, and filled with his grace; requiring sinners to submit themselves to his ruling power, and commit themselves to his saving mercy; now both lodged in this his Son: to pay him *immediately* all homage and obedience, and through him *ultimately* to himself; from him *immediately* to expect salvation and blessedness, and through him *ultimately* from himself. That whereas the spirits of men are not to be wrought to this temper, but by the intervention of a discovery and revelation of the divine will to this purpose; our Lord Jesus Christ is further appointed by the Father to reveal all this his counsel to sinners: and is eminently spoken of in Scripture upon this account, under the notion of the *truth*; in which capacity he more effectually recommends to sinners both his *authority* and his *grace*. So that his threefold (so much celebrated) office of King, Priest, and Prophet, (the distinct parts of his general office as mediator) which he manages in order to the reducement of lost sinners, exactly correspond (if you consider the more eminent acts and properties of each office) to that threefold notion under which the spirit of man must always have eyed and been acted towards God, had he never fallen; and hence this righteousness, which consists in conformity to the gospel, is the former righteousness, which was lost; with such an accession as is necessary, upon consideration that it was lost, and was only to be recovered by a mediator.

Therefore you may now take this short, and as compendious an account as I can give of it, in what follows. It includes so firm and understanding an assent to the truth of the whole gospel revelation, as that the soul is thereby brought, through the power of the Holy Ghost, sensibly to apprehend its former disobedience to God, and distance from him, the reasonableness of subjection to him, and desirableness of blessedness in him; the necessity of a Redeemer to reconcile and recover it to God; the accomplishments and designation of the Lord Jesus Christ to that purpose: and hence, a penitent and complacential return to God, as the supreme authority, and sov'reign Good, a humble and joyful acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ as its Prince and Saviour, with submission to his authority, and reliance on his grace (the exercise of both which are founded in his blood,) looking and pitching upon him, as the only medium, through

which he and his duties can please God, or God and his mercies approach him; and through which he hath the confidence to venture upon a covenant-acceptance of God, and surrender of himself to him, afterwards pursued to his uttermost, by a continued course of living in his fear and love, in obedience to him, and communion with him through the Mediator, always, while he is passing the time of his pilgrimage in this world, groaning under remaining sin, and pressing after perfect holiness; with an earnest expectation (animating him to a persevering patience through all difficulties) of a blessed eternity in the other world. That such a conformity to the gospel should be expressed by the name of righteousness, cannot seem strange to such as acquaint themselves with the language of the Scripture. That gracious frame which the gospel (made effectual) impresses upon the soul, is the kingdom of God, in the passive notion of it, his kingdom received, and now actually come with power upon our spirits. And this kingdom (sometimes also by an apt synecdoche called judgment in the same notion) is said to consist in rightness; whence then result also, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. 14. 17. The same holy impressions and consequent operations are mentioned by the apostle under the name of fruits of righteousness, wherewith he prays his Philippians might be filled. (Phil. 1. 11.) It was Elymas's opposition to the gospel, that stigmatized him with that brand, "Thou enemy of all righteousness." To yield ourselves servants to righteousness, in opposition to a former servitude to sin, is obeying from the heart the doctrine of the gospel, into the type or mould whereof we have been cast or delivered. Rom. 6. 17. And sure, both the seal and the impression, God's revelation, and holiness (however now more explicit and distinctly conspicuous in all their parts) are the same, with us substantially, and in David's time; whence we need make no difficulty to own this latter, when we meet with it, as here, under the same name. By what hath hitherto been said, it may be already seen in part, how exactly this righteousness corresponds to the blessedness for which it qualifies; whereof we shall have occasion hereafter to take further notice. In the mean time, it will be requisite to shew which was promised to be done in the next place.

*Secondly.* How it qualifies. To which I say (very briefly) that it qualifies for this blessedness two ways:

1. Legally, or in *genere Morali*, as it describes the persons, who by the gospel-grant have, alone, title thereunto.—The righteous into life eternal, (Mat. 25. 26.)—The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (1. Cor. 6. 9.) Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them. (Isa. 3. 10.) The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him.—In his righteousness he shall live. (Ezek. 18. 23.) In which last words, how this righteousness conduceth to life, is expressed by the

same proposition as in the text. In this kind it is not at all causal of this blessedness, but it is that which the free, and wise, and holy Law-giver thought meet, by his settled constitution (besides what necessity there is of it upon another account) to make requisite thereto. The conformity of our Lord Jesus Christ to that severer law, under which he is said to have been made, is that which alone causes, merits, purchases this blessedness; which yet is to be enjoyed, not by all *indiscriminatim*, or without distinction, but by such alone, as come up to the terms of the gospel; as he did fully satisfy the strict exactions of that other rigid law, by doing and suffering for their sakes.

2. Naturally, or in *genere Physico*. In this kind it may be said to be some way causal, that is, to be *causa materialis dispositiva*, by a proper positive influence, *disposing the subject* unto this blessedness, which that it shall, yet, enjoy, is wholly to be resolved into the divine good pleasure, but it is put by this holy rectitude in that temper and posture that it may enjoy it through the Lord's gracious vouchsafement; when without it, it were naturally impossible that any should. An unrighteous impure soul, is in a natural indisposition to see God, or be blessed in him. That depraved temper averts it from him, the steady bent of its will is set another way, and it is a contradiction that any (*in sensu composito*) should be happy against their wills, that is while that aversion of will yet remains. The unrighteous banish themselves from God, they shun and hate his presence. Light and darkness cannot have communion. The sun doth but shine, continue to be itself, and the darkness vanishes, and is fled away. When God hath so determined, that only the pure in heart shall see him; that without holiness none shall; he lays no other law upon holy souls, than what their own impure natures lay upon themselves. If therefore it should be inquired, Why may not the unrighteous be subjects of this blessedness, see God, and be satisfied with his likeness, as well as the righteous? the question must be so answered, as if it were inquired, Why doth the wood admit the fire to pass upon it, suffer its flames to insinuate themselves till they have introduced its proper form, and turned it into their own likeness: but we see water doth not so, but violently resists its first approaches, and declines all commerce with it? The natures of these agree not. And is not the contrariety here as great. We have then the qualified subjects of this blessedness, and are next to consider this blessedness itself.

## CHAPTER III.

I. The next thing proposed in the preceding chapter which was *Secondly*, to show the nature of this blessedness, which is considered, in the three ingredients (here mentioned) whereof it consists. 1. Vision of God's face. 2. Assimilation to him. 3. The satisfaction resulting thence. II. These propounded to be considered, *First*. Absolutely and singly each by itself. *Secondly*. Relatively, in their mutual respects to each other. The first of these, Vision of God's face, discoursed of. 1. The Object. 2. The Act.

I. Now for the nature of this blessedness, or the inquiry wherein it lies, so far as the text gives us any account of it, we are here invited to turn our thoughts and discourse to it. And we have it here represented to us in all the particulars that can be supposed to have any nearer interest in the business of blessedness, or to be more intimate and intrinsic thereunto. For (the beatific object supposed) what more can be necessary to actual, complete, formal blessedness, than the sight of it, an adaption or assimilation to it, (which is nothing else but its being actually communicated and imparted to the soul, its being united and made as it were one with it) and the complacential fruition the soul hath of it so communicated, or having so transformed it into itself?

And these three are manifestly contained in the text (the beatific object being involved with them) the first in the former clause; "I shall behold thy face;" the second and third in the latter, "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness;" where, being made like to God hath been discovered to be supposed; and the satisfaction, the pleasant contentful relishes consequent thereto, plainly expressed. We shall therefore have stated the entire nature of this blessedness in the handling of these three things;—vision of the face of God:—participation of his likeness, and—satisfaction therein.

II. And I shall choose to consider them absolutely, and singly, each by itself, and relatively, in the mutual respects (by way of influence and dependance) they may be found to have towards each other. Therefore,

*First*, in the absolute consideration of them severally we begin with

1. The vision of God's face, where—the object; The face of God, and,—the act of seeing and beholding it, are distinctly to be spoken to.

(1.) The object of this vision, the face of God which is his glory represented, offered to view. And this objected or exhibited glory is twofold:—sensible, such as shall incur and gratify (after the resurrection) the bodily eye, and—intellectual, or intelligible; that spiritual glory that only comes under the view and contemplation of the glorified mind.

[1.] A sensible glory (to begin with what is lower) is fitly in our way to be taken notice of, and may well be comprehended (as its less principal intendment) within the significancy of the expression; the face of God. So indeed it doth evidently signify, Exod. 33. 11. And if we look to the notation of the word, and its frequent use as applied to God, it may commodiously enough, and will often be found to signify, in a larger and more extended sense, any aspect or appearance of God. And though it may be understood (ver. 23.) of that chapter, to signify an over-coming spiritual glory, as the principal thing there intended, such as no soul dwelling in flesh could behold, without rending the vail, and breaking all to pieces; yet, even there also, may such a degree of sensible glory be secondarily intended, as it was not consistent with a state of mortality to be able to bear. And supposing the other expression “Thy likeness;” to signify, in any part, the *objective* glory saints are to behold; it is very capable of being extended so far, as to take in a *sensible* appearance of glory also, which it doth in these words, “The similitude of the Lord shall he behold:” (Numb. 12. 8.) yet even that glory also was transformative and impressive of itself: Moses so long conversed with it, till he became incapable, for the present, of conversing with men, as you know the story relates. Ezek. 1. 28. Exod. 34, 35, &c.

Such a glory as this, though it belong not to the being of God, yet it may be some umbrage of him, a more shadowy representation, as a man’s garments are of the man, which is the allusion in that of the Psalmist, That art clothed with majesty and honor: Thou coverest thyself with *light* as with a garment. Psal. 104. 1, 2. And inasmuch as that spiritual body (the house not made with hands, 2, Cor. 5. 1.) wherewith the blessed are to be clothed upon, must then be understood to have its proper sensitive powers and organs \*refined to that degree, as may be agreeable to a state of glory; so must these have their suitable objects to converse with. A faculty without an object, is not possible in nature, and is altogether inconsistent with a state of blessedness. The bodies of saints will be raised in glory, fashioned like Christ’s glorious body; must bear the image of the heavenly; (1. Cor. 14. 43. Phil. 3. 21.) and this will connaturalize them to a region of glory, render a surrounding, sensible glory necessary

\* *Cuilibet potentiae activae respondet passiva, sive objectiva: To every active faculty, there corresponds a passive or objective one.*

and natural to them, their own element: they will, as it were, not be able to live but amidst such a glory. Place is conservative of the body placed in it, by its suitability there. Indeed every created being (inasmuch as it is not self-sufficient, and is obliged to fetch in continual refreshings from without) must always have somewhat suitable to itself to converse with, or it presently languishes. By such a harmony of actives and passives, the world consists and holds together. The least defect thereof then, is least of all supposable in the state of blessedness. The rays of such a glory have often shone down into this lower world. Such a glory we know shewed itself upon the Mount Sinai: afterwards often about the tabernacle, and in the temple; such a glory appeared at our Saviour's birth, baptism, and transfiguration; and will do at his expected appearance; which leaves it no unimaginable thing to us, and shews, how facile it is to God to (do that which will then be, in some sort necessary) create a glory meet for the entertainment and gratification of any such faculty, as he shall then continue in being. But,

[2.] The intellectual glory, That which perfected spirits shall eternally please themselves to behold, calls for our more especial consideration. This is the glory that excelleth, hyperbolical glory, as that expression *ὑπερβαλλέουσας δόξης* (2. Cor. 3. 10.) imports; such, as in comparison whereof, the other is said to be no glory: as the apostle speaks, comparing the glory of the legal with that of the evangelical dispensation, where the former was, we must remember, chiefly a sensible glory, the glory that shone upon Mount Sinai; the latter a purely spiritual glory; and surely, if the mere preludes of this glory, the *primordia*, the *beginnings* of it,—the glory—yet shining but through a glass, (as he there also speaks of his glory) were so hyperbolically glorious, what will it be in its highest exultation, in its perfected state? The apostle cannot speak of that, but with hyperbole upon hyperbole in the next chapter. *Καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολήν.* (2. Cor. 4. 17.) as though he would heap up words as high as heaven to reach it, and give a just account of it. Things are as their next originals. This glory, more immediately rays forth from God, and more nearly represents him. It is his more genuine production. He is styled the Father of Glory: (Eph. 1. 17.) every thing that is glorious is some way like him, and bears his image. But he is as well the Father of Spirits, (Heb. 12. 9.) as the Father of Glory; and that glory, which is purely spiritual, hath most in it of his nature and image: as beams but in the next descent from the body of the sun. This is his unveiled face, and emphatically, the divine likeness. Again, things are as the faculties which they are to exercise and satisfy; this glory must exercise and satisfy the noblest faculty, of the most noble and excellent creature. Intellectual nature, in the highest improvement it is capable of in a creature, must here be gratified to the uttermost; the most

enlarged contemplative power of an immortal spirit find that wherein it terminates here, with a most contentful acquiescence. It is true it must be understood not totally to exceed the capacity of a creature, but it must fully come up to it. Should it quite transcend the sphere of created nature, and surpass the model of a human understanding (as the divine glory undoubtedly would, did not God consider us in the manner of exhibiting it to our view) it would confound, not satisfy. A creature even in glory is still a creature, and must be treated as such. After the blessed God hath elevated it to the highest pitch, he must infinitely condescend: it cannot otherwise know or converse with him. He must accommodate his glory to the weaker eye, the fainter and more languid apprehensions of a poor finite thing. I had almost said nothing, for what is any creature, yea, the whole creation in its best state, compared with the *I AM*, the being (as he justly appropriates to himself that name) the All in All. We must be careful then to settle in our own thoughts such a state of this glory (in forming that indeterminate notion we have now of it) as may render it (though confessedly above the measure of our present understandings as to a distinct knowledge of it) not manifestly incompetent to any created understanding whatsoever, and as may speak us duly shy of ascribing deity to a worm, of affixing any thing to the creature, which shall be found agreeing to the blessed God himself alone. Their expressions therefore who over-magnify (even deify) the creature assumed into glory, must be heard and read with caution and abhorrency, as the high-swelling words of blasphemous vanity. Is it not enough that perishing wretches, that were within one hand's breadth of hell, are saved, except they be also deified too? that they become happy, unless they also become gods? The distance even of a glorified creature from the glorious God, is still infinitely greater, than between it and the silliest worm, the minutest atom of dust.

And by how much more we shall then know of his glory, so much more shall we understand that distance. Yet as he shall then enlarge the capacity of the soul he glorifies, to a very vast comprehension, so shall the exhibition of his glory to it, be fully adequate to its most enlarged capacity. They are as yet but obscure glimmerings, we can have of this glory; but so far as, without too bold curiosity, we may, and wherein Scripture-light will give us any pre-apprehension of it, let us consider a while, the nature and the excellency of it. We cannot indeed consider these separately; for we can no sooner understand it to be glory, than we conceive it excellent; glory, in the proper notion of it, being nothing else but resplendent excellency, the lustre of excellency, or real worth made conspicuous. Yet as there is an excellency conceivable in the nature of it, that excellency whereof it is the splendor and brightness; so we must conceive

a peculiar excellency of that very radiation, that splendor itself, wherewith it shines unto blessed souls. In its very nature it is the brightness of divine excellencies: in its present appearance, it shines in the highest excellency of that brightness; in its nature it excelleth all things else: in its present exhibition, compared with all its former radiations, it excelleth itself.

As to the *nature* of this glory, it is nothing else but the conspicuous lustre of divine perfections. We can only guide our present conceptions of it, by the discovery God hath already given us of himself, in those several excellencies of his being, the great attributes that are convertible and one with him. When Moses besought him for a sight of his glory, he answers him with this, "I will proclaim my name before thee." His name, we know, is the collection of his attributes. The notion therefore we can hence form of this glory, is only such as we may have of a large volume by a brief synopsis or table; of a magnificent fabric, by a small model or platform; a spacious country, by a little landscape. He hath here given us a true representation of himself, not a full; such as will secure our apprehensions, being guided thereby, from error, not from ignorance. So as they swerve not in apprehending this glory, though they still fall short. We can only apply our minds to contemplate the several perfections which the blessed God assumes to himself, and whereby he describes to us his own being; and can in our thoughts attribute them all to him, though we have still but low defective conceptions of each one. As if we could at a distance distinguish the streets and houses of a great city; but every one appears to us much less than it is. We can apprehend somewhat of whatsoever he reveals to be in himself; yet when all is done, how little a portion do we take up of him! Our thoughts are empty and languid, straight and narrow, such as diminish and limit the Holy One. Yet so far as our apprehensions can correspond to the discovery he affords us of his several excellencies, we have a present view of the divine glory. Do but strictly and distinctly survey the many perfections comprehended in his name, then gather them up, and consider how glorious he is! Conceive one glory resulting from substantial wisdom, goodness, power, truth, justice, holiness, that is, beaming forth from him who is all these by his very essence, necessarily, originally, infinitely, eternally, with whatsoever else is truly a perfection. This is the glory blessed souls shall behold for ever.

For the *excellency* of it, it is called by way of discrimination, "The excellent glory." 2. Pet. 1. 17. There was glory put upon Christ in the transfiguration; of which, when the apostle speaks, having occasion to mention withal the glory of heaven itself, from whence the voice came; he adds to this latter, the distinguishing note of the excellent. He himself was eye-witness of the honour, and majesty, and glory, which the Lord Je-



sus then received; but beyond all this, the glory from whence the voice came, was the excellent or stately glory, as the word *Μεγαλοπρεπούς* imports. It is a great intimation how *excellent* a glory this is, that it is said to be a glory yet to be revealed; (1. Pet. 4. 13.) as if it had been said, whatever appearances of the divine glories are now offered to your view, there is still somewhat undiscovered, somewhat behind the curtain that will outshine all. You have not seen so much, but you are still to expect unspeakably more. Glory is then to shine in its noon-day strength and vigor: it is then in its meridian. Here, the riches of glory are to be displayed, certain treasures of glory, the plentitude and magnificence of glory. We are here to see him as he is; to know him as we are known of him. Certainly, the display of himself, the rays of his discovered excellency, must hold proportion with that *vision*, and be therefore exceeding glorious. It is the glory Christ had with the Father before the foundations of the world were laid; (John 1. 5.) into the vision and communion whereof holy souls shall now be taken, according as their capacities can admit; that wherewithal his great achievements and high merits shall be rewarded eternally; that wherewith he is to be glorified in heaven, in compensation of having glorified his Father on earth, and finished the work whereto he was appointed. This cannot but be a most transcendent glory. It is in sum, and in the language of the text, the glory of God's own face, his most aspectable, conspicuous glory. Whose transforming beams are productive of the glory impressed, the next ingredient into this blessedness, which will presently come to be spoken of, after we have given you some short account of,

(2.) The act of beholding: the vision or intuition itself, by which intervening the impression is made. Glory seems to carry in it a peculiar respect to the visive power (whether corporeal or mental, as it is itself of the one kind or the other); it is something to be contemplated, to be looked upon. And being to transmit an impression, and consequent pleasure to another subject, it must necessarily be so, it can neither transform nor satisfy but as it is beheld. And here the sensitive intuition I shall not insist on, as being less intended in the text, and the discourse of it less suitable to such as with a spiritual mind and design set themselves to inquire into the nature of the saints' blessedness. Yet, as this is the most noble, comprehensive, quick, and sprightly sense, so is the *act* of it more considerable, in the matter of blessedness, than any other of the outward man, and the most perfect imitation of the act of the mind; whence also this so often borrows the name of the other, and is called seeing. It is an act indeed very proper and pertinent to a state of glory. By how much more any sensible object is glorious (supposing the *sensorium* to be duly disposed and fortified, as must be here supposed), so much it is the fitter object of sight; hence when we

would express a glorious object, we call it conspicuous ; and the less glorious, or more obscure any thing is, the less visible it is, and the nearer it approaches to invisibility ; whence that saying in the common philosophy, " To see blackness is to see nothing." *Arist. in 3. Meteorolog. Cap. de Iride.* Whatsoever a glorified eye, replenished with a heavenly vitality and vigor, can fetch in from the many glorified objects that encompass it, we must suppose to concur to this blessedness. Now is the eye satisfied with seeing, which before never could.

But, it is intellectual sight we are chiefly to consider here, that, whereby we see him that is invisible, and approach the inaccessible light. The word here used, some critics tell us, more usually signifies the sight of the mind. And then, not a casual, superficial glancing at a thing, but contemplation, a studious, designed viewing of a thing when we solemnly compose and apply ourselves thereto ; or the vision of prophets, or such as have things discovered to them by divine revelation, (thence called *chozim, seers,*) which imports (though not a previous design, yet) no less intention of mind in the act itself. And so it more fitly expresses that knowledge which we have, not by discourse and reasoning out of one thing from another, but by immediate intuition of what is nakedly, and at once offered to our view, which is the more proper knowledge of the blessed in heaven. They shall have the glory of God so presented, and their minds so enlarged, as to comprehend much at one view ; in which respect they may be said, in a great degree, to know as they are known, inasmuch as the blessed God comprehends all things at once, in one simple act of knowing. Yet that is not to be understood as if the state of glory should exclude all ratiocination, more than our present state doth all intuition, (for first and indemonstrable principles we see by their own light, without illation or argument) ; nor can it be inconvenient to admit, that while the knowledge the blessed have of God is not infinite, there may be use of their discursive faculty with great fruit and pleasure. Pure intuition of God, without any mixture of reasoning, is acknowledged (by such as are apt enough to be over-ascribing to the creature) peculiar to God alone. But as the blessed God shall continually afford (if we may speak of continuity in eternity, which yet we cannot otherwise apprehend) a clear discovery of himself, so shall the principal exercise, and felicity of the blessed soul consist in that less laborious and more pleasant way of knowing, a mere admitting or entertaining of those free beams of voluntary light, by a grateful intuition ; which way of knowing, the expression of sight, or beholding, doth most incline to ; and that is, we are sure, the ordinary language of Scripture about this matter. *Matt. 5. 8. 12. 14.) Cognoscere Deum clare et intuitive est proprium et naturale soli Deo, sicut est proprium igni calefacere et soli illuminare : to*

*know God clearly and intuitively is peculiar and natural to God alone ; as it is peculiar to fire to give warmth and to the sun to give light. Ledesm. de divin. perfect. p. 8. Art. 7.*

## CHAPTER IV.

I. Having considered the 1. ingredient of this blessedness, "Vision of God's face," we pass on to the next, that is, 2, Assimilation to God, or his glory impressed. Wherein it consists, discovered in sundry propositions. II. The last ingredient, which is, 3, The satisfaction and pleasure which results, stated and opened.

I. And now, upon this vision of the blessed face of God next follows, in the order of discourse,

2. The soul's perfect assimilation unto that revealed glory, or its participation thereof (touching the order of the things themselves have one to another, there will be consideration had in its proper place) and this also must be considered as a distinct and necessary ingredient into the state of blessedness we are treating of. Distinct it is, for though the vision now spoken of, doth include a certain kind of assimilation in it, as all vision doth, being only a reception of the species or likeness of the object seen ; this assimilation we are to speak of, is of a very different kind. *That*, is such as affects only the visive or cognitive power, and that not with a real change, but intentional only, nor for longer continuance than the act of seeing lasts ; but *this*, is real, total, and permanent. And surely it is of equal necessity to the soul's blessedness, to partake the glory of God, as to behold it ; as well to have the divine likeness impressed upon it, as represented to it. After so contagious and over-spreading a depravation as sin hath diffused through all its powers, it can never be happy without a change of its very crasis and temper throughout. A diseased, ulcerous body would take little felicity in gay and glorious sights: no more would all the glory of heaven signify to a sick, deformed, self-loathing soul.

It must therefore be all glorious within, have the divine nature more perfectly communicated, the likeness of God transfused and wrought into it. This is the blessed work begun in regeneration ; but how far it is from being perfected, we may soon find by considering, how far short we are of being satisfied in our present state, even in the contemplation of the highest and most excellent objects. How tasteless to our souls are the thoughts of God ! How little pleasure do we take in viewing

over his glorious attributes! the most acknowledged and adorable excellencies of his being! And whereunto can we impute it but to this, that our spirits are not yet sufficiently connaturalized to them? Their likeness is not enough deeply instamped on our souls. Nor will this be, till we awake. When we see better we shall become better; when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. But do we indeed pretend to such an expectation? Can we think what God is, and what we are in our present state, and not confess these words to carry with them an amazing sound, "we shall be like him! How great a hope is this! How strange an errand hath the gospel into the world! How admirable a design! to transform men and make them like God! Were the dust of the earth turned into stars in the firmament! were the most stupendous, poetical transformations assured realities; what could equal the greatness and the wonder of this mighty change! Yea, and doth not the expectation of it seem as presumptuous, as the issue itself would be strange; is it not an over-bold desire; too daring a thought; a thing unlawful to be affected, as it seems impossible to be attained? It must be acknowledged there is an appearance of high arrogance in aspiring to this, to be like God. And the very wish or thought of being so, in all respects, were not to be entertained without horror. It is a matter therefore that requires some disquisition and explication, wherein that impressed likeness of God consists, which must concur to the saints' blessedness. In order hereunto then take the following propositions:

(3.) There is a sense wherein to be like God is altogether impossible, and the very desire of it the most horrid wickedness. The prophet in the name of God charges the proud prince of Tyre with this, as an inexpressible arrogance that he did set his heart as the heart of God, and upon this score challenges and enters the list with him: Come, you that would fain be taken for a God, I will make a sorry God of thee before I have done; Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God, I will set those upon thee, that shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and that shall defile thy brightness; And what! Wilt thou yet say in the hand of him that slayeth thee, I am a God? Thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee; I have spoken it saith the Lord God. Ezek. 28. 6—10. He will endure no such imitation of him, as to be rivalled in the point of his Godhead. This is the matter of his jealousy; "They have moved me to jealousy with not-God," (Deut. 32. 21.) so it is shortly and more smartly spoken in the original text. And see how he displays his threats and terrors hereupon in the following verses. This was the design and inducement of the first transgression, to be as gods. And indeed all sin may be reduced hither. What else is sin (in the most comprehensive notion) but an undue imitation of God? an exalting of the creature's will

into a supremacy, and opposing it as such to the divine? To sin, is to take upon us, as if we were supreme, and that there were no Lord over us; it is to assume to ourselves a deity, as if we were under no law or rule; as he is not under any, but what he is to himself. Herein, to be like God, is the very core and malignity of sin.

(2.) There is a just and laudable imitation of God, a likeness to him, that is matter of command, praise and promise, as wherein both the duty, excellency and blessedness of the reasonable creature doth consist; and which is in some respect inseparable from the nature of man. We are required to be followers of God, as dear children, (Eph. 1. 5. μιμηται) imitators the word is. David is commended as a man after God's own heart; though but now, we saw in another, with what disdain and indignation it was resented, that he did set his heart, as the heart, of God. The new creature, the new man, the first fruits, as he is called, the flower of the creation, is made after God. Jam. 1. 18. Eph. 4. 24. Saints expect, upon the assurance of his word, to be more fully like him, as we see in the text, and parallel places. Yea, man was made at first with a concrete similitude to God, which we know was the counsel of heaven, and the result and issue of that counsel, Gen. 1. 26. 27. This is evident enough in itself, and needs no more words. But to make a further step in this business, observe next,

(3.) There can be no allowable imitation of any one, but with an exception, as to some peculiarities that may belong to his special station, relation, and other circumstances of the condition in which he is; or with limitation to such things as are of common concernment unto both.\* It is commonly observed, how naturally a people form their manners and fashions to the example of the prince; and there is no well-disposed ruler, but would take it well, to be imitated in things that are of common concernment to him and his subjects, that is, that concern him, not as he is a king, but as he is a man, or a christian. To behold the transforming power of his own example; where it is such as begets a fair and unreprouchful impress†; how his virtues circulate (his justice, temperance, love of religion,) and produce their likeness among his people; it will be a glory, and cannot but be resented with some delight. We cast an honor upon them whom we imitate: for we acknowledge an excellency in them (which is all that honoring imports in the first notion of it,) and that naturally is received with pleasure. But now, should subjects aspire to

\*Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis; the whole nation is conformed to the example of the King.

†Nam facere rectè bonus princeps faciendo docet. Cumque sic imperio maximus, exemplo major est: for a good prince teaches virtue by his own practice. And thus while he is supreme in authority, he is superior in example. Velleius Paterculus, Rom. Hist. 1. 2.

a likeness to their prince, in the proper appendages and acts of sovereignty ; and because he is a glorious king, they will be such too ; and assume the peculiar cognizances of regality ; ascend the throne, sway the sceptre, wear the crown, enact laws, &c. There cannot be more of dutifulness and observance in the former imitation, than there is of disloyalty and treason in this. A father is pleased, to have his son imitate him, within such limits before-mentioned ; but, if he will govern the family, and fill up his room in all relations, this will never be endured.

(4.) There are some things to be found in the blessed God, not so incommunicable and appropriate, but that his creatures may be said to have some participation thereof with him : and so far, to be truly like him. This participation cannot be univocal ; as the nature of a living creature in general, is equal in men and brutes ; so, it is a self-evident principle, that *inter Deum et creaturam nihil est commune, nothing can be common to God and an inferior being*. Nor is it only an equivocal, a participation of the same name, when the natures signified thereby are altogether diverse : but analogical, in as much as the things spoken, under the same names, of God and the creature, have a real likeness, and conveniency in nature with one another : and they are in God, primarily ; in the creature, by dependance, and derivation : in him, essentially, as being his very essence ; in them, but as accidents, (many of them) adventitious to their beings ; and so while they cannot be said to be the same things in them, as in him, are fitly said to be his likeness.

(5.) This likeness, as it is principally found in man, among all the terrestrial creatures ; so hath it, in man, for its seat and subject, his soul or spiritual part. The effects of divine wisdom, power, goodness, are every-where visible, throughout the whole creation ; and as there is no effect, but hath something in it, corresponding to its cause (wherein it was the cause ; ) so, every creature doth, some way or other, represent God. Some in virtues, some in life, some in being\* only. The material world represents him, as a house does the builder ; but spiritual beings, as a child does the father *εἰ γὰρ γένος ἔσμεν, for we are his offspring*. Other creatures (as one, *P. Folineus de cognitione Dei*, fitly expresses it) carry his footsteps ; these, his image ; and that, not as drawn with a pencil, which can only express figure and color ; but as represented in a glass, which imitates action and motion.

\*Multis enim modis dici res possunt similes Deo ; aliæ secundum virtutem, & sapientiam, factæ ; quia in ipso est virtus & sapientia non facta ; aliæ in quantum solum vivunt, quia ille summè & primò vivit ; aliæ in quantum sunt, quia ille summè ? et primitus est. For there are many respects in which creatures may be said to be like God : some with regard to virtue and wisdom, inasmuch as there are in him, virtue and wisdom, uncreated ; others merely from their possession or share of life, whereas he possesseth life in the highest and first sense ; others in being only, but he is the highest and first of beings. Aug. 80 quest. q. (nibi) 211.

To give the pre-eminence therefore, \*in this point to the body of man, was a conceit so gross, that one would wonder how it should obtain; at least in the Christian world.

Yet we find it expressly charged by St. Augustine upon the anthropomorphites of old (or melitonians, as he calls them, from one Melito the father of them) not only, that they imagined God in a human shape (which was their known conceit) but that they stated God's image in man, in his body, not his soul.† Nor are Van Helmont's fancies, about corporeal likeness, capable of excuse by any thing, but that they were a dream (as they are fitly stiled) and not likely to impose upon the waking reason of any man.

(6.) This image or likeness of God in the spirit of man, representing what is communicable in him, is either natural or moral. There is first, a natural image of God, in the soul of man, which is inseparable from it; and which it can never divest itself of.‡ Its very spiritual, immortal nature itself, is a representation of his. Its intellective and elective powers are the image of what we are constrained to conceive under the notion of the same powers in him. Yea, the same understanding with the me-

\*Heathens have disdained and declaimed against so unworthy thoughts of God. *Τὸ δὲ θεῖον αὐτὸ ἀόρατον ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἀήρητον φωνῇ, ἀναφῆς σαρκί, &c. the divine essence itself is not to be seen by the eye, uttered by the voice, shewn in the flesh, &c.* Maximus Tyr. Dissert. 1. The same author warns us to take heed, that we ascribe to God, *Μήτε μέγεθος, μήτε χροῦμα, μήτε χροῖμα, μήτε ἄλλο τι ὑλῆς πάθος, neither size, nor colour, nor form, nor any other property of matter.* Ibid.

Unto which purpose is that decantate distich of Homer, *Οὐ γὰρ σίτον, &c.* And that saying of Pliny, *Quam propter effigiem Dei formamque quærere; imbecillitatis humanæ reor,* applied by Zanc. *de operibus Dei.* Wherefore I think it a proof of human weakness to seek after any image or form of God. And we may see much of like import alleged by Natal. Com. lib. 1. p. 13. Which (by the way) discovers how flatly opposite the idolatry, forbidden in the second commandment, is to the light of nature itself. Which hath been also the just apology of the ancient patrons of the Christian cause, for the simplicity of their worship in this respect; and their not imitating the pompous vanity of pagan image-worship. *Οὐδὲ θείας εἰκονας ὑπολαμβάνομεν εἶναι τὰ ἀγάλματα, ἅτε μορφῆν ἀόρατου θεῶ καὶ ἀσωμάτου μη διαγράφοντες, &c. we do not esteem images of God to be proper ornaments, because we cannot delineate the form of the invisible and spiritual Deity.* Origen contr. Celsum. lib. 7.

To which purpose see at large, Min. Felix, *Quod simulacrum Deo fingam? &c. what image shall I make for God?*

And surely it is as improveable against the same piece of Christian paganism. The usually assigned differences would easily be shewn to be trifling impertinencies.

†*Corpus hominis non animum esse imaginem Dei;* not the soul but the body of man is the image of God. Aug. (if it be Augustine's) lib. de hæresibus. See Dr. Charleton of his image of God in man.

‡*Est Dei similitudo quædam, quam nemo vivens, nisi cum vita exiit: quam habet homo et volens, et nolens, &c.* there is a certain likeness of God which no man living divests himself of, but with life, which every man has whether willing or not. Bernard, de vita Solitar.

moiy and will, in one soul, are thought a lively resemblance of the\* triune Deity. But there is further a similitude of him in respect of moral† virtues or perfections answering to what we conceive in him, under that notion: his wisdom (so far as it hath the nature of a moral virtue) his mercy, truth, righteousness, holiness, &c. These two kinds or parts (as they may be called) of the divine impress upon the spirits of men, are distinguished by some (I see not how properly) by the distinct names of image, denoting the former; and similitude the latter: answering, as is thought, to two Hebrew words, (Zanc.) of the like import: but the things themselves are evidently enough distinct, namely, what perfects the nature of man *in genere physico*, as he is such a particular being in the universe: and what perfects him, *in genere morali*, as he is considerable in reference to a law or rule guiding him to blessedness, as his end.

(7.) It is a likeness to God in respect of those moral excellencies or perfections, that is especially considerable by us, in reference to our present purpose; as more immediately relating to the soul's blessedness in God. By the former it hath a potentiality, by the latter an habitude in reference thereunto. Or (to use terms, more liable to common apprehension) by the former it hath a remoter capacity, by the latter a present fitness: or as the apostle expresses it, is made meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, that is, considering this likeness as begun in the soul.

(8.) Besides what is thus (in the sense before expressed) communicable between God and man, there are some things so peculiarly appropriate to God, as that, in respect of them, there can be no formal likeness in the creature: and it would be impious boldness to aspire thereto. Many things of this kind might be mentioned: I shall only instance in two, wherein there is a manifest competition of the apostate world with him; and which are therefore more relative to practice; his sovereign authority, and his independency. In these while men affect to imitate, they wickedly affront him. And here is the great controversy between the glorious God, and the degenerate children of men. Every man would catch at a Godhead, and either assume it to himself, or cast it, many times, upon other creatures viler and more ignoble than himself; snatch the reins of government out of God's hand; and exalt their own wills into an absoluteness, as liable to control from none: place and settle their dependance on their own wit, power, fortitude, industry; or, if that be a more hopeless course (for they often find an entire Godhead too much for one creature, and are therefore constrained to parcel it

\*D. Aug. (*fuse*) lib. 10. de Trinitat.

†Sed est alia, magis Deo propinqua, similitudo, quæ in virtutibus consistit: but there is another more intimate resemblance to God which consists in virtue. Bernard.



out among many) place their confidences and expectations in something else without them: do often, that ridiculous thing, so worthy to be hooted at, make the congested dirt of the earth their trust, (the righteous shall laugh at him, and say, Lo! this is the man that trusted in riches. Psal. 52. 6. 73.) ; their wealth their strong tower; which only the name of the Lord is to his righteous ones. Yet, all the while, self is the centre and end in which all must meet and terminate. This at last carries away the assumed fictitious deity. And this thing, that is thus now made like God, is an idol (which indeed signifies so much) and this imitation of him, wicked idolatry; than which nothing more debases a reasonable soul, or divests man of himself, that till they redress this, they give no proof of their being men. Isa. 46. 8. This assimilation of ourselves to God is very remote then from being a perfection: it is a most reproachful deformity: as we know imitations, if they be visibly affected, and strained too far, are always thought ridiculous by wise men.

(9.) Though, in respect of these incommunicable things, there cannot be a proper, formal, immediate similitude to God; yet, there ought to be a correspondency; which must be measured and estimated by the consideration of his state, and ours; whence it will appear, that what so properly appertains to him, and what ought to correspond thereto in us, do agree to each, upon one and the same intervening reason.

For instance, is he absolutely supreme in as much as he is the first being. The correspondent impression with us, and upon the same reason, must be a most profound, humble self-subjection, disposing our souls to constant obedience to him. Again, is he simply independent; as being self-sufficient and all in all. The impression with us must be a nothingness, and self-emptiness, engaging us to quit ourselves, and live in him. This is the only conformity to God, which with respect to his incommunicable excellencies, our creature-state can admit. It may be also stiled a likeness to him, being a real conformity to his will concerning us, and his very nature as it respects us. We may conceive of it, as of the likeness between a seal, and the stamp made by it; especially, supposing the inequality of parts in the seal to be by the protuberancy of what must form the signature. In that case there would be a likeness, *aliquatenus*, that is an exact correspondency: but what would then be convex or bulging out in the seal, would be, as we know, concave or hollow in the impression. Such is the proportion between sovereignty and subjection, between self-fulness and self-emptiness. Whereas a similitude to God, in respect of his communicable perfections, is as that, between the face and its picture; where no such difference is wont to appear.

(10.) Assimilation, or conformity to God, in both these respects, composes that excellent frame of moral perfections, which

the divine glory, beheld, impresses upon the soul; and which immediately conduces to its satisfaction and blessedness. I say, moral perfection, because that only is capable of being impressed by the intervening ministry of our own understanding; namely, by its vision, intimated, as was formerly observed, in that of the apostle, "We shall be like him—for we shall see him," &c. Its natural perfections are antecedent and presupposed, therefore not so fitly to be understood here. And I say, both these ways; for, as we cannot form an entire idea of God, without taking in, together, his perfections of both sorts, communicable, and incommunicable, (the former whereof must serve instead of a genus; the latter of a *differentia*,) in composing the notion of God, Thes. (Salmu. de Deo immenso:) so nor will his impress on us be entire, without something in it respecting both; in the senses already given. What it will contribute to future blessedness, we shall shortly see, in its place, when we have made a brief inquiry (which is the next thing, according to our order proposed) concerning,

3. The satisfaction that shall hence accrue. Where it will not be beside our purpose, to take some notice of the signifi- cancy of the word. And not to insist on its affinity to the word used for swearing, or rather, being sworn, (which; an oath being the end of controversies, and beyond which we go no further, nor expect more, in way of testifying; would, the more fitly here represent to us the soul in its non-ultra: having attained the end of all its motions, and contentions,) its equal nearness to the word signifying the number of seven, is not altogether unworthy observations. That number is, we know, often used in Scripture, as denoting plenitude and perfection; and God hath, as it were signalized it, by his rest on the seventh day: \* and if this were not designedly pointed at here in the present use of this word, (as it must be acknowledged to be frequently used where we have no reason to think it is with such an intendment) it may yet occasion us to look upon the holy soul now entered into the eternal sabbath † the rest of God: which, (secluding all respect to that circumstance) is, yet, the very

\* How fit a Symbol it is of God's Sabbath rest, see Dr. More's defence of his Philosophical Cabbala from Philo. Judæus.

† Erit ibi verè maximum Sabbatum, non habens vesperam, quod commendavit Dominus in primis operibus mundi; ut legitur, et requievit die Septimo—Dies enim Septimus etiam nos ipsi erimus, quando ipsius fuerimus benedictionum et sanctificationum pleni atque referti; ibi vacabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus, laudabimus, &c. There shall be in reality a great sabbath having no evening, which God distinguished at the very creation of the world; as it is written "and he rested on the seventh day." For the seventh day shall be ever with us, when we shall be completely filled with blessings and graces. There we shall rest and contemplate; contemplate and love; love and praise. Aug. de civit Dei lib: 22, c. 38, vid. eund. de civit. Dei 1. 17, c. 4.

substance and true notion of the thing itself (to the consideration whereof I now pass) under the word held forth to us. For this *satisfaction*, is the soul's rest in God; its perfect enjoyment of the most perfect good: the expletion of the whole capacity of its will; the total filling up of that vast enlarged appetite; the perfecting of all its desires in delight and joy. Now delight or joy (for they differ not, save that the latter word is thought something more appropriate to reasonable nature) is fitly defined *Quies appetitus in appetibili: the rest of the desiring faculty in the thing desired.* (Abuin. Sum.) Desire and delight, are but two acts of love, diversified, only by the distance, or presence of the same object: which, when it is distant, the soul, acted and prompted by love, desires, moves towards it, pursues it; when present and attained, delights in it, enjoys it, stays upon it, satisfies itself in it, according to the measure of goodness it finds there. Desire, is therefore, love in motion: delight, is love in rest. And of this latter delight or joy, Scripture evidently gives us this notion, he will rejoice over thee with joy, (unto which is presently added as exegetical,) he will rest in his love: (Zeph. 3. 17.) which resting can be but the same thing with being satisfied. This *satisfaction* then is nothing else but the repose and rest of the soul amidst infinite delights: its peaceful acquiescence, having attained the ultimate term of all the motions, beyond which it cares to go no further: the solace it finds in an adequate, full good; which it accounts enough for it, and beyond which, it desires no more; reckons its state as good as it can be, and is void of all hovering thoughts, (which perfect rest must needs exclude,) or inclination to change.

And so doth this being satisfied, not only generally signify the soul to be at rest; but it specifies that rest; and gives us a distinct account of the nature of it. As, that it is not a forced, violent rest; such as proceeds from a beguiled ignorance, a drowsy sloth, a languishing weakness, or a desire and hope of happiness, by often frustrations baffled into despair, (to all which, the native import and propriety of that word satisfaction doth strongly repugn.) But it discovers it to be a natural rest: I mean, from an internal principle. The soul is not held in its present state of enjoyment by a strong and violent hand; but rests in it by a connaturalness thereunto: is attempered to it, by its own inward constitution and frame. It rests not as a descending stone, intercepted by something by the way, that holds and stops it; else it would fall further; but as a thing would rest in its own centre; with such a rest as the earth is supposed to have in its proper place; that being hung upon nothing, is yet unmoved *ponderibus librata suis, equally balanced by its own weight every way.*

It is a *rational, judicious* rest; upon certain knowledge that its present state is simply best, and not capable of being changed for a better. The soul cannot be held under a perpetual

cheat, so as always to be satisfied with a shadow. It may be so befooled for a while, but if it remain satisfied, in a state that never admits of change; that state must be such, as commends itself to the most thoroughly informed reason and judgment. It is hence a *free, voluntary, chosen* rest: such as God professes his own to be in Zion; this is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Psal. 123. 14. It is a *complacential* rest, wherein the soul abides steady, bound only by the cords of love; a rest in the midst of pleasantness; Psal. 16. 6. The Lord is my portion, the lots are fallen to me in *amœnitatibus*; it cannot be more fitly expressed than *amidst pleasantness*: and this speaks not only what the Psalmist's condition was, but the sense, and account he had of it. That temper of mind gives us some idea of that contentful, satisfied abode with God, which the blessed shall have. He intimates, how undesirous he was of any change. Their sorrows (he told us above) should be multiplied that hasten after another God. (Ver. 4.) Hereafter there will be infinitely less appearance of reason for any such thought. Now, it is the sense of a holy soul, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none I desire on earth besides the:" as if he said, Heaven and earth yield not a tempting object, to divert me from thee: it is now so, at sometimes, when faith and love are in their triumph and exaltation (but the Lord knows how seldom!) but much more when we see him as he is, and are satisfied with his likeness! It is an *active, vigorous* rest. Action about the end, shall be perpetuated here, though action towards it, ceases. It is the rest of an awakened, not of a drowsy, sluggish soul; of a soul satisfied by heavenly sensations and fruitions: not incapable of them; or that hath its powers bound up by a stupifying sleep. It is the rest of *hope*, perfected in fruition, not lost in despair; of satisfied, not defeated expectation. \*Despair may occasion rest to a man's body, but not to his mind; or a cessation from further endeavors, when they are constantly found vain, but not from trouble and disquiet; it may suspend from action, but never satisfy. This satisfaction therefore speaks both the reality and nature of the soul's rest in glory: that it rests; and with what kind of rest.

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\* I think it not worth the while to engage in the dispute (so much agitated between the Thomists and Scotists) whether blessedness do formally consist in this satisfying fruition, or in the antecedent vision: this satisfaction is certainly inseparable from it, and I see not how to be excluded out of its formal notion: it is not vision, as vision; but as satisfying, that makes us happy; and to talk of the satisfaction or pleasure which the understanding hath in knowing is insipid: while the soul understanding, that is, the mind, knows it is the soul enjoying, that is, the will, is pleased and finds content: and till the soul be fully contented, it is not blessed, and it is, by being so, when it saith, "Now am I fully satisfied, I have enough, I desire no more."

## CHAPTER V.

1. The three ingredients of this blessedness having been considered absolutely, we come—*Secondly*. To their relative consideration; where it is propounded to shew particularly: 1. What relation vision hath to assimilation. 2. What both these have to satisfaction. The relation between the two former; inquired into. An entrance upon the much larger discourse, what relation and influence the two former have towards the third: What vision of God's face or glory, contributes towards satisfaction, estimated from the consideration, 1. Of the object, the glory to be beheld; as it is divine, entire, permanent, appropriate.

I. Thus far have we viewed the parts or necessary concurrence, of which the blessedness of the saints must be composed absolutely and severally each from other: we proceed,

*Secondly*. To consider them relatively, namely, in the mutual respects they bear one to another; as they actually compose this blessed state. Wherein we shall shew particularly: the relation, by way of influence, and dependance, between *vision*, and *assimilation*: and—Between both these and the *satisfaction*, that ensues: which latter I intend more to dwell upon; and only to touch the former, as a more speculative and less improveable subject of discourse, in my way to this.

I. It may be considered—What relation there may be between vision of God, and assimilation, or being made like to him; and it must be acknowledged (according to what is commonly observed of the mutual action of the understanding and will) that the sight of God, and likeness to him, do mutually contribute each towards other. The sight of God assimilates, makes the soul like unto him; that likeness more disposes it for a continued renewed vision. It could never have attained the beatifical vision of God, had it not been prepared thereto, by a gradual previous likeness to him.\* For righteousness (which we have shewn qualifies for this blessedness) consists in a likeness to God: and it could never have been so prepared, had not some knowledge of God introduced that conformity and yielding bent

\*Which necessity of a likeness to God to dispose for the vision of him, is excellently expressed by a platonick philosopher. The divine nature, the τοῦ θεῖου, which he saith, is liable to no sense, μὴ ὄν δὲ τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς καλῶ καὶ καθαρῶτάτῳ, καὶ νοσηρῶτάτῳ, καὶ κρηστῶτάτῳ, καὶ πρεσβυτάτῳ, ὁρατὸν δὲ ὁμοίότητά, &c. is yet visible, to that in the soul which his most beautiful, most pure, most perspicuous, most sublime, most noble, in respect of a certain similitude and cognition that is between them. Max. Tyr.

of heart towards him. For the entire frame of the new man, made after the image of God, is renewed in knowledge. Col. 3. 10. But as, notwithstanding the circular action of the understanding and will upon one another, there must be a beginning of this course somewhere, and the understanding is usually reckoned the ἡγεμονικόν, *the first mover*, the leading faculty: so, notwithstanding the mutual influence of these two upon each other, seeing hath a natural precedency, and must lead the way unto being like; which is sufficiently intimated in the text, "I shall behold thy face;" and then "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness;" and more fully in that parallel scripture: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him," &c. From whence also, and from the very nature of the thing, we may fitly state the relation of the first of these to the second, to be that of a cause to its effect: sight begets likeness, is antecedent to it, and productive of it. That is, the face or glory of God seen; that glory in conjunction with our vision of it: for the vision operates not, but according to the efficaciousness of the thing seen; nor can that glory have any such operation, but by the intervention of vision. It is therefore the glory of God seen, as seen, that assimilates, and impresses its likeness upon the beholding soul: and so its causality is that of an objective cause (which whether it belong to the efficient or final, I shall not here dispute) that operates only as it is apprehended: so introducing its own form, and similitude into the subject it works upon. Such a kind of cause were Jacob's streaked rods of the production that ensued; and such a cause is any thing whatever, that begets an impression upon an apprehensive subject, by the mediation and ministry, whether of the fancy or understanding. This kind of causality the word hath in its renewing, transforming work; and the sacraments, wherein they are causal of real physical mutations on the subjects of them. So much of the image of God as is here impressed upon souls by gospel-dispensations, so much is impressed of his glory. The work of grace is glory begun. And now, as glory initial, and progressive in this life enters at the eye—(beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed, 2. Cor. 3. 18.) so doth perfect and consummate glory in the other life. For we have no reason to imagine to ourselves any alteration in the natural order the powers of the soul have towards each other, by its passing into a state of glory.

The *object* seen, is unspeakably efficacious; the *act* of intuition is full of lively vigor; the *subject* was prepared, and in a disposition before; and what should hinder, but this glorious effect should immediately ensue? as the sun no sooner puts up his head above the hemisphere, but all the vast space, whither it can diffuse its beams, is presently transformed into its likeness and turned into a region of light. What more can be wanting to cause all the darkness of atheism, carnality, and every thing of

sin, forever to vanish out of the awaking soul; and an entire frame of holiness to succeed: but one such transforming sight of the face of God? One sight of his glorious majesty presently subdues, and works it to a full subjection: one sight of his purity makes it pure; one sight of his loveliness turns it into love; and such a sight always remaining, the impress remains always actually (besides that it is in itself most habitual and permanent in the soul's now confirmed state) fresh and lively.

The *object* hath quite another aspect upon a wicked soul, when it awakes; and the *act* of seeing is of another kind; therefore no such *effect* follows. Besides, the *subject* is otherwise disposed, and therefore as the sun enlightens not the inward parts of an impervious dung-hill, but it enlightens air; so the sight of God transforms and assimilates at last, not a wicked, but it doth a godly soul. That which here makes the greatest difference, in the temper of the subject, is love. I look upon the face of a stranger and it moves me not; but upon a friend and his face presently transforms mine into a lively cheerful aspect. As iron sharpens iron, so doth the face of a man his friend, (Prov. 27. 17.) puts a sharpness and a quickness into his looks. The soul that loves God, opens itself to him, admits his influences and impressions, is easily moulded and wrought to his will, yields to the transforming power of his appearing glory. There is no resistant principle remaining, when the love of God is perfected in it; and so overcoming is the first sight of his glory upon the awaking soul, that it perfects it, and so his likeness, both at once. But enmity fortifies the soul against him, as with bars and doors; averts it from him; carries with it a horrid, guilty consciousness; which fills it with eternal despair and rage, and inwraps it in the blackness of darkness forever.

2. Both the *vision* of God, and *likeness* to him, must be considered in their relation to the consequent *satisfaction*, and the influence they have in order thereto. I say both; for though this satisfaction be not expressly and directly referred by the letter of the text, to the sight of God's face; yet its relation thereto, in the nature of the thing, is sufficiently apprehensible and obvious: both mediate, in respect of the influence it hath towards the satisfying assimilation; and immediate, (which we are now to consider,) as it is so highly pleasurable in itself; and is plainly enough intimated in the text: being applied, in the same breath, to a thing so immediately and intimately conjunct with this vision, as, we find it is. Moreover, supposing, that likeness here, do (as it hath been granted it may) signify objective glory, as well as subjective glory, and repeat what is contained in the former expression, "the face of God," the reference satisfaction hath to this vision, (which the re-mention of its object, though under a varied form of expression, supposes) will be more express: therefore we shall shew—what the vision of the

divine glory contributes to the satisfaction of the blessed soul, and what felicity it must needs take herein: which cannot but be very great, whether we respect—the glory seen, the object of this vision: or—the act of vision, or intuition itself.

(1.) The object, the glory beheld. What a spring of pleasure is here? What rivers of pleasures flow hence? In thy presence (saith the Psalmist) is fulness of joy: at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Psal. 16. 11. The awaking soul, having now passed the path of life, (drawn through Sheol itself, the state of deadly-head,) appears immediately in this presence; and, what makes this presence so joyous, but the pleasant brightness of this face? To be in the presence of any one, and before his face, in conspectu, are equivalent expressions: therefore the apostle quoting this passage, renders it thus, Thou hast filled me with gladness, by thy (countenance;) now in this glorious presence, or within view of the face of God, is fulness of joy, that is, joy unto satisfaction\*. And the apostle Jude speaking of this presence under this name (a presence of glory) tells us of an exceeding joy, *κατανώπιον τῆς δόξης* a jubilation (an *ἀγαλλίασις*) that shall attend the presentment of saints there. The holy soul now enters the divine Shechinah, the chamber of presence of the great king, the habitation of his holiness and glory, the place where his honor dwelleth. ver. 24. Here his glory surrounds it with encircling beams; it is beset with glory, therefore surely also filled with joy. When the veil is drawn aside; or we are within the veil; in that very presence whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered (through the path of life,) O the satisfying overcoming pleasure of this sight! Now that is to us revealed, or unveiled glory, which was hidden before. Here the glory set in majesty (as the expression is, concerning the glory of the temple, Ezek. 7. 20.) is presented to view openly and without umbrage. God is now no longer seen through an obscuring medium. They are not now shadowed glimmerings, transient, oblique glances, but the direct beams of full-eyed glory that shine upon us. The discovery of this glory is the ultimate product of that infinite wisdom and love, that have been working from eternity, and for so many thousand years, through all the successions of time, towards the heirs of salvation. The last and complete issue of the great achievements, sharp conflicts, glorious victories, high merits of our mighty Redeemer. All these end in the opening of heaven (the laying of this glory as it were common) to all believers. This is the upshot, and close of that great design: will it not think ye be a satisfying glory! The full blessedness of the redeemed, is the Redeemer's reward. He cannot be satisfied in seeing his seed, if they should be un-

\*Act: 2. 28. which indeed is the Seventies' reading of the Psalmist's words.



satisfied. He cannot behold them with content if his heart tell him not, that he hath done well enough for them. God would even be ashamed (Heb. 11. 16.) to be called their God; had he not made provision for their entertainment worthy of a God. It is the season of Christ's triumphs, and saints are to enter into his joy. It is the appointed jubilee, at the finishing of all God's works from the creation of the world, when he shall purposely shew himself in his most adorable majesty, and when Christ shall appear in his own likeness (he appeared in another likeness before;) surely glory must be in its exaltation in that day. But take a more distinct account, how grateful a sight this glory will be, in these following particulars.

[1.] It is the divine glory. Let your hearts dwell a little upon this consideration. It is the glory of God, that is the glory which the blessed God both enjoys and affords, which he contemplates in himself, and which rays from him to his saints; it is the felicity of the divine Being. It satisfies a Deity, will it not a worm? It is a glory that results and shines from him; and in that sense also divine (which here I mainly intend;) the beauty of his own face, the lustre of divine perfections; every attribute bears a part; all concur to make up this glory. And here pre-terminating those which are less liable to our apprehension; his eternity, immensity, simplicity, &c. (of which, not having their like in us,) we are the more incapable to form distinct conceptions, and consequently of perceiving the pleasure, that we may hereafter upon the removal of other impediments, find in the contemplation of them, let us bethink ourselves, how admirable and ravishing the glory will be,

First. Of his unsearchable wisdom, which hath glory peculiarly annexed and properly belonging to it. Glory is as it were, by inheritance, due to wisdom. The wise shall inherit glory. Prov. 3. 36. And here, now, the blessed souls behold it in its first seat, and therefore in its prime glory: wisdom, counsel, understanding, are said to be with him; as if no where else. Job 12. 13. Twice we have the apostle describing glory to God, under the notion of only wise; (Rom. 16. 27. I. Tim. 1. 17.) Wisdom, we know is the proper and most connatural glory of intellectual nature: whether as it relates to speculation, when we call it knowledge; or action, when it is prudence. How pleasant will the contemplation be, of the divine wisdom, in that former notion! When in that glass, that *speculum aternitatis*, *mirror of eternity*, we shall have the lively view of all that truth, the knowledge whereof can be any way possible and grateful to our natures; and in his light, see light! When all those vast treasures of wisdom and knowledge, (Col. 2. 3.) which already by their alliance to Christ, saints are interested in shall lie open to us! When the tree of knowledge shall be without enclosure; and the most voluptuous epicurism, in reference to it, be inno-

cent! Where there shall neither be lust, nor forbidden fruit; no withholding of desirable knowledge, nor affectation of undesirable! When the pleasure of speculation shall be without the toil; and that maxim be eternally antiquated, that increased knowledge increases sorrow! As to the other notion of it; how can it be less grateful to behold the wisdom that made, and governed the world; that compassed so great designs: and this, no longer in its effects, but in itself? Those works were honorable and glorious, sought of all them that have pleasure in them. What will be the glory of their cause? It would gratify some men's curiosity to behold the unusual motion of some rare *automaton*; but an ingenious person would, with much more pleasure, pry into the secret springs of that motion; and observe its inward frame and parts, and their dependance, and order to each other. It is comely to behold the exterior economy of a well-governed people; when great affairs are, by orderly conduct, brought to happy issues; but to have been at the helm; to have seen the pertinent, proper application of such and such maxims to the incident cases; to have known all the reasons of state; heard debates; observed, with what great sagacity, inconveniencies have been foreseen, and with what diligence prevented: would much more gratify an inquiring genius. When the records of eternity shall be exposed to view; all the counsels and results of that profound wisdom looked into; how will it transport! when it shall be discerned, Lo! thus were the designs laid here; were the apt junctures, and admirable dependencies of things, which when acted upon the stage of the world, seemed so perplexed and cross, so full of mysterious intricacy? If St. Paul were so ravished at those more obscure appearances of divine wisdom, which we find him admiring, (Rom. 11. 33.) O the depths, &c. what satisfaction will it yield, to have a perfect model, of the deep thoughts and counsels of God, presented to open view! How is the happiness of Solomon's servants magnified, that had the privilege continually to stand before him, and hear his wisdom! But this happiness will be proportionably greater, as Solomon's God is greater than he.

Secondly. The glory of his power will add comeliness to the object of this vision. Power duly placed and allayed is lovely. Beauty consists much in a symmetry or proportion of parts. So must there be a concurrence of divine perfections, to compose and make up the beautiful complexion of his face; to give us a right aspect, the true idea of God, and here his power hath a necessary ingrediency. How incoherent, and disagreeing with itself, were the notion of an impotent God? His power *κράτος* *εἰς* *δόξης* gives lively strokes to his glory. It is called glorious power or the power of glory: (Col. 1. 11.) yea, it is simply called glory itself; (Rom. 6. 4.) the apostle tells us Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, when it is plain he

means power. And the same apostle prays on the behalf of the Ephesians, that God would grant them according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might, &c. chap. 3. 16. How frequently are power and glory ascribed to him in conjunction? intimating that, as he is powerful, he is glorious. And certainly even this glory, cannot but cast a grateful aspect upon the blessed soul, and be infinitely pleasant to behold. What triumphs doth it now raise in gracious spirits, to behold the exertions of it in his works; to read its descriptions in his word; while as yet he holds back the face of his throne, (Job. 26. 9.) while the countenance of enthroned majesty cannot be seen; when so little a portion is heard of him, and the thunder of his power (ver. 14.) so little understood! The infinitely fainter rays of this power in a creature; power in that unspeakable diminution and abatement; that derived, precarious power, when it is innocently used, is observed with pleasure. Here is power in the throne, power in its chief and highest seat; essential, and self-originated power; the root and fountain, the very element of power; power in its proper situation, in its native place to which it belongs. God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. Ps. 62. 11. Power to God it is in the Hebrew. It languishes in a creature, as in an alien subject. If I speak of strength; Lo he is strong in power (saith Job. ch. 26.) it as though he had said "Created power is not worth the speaking of; here is the power that deserves the name, that is so indeed." How satisfying a pleasure will this afford, to contemplate this radical power? this all-creating, all-ruling power, the principle of all action, motion and life, throughout the whole creation? This will be as natural a pleasure, as the child takes in the mother's bosom, and in embracing the womb that bare it. How grateful to behold, whence the vast frame of nature sprang! what stretched out the heavens, established the earth, sustained all things! what turned the mighty wheels of providence, throughout all the successions of times and seasons; chained up devils, restrained the outrages of a tumultuous world, preserved God's little flock! especially, what gave being to the new creation, (The exceeding greatness of power that wrought in them that believed, &c. Eph. 1. 19. 20.) what made hearts love God, embrace a Saviour! what it was that overcame their own, and made them a willing people in that memorable day! Psal. 110. 3. How delightful a contemplation to think, with so enlarged an understanding, of the possible effects of this power; and so far as a creature can range into affinity, to view innumerable creations, in the creative power of God! And yet how pleasant to think, not only of the extents, but of the restraints of this power; and how, when none could limit, it became ordinate, and did limit itself; that, since it could do so much, it did no more; turned from premature revenge, that had abortived the womb of love,

and cut off all the hopes of this blessed eternity that is now attained! *Posse et nolle, nobile, to possess power and to forbear its exercise is noble.* This also speaks the greatness of power: let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, the Lord is gracious, long-suffering, &c. Numb. 14. 17, 18. This was his mightiest power, whereby he overcame himself: *Fortior est qui se, &c. he is stronger who governs himself, &c.*

Thirdly. And what do we think of the ravishing aspects of his love! when it shall, now, be open-faced, and have laid aside its vail! when his amiable smiles shall be checkered with no intermingled frowns; the light of that pleasing countenance be obscured by no intervening cloud! when goodness, which is love issuing into benefaction, or doing good: grace, which adds freeness unto goodness; mercy, which is grace towards the miserable; shall conspire in their distinct, and variegated appearances to set off each other, and enhance the pleasure of the admiring soul! when the wonted doubts shall all cease, and the difficulty vanish, of reconciling (once necessary) fatherly severity with love! when the full sense, shall be unfolded to the life, of that description of the divine nature, "God is love:" and the soul be no longer put to read the love of God in his name (as Moses was when the sight of his face could not yet be obtained;) shall not need to spell it by letters and syllables; but behold it in his very nature itself, and see how ultimately essential it is to the divine Being! how glorious will this appearance of God be, (we now, hear something of the glory of his grace Eph. 1. 6.) and how satisfying the tuition of that glory! Now is the proper season for the full exercise and discovery of love. This day hath been long expected, and lo, now it is dawned upon the awakening soul; it is now called forth; its senses unbound; all its powers inspirited, on purpose, for love-visions and enjoyments; it is now to take its fill of loves. The apostle's extatical prayer is now answered to the highest degree possible with respect to such a one. Eph. 3. 16. 17. 18. 19. He is now, according to the riches of divine glory, strengthened with might, by the Spirit, in the inner man—to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; to know that love that passeth knowledge &c. He shall now no longer stand amazed, spending his guesses, what manner of love this should be; and expecting fuller discoveries, further effects of it, that did not yet appear: but sees the utmost, all that his soul can bear, or wish to see. He hath now traced home the rivulets to their fountain, the beams to the very sun of love. He hath got the prospect, at last, in that heart, where the great thoughts of love were lodged from everlasting; where all its counsels and designs were formed. He sees what made God become a man; what clothed a Deity with human flesh; what made eternity become the birth of time (when come to its parturient fulness;

Gal. 4. 4.) what moved the heart of the Son of God to pitch his tabernacle among men; what engaged him to the enterprize of redeeming sinners; what moved him so earnestly to contest with a perishing world, led him at last to the cross, made him content to become a sacrifice to God, a spectacle to angels and men, in a bitter reproachful death, inflicted by the sacrilegious hands of those whom he was all this while designing to save. The amazed soul now sees into the bottom of this design; understands why itself was not made a prey to divine revenge: whence it was, that it perished not in its enmity against God; that he was not provoked by the obstinacy of its disobedience, and malice of its unbelief, beyond the possibility of an atonement; why he so long suffered its injurious neglects of him, and unkind repulses of a merciful Saviour; and persuaded, till at last he overcame, made the averse heart yield, the careless disaffected soul cry out, "Where is my God?" Now a Christ or I perish! All this is now resolved into love: and the adoring soul sees how well the effects agree to their cause, and are owned by it. Nothing but heaven itself that gives the sense, can give the notion of this pleasure.

Fourthly. Nor will the glory of holiness be less resplendent; that great attribute which even in a remote descent from its original, is frequently mentioned with the adjunct of beauties. Psal. 110. 3. &c. What loveliness will those beauties add to this blessed face! Not here to insist (which is besides my purpose) upon the various notions of holiness: real holiness Scripture states in purity, (2. Cor. 7. 1.) an alienation from sin: it is set in opposition to all filthiness, to all moral impurity; and in that notion it best agrees to God; and comprehends his righteousness and veracity, and indeed, whatever we can conceive in him, under the notion of a moral excellency. This may therefore be styled a transcendental attribute, that as it were runs through the rest, and casts a glory upon every one; it is an attribute of attributes. Those are fit predications, holy power, holy truth, holy love, &c. And so it is the very lustre, and glory of his other perfections; he is glorious in holiness. Exod. 15. 11. Hence in matters of greatest moment, he is sometimes, brought in swearing by his holiness, Psal. 89. 35. Amos. 14. (which he is not wont to do by any one single attribute,) as though it was an *adequatior conceptus*, a fuller expression of himself, than any of the rest.

What is of so great an account with him, will not be of least account with his holy ones, when they appear in his glorious presence. Their own holiness is a conformity to his; the likeness of it. And as their beholding it, forms them into that likeness; so that likeness makes them capable of beholding it with pleasure. Divine holiness doth now, more ravish than affright. This hath been the language of sinful dust. Who can stand before this holy God? (1. Sam. 6.) when holiness hath appeared

armed with terrors, guarded with flames, and the divine majesty been represented as a consuming fire. Such apprehensions sin and guilt naturally beget: the sinners of Sion were afraid. But so far as the new man is put on, created after God, and they, who were darkness, are made light in the Lord, he is not under any notion more acceptable to them, than as he is the holy one. They love his law, because holy; and love each other, because holy; and hate themselves, because they are no more so. Holiness hath still a pleasing aspect when they find it in an ordinance, meet it in a sabbath: every glimpse of it is lovely. But with what triumphs hath the holiness of God himself been celebrated even by saints on earth? Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness! There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none besides thee. Sing unto the Lord, all ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Exod. 15. 11. 1. Sam. 2. 2. Psal. 30. 4.—97. 12. What thoughts will they have of it,\* when their eyes can behold that glory; when they immediately look on the archetypal holiness, of which their own is but the image; and can view that glorious pattern, they were so long in framing to? How joyfully will they then fall in with the rest of the heavenly host; and join in the same adoration and praise, in the same acclamation, and triumphant Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! How unconceivable is the pleasure of this sight; when the *αἰσὸν καλόν*, the first pulchritude, the original beauty offers itself to view! Holiness is intellectual beauty: divine holiness is the most perfect and the measure of all other: and what is the pleasure and satisfaction, of which we speak, but the perfection and rest of love? Now love, as love, respects and connotes, a pulchritude in its object. Max. Tyr. dissert. 11. And then the most perfect pulchritude, the ineffable, and immortal pulchritude, that cannot be declared by words, or seen with eyes, (they are a heathen's expressions concerning it,) how can it but perfectly, and eternally please and satisfy? Ibid.

And we are told by the great Pagan theologue,† in what state we can have the felicity of that spectacle. Not in our present

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\* Si ergo pulchritudo divina nondum visa, sed solum credita et sperata, tantum ignem desiderii excitat: Quid faciet cum, remote velo, ut est in se, conspicitur? Omnino id faciet ut torrente voluptatis illius inebriati, neque velimus, neque possimus, vel ad punctum temporis, oculos ab ea divertere: it then the divine beauty, while not as yet seen, but only believed and hoped for, excites such a flame of desire after it, what will be its effect, when the veil being drawn aside, it shall be immediately and distinctly perceived? Certainly it will affect us with such an intoxication of delight, that we shall neither be willing nor able, even for a single moment, to divert our attention from it. Bellarmine on the ascent of the mind to God.

† Plato in Phædo passim. (Though he there speaks these things as the memoirs of his supposed pre-existent soul.)

state; when we have, indeed, but obscure representations, of such things as are, with souls of highest excellency: But when we are associated to the εὐδαίμωνι χορῶν *blessed quire*: when we are delivered from the body, (which we now carry about, ὁστρέεσ τροπόν, *as the oyster doth its shell*. When we are no longer sensible of the evils of time. When we wholly apply ourselves to that blessed vision; are admitted to the beholding of the simple permanent sights; and behold them, being ourselves pure, in the pure light: then have we the view of the ἐν ἀγῆ καθαρά, καθαροὶ ὄντες, κάλλος λαμπρόν, *bright shining pulchritude, &c.*

[2.] It is an entire or united glory. We have something of the divine glory shining, now upon us: but the many interpositions cause a various refraction of its light. We have but its dispersed rays, its scattered, dishevelled beams: we shall then have it perfect and full. It is the eternal glory we are hereafter to behold. Eternity (as the notion of it is wont to be stated) is a duration that excludes both succession, and end. And if it be an unsuccessive duration, (though it is more difficult to apprehend how the being or enjoyments of a creature can come under that mensuration, or how there can be any such) the glory presented to the view of a blessed soul, cannot be presented by parcels, but at once. *Æternitas est interminabilis vitæ tota simul et perfecta possessio: eternity is the boundless, simultaneous, perfect possession of life. Boeth.* In our temporary state, while we are under the measure of time, we are not capable of the fulness of blessedness, or misery; for time exists not all together, but by parts. And indeed we can neither enjoy, nor suffer more, at once, than can be compassed within one moment; for no more exists together. But our relation to eternity (according to this notion of it) will render the same invariable appearance of glory, always presentaneous to us, in the entire fulness of it. We read indeed (1 Thes. 3. 10.) of certain ὑσσερήματα πίστεως, *afterings of faith* (as it may be significantly enough rendered, let but the novelty of the expression be pardoned), things lacking we read it: but there will be here no ὑσσερήματα δόξης, *afterings of glory*. What is perfect admits no increase; it is already full: and, why should not a full glory satisfy? There is here no expectation of (greater) future, to abate the pleasure of present discoveries. Why therefore shall not this satisfaction be conceived full and perfect? It must be the fulness of joy.

[3.] It is permanent glory; a never fading, unwithering glory, (ἀφθαρτον ἀμάραντον. 1 Pet. 1. 4.) glory that will never be sullied, or obscured, never be in a declination. This blessed face never grows old; never any wrinkle hath place in it. It is the eternal glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17. 2 Tim. 2. 10. 1 Pet. 5. 10. (in the other part of the notion of eternity), as it imports an endless duration, neither subject to decay, in itself, nor to injury, or impairment from without. As stable as the divine Being; Thy God, thy

glory ; the Lord thy everlasting light ; Isa. 60. 19. If that have a true sense with respect to any of the church militant on earth, it must needs have a more full sense, in reference to it triumphing in heaven. As, therefore, full entire glory affords fulness of joy ; permanent, everlasting glory affords pleasures for evermore. Psal. 16. 11.

[4.] An appropriate glory, even to them it is so : a glory wherein they are really interested. It is the glory of *their* God, and *their* happiness is designed to them from it. They are not unconcerned in it, as the glory of God. It cannot but be grateful to them to behold the shining glory of their God ; whom they feared and served before while they could have no such sight of him. That glory of his was once under a cloud, concealed from the world, wrapt up in obscurity : it now breaks the cloud and justifies the fear and reverence of his faithful and loyal servants, against atheistical rebels, that feared him not. It is infinitely pleasing to see him now so glorious, whom they thought to have a glory beyond all their conceptions before ; while others would not think so of him, but judged it safe to slight, and set him at nought. Subjects share in their prince's glory, children in their father's. But besides that collateral interest, that interest by reflection, they have a more direct interest in this glory. A true and real right : upon a manifold title, the father's gift, son's purchase, Holy Ghost's obsignation, and earnest ; the promises, tender ; their faith's acceptance ; their fore-runner's prepossession ; yea, it is their inheritance ; (Rom. 8. 17.) they are children, and therefore heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, to the same glory with him, (ch. 15. 7.) They are, by him, received to the glory of God, called to his kingdom and glory. 1. Thes. 2. 12. Will it not contribute exceedingly to their satisfaction, when they shall look upon this glory, not as unconcerned spectators, but as interested persons ? This is my happiness, to behold and enjoy this blessed God ; What a rapturous expression is that, God our own God shall bless us ; and that, Thy God thy glory ! (Psal. 67. 6.) Upon interest in God, follows their interest in his glory and blessedness : which is so much the dearer, and more valuable, as it is theirs : their glory from their God. They shall be blessed by God, their own God ; drink waters out of their own well. How endearing a thing is propriety ? Another man's son is ingenious, comely, personable, this may be a matter of envy ; but mine own is so, this is a joy. I read in the life of a devout nobleman of France, (Monsieur de Renti,) that receiving a letter from a friend, in which were inserted these words, *Deus meus, et omnia : my God, and my all* ; he thus returns back to him, "I know not what your intent was, to put into your letter these words, *Deus meus, et omnia : My God, and my all* ; only you invite me thereby to return the same to you, and to all creatures ;



My God, and my all; my God, and my all; my God, and my all; If perhaps you take this for your motto, and use it to express how full your heart is of it; think you it possible, I should be silent upon such an invitation, and not express my sense thereof? Likewise, be it known unto you therefore, that he is my God, and my all; and if you doubt of it, I shall speak it a hundred times over. I shall add no more; for any thing else is superfluous, to him that is truly penetrated with my God, and my all: I leave you therefore in this happy state of jubilation; and conjure you, to beg for me, of God, the solid sense of these words," and do we think, My God, and my all; or my God and my Glory, will have lost its emphasis in heaven? or that it will be less significant among awaked souls? These things concur then, concerning the object: it is most excellent, even divine, entire, permanent, and theirs: how can it but satisfy!

## CHAPTER VI.

What the vision of God's face contributes to the soul's satisfaction estimated (2.) From the consideration of the act of vision itself. Wherein this pleasure surpasses that of sense. A comparison pursued more at large. [1] Between this intuition and discourse. [2] Between it and faith. This intuition more absolutely considered: Its characters, and what they contribute to the satisfaction of the blessed soul: That it is (namely) efficacious, comprehensive, fixed, appropriative.

(2) The act of vision or intuition itself. How great the pleasure will be that accrues to the blessed from this sight of God's face, is very much also to be estimated from the nature of the act, as well as the excellency of the object. Inasmuch as every vital act is pleasant, the most perfect act of the noblest faculty of the soul, must needs be attended with highest pleasure. It is a pleasure that most nearly intimates divine pleasure. And every thing is more perfect, as it more nearly approaches divine perfections.\* Intellectual pleasure is as much nobler than that of sense, as an immortal spirit is more noble than a clod of earth. The pleasure of sense is drossy, feculent, the pleasure of the mind refined and pure; that, is faint and languid, this, lively and vigorous; that, scant and limited, this, ample and enlarged; that, temporary and fading, this durable and permanent; that,

\* Res sunt perfectiores vel imperfectiores prout à summa perfectione magis vel minime abscedunt. All things are more or less perfect in proportion as they more or less nearly approach to the supreme perfection.

flashy, superficial, this, solid and intense; that, raving and distracted, this, calm and composed.\* Whence even that great reputed sensualist, Epicurus himself, professedly disclaims or is represented as disclaiming, the conceit of placing happiness in sensual delights.

And as the pleasure of intellection excels all the pleasure of sense; so doth the pleasure of intuition, excel all other intellectual pleasure. Let us to this purpose, but consider, generally, this way of knowing things, and compare it with those two other ways, by—discourse and by faith.

[1.] By discourse. I mean (that I be not mistaken by the vulgar reader) the discourse of the mind or ratiocination; that way of attaining the knowledge of things, by comparing one thing with another, considering their mutual relations, connexions, dependencies; and so arguing out, what was more doubtful and obscure, from what was more known and evident. To the altogether unlearned it will hardly be conceivable; and to the learned it need not be told how high a gratification this employment of his reason naturally yields to the mind of a man; when the harmonious contexture of truths with truths; the apt coincidence, the secret links and junctures of coherrent notions, are clearly discerned; when effects are traced up to their causes;\* properties lodged in their native subjects; things sifted to their principles. What a pleasure is it, when a man shall apprehend himself regularly led on (though but by a slender thread of discourse) through the labyrinths of nature; when still new discoveries are successfully made, every further inquiry ending in a further prospect, and every new scene of things entertaining the mind with a fresh delight! How many have suffered a voluntary banishment from the world, as if they were wholly

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\*Pet. Molin. de cognitione Dei. See Culverwel of the light of nature, speaking (as I remember) to this purpose, c. 17. Quocirca et cum universe voluptatem beatæ vitæ esse finem dicimus; longe profecto absumus, ut eas voluptates, quæ sunt virorum luxu diffluentium, aut aliorum etiam, quatenus spectantur in ipsa motione, actioneve fruendi: qua nimirum sensus jucunde dulciterque afficitur, intelligamus; veluti quidam rem ignorantes, aut a nobis dissentientes, aut alioquin adversum nos male affecti, interpretantur; sed illud duntaxat (ut res iterum dicatur) intelligimus: non dolere corpore; animo non perturbari; wherefore while we say in general, that pleasure is the end of a well spent life, we are very far from meaning that pleasure which is enjoyed only by persons of luxurious and dissolute habits, or by others only so long as they are in the very act or instant of gratification—a pleasure which consists in the voluptuous emotion of the senses; (though this is the idea which some, whether from ignorance, party spirit or ill-will, give our system) but we mean as has been said before, the freedom of the body from pain and the mind from perturbation. Gassend: Syntag. Philos Epicur: See his epistle to Manoceus in D. Laert.

\* Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas: happy the man who can trace the effects of things to their causes.

strangers, and unrelated to it: rejected the blandishments of sense; macerated themselves with unwearied studies, for this pleasure; making the ease and health of their bodies, to give place to the content and satisfaction of their minds! But how much intuition hath the advantage, above this way of knowledge, may be seen in these two obvious respects.

First. It is a more facile way of knowing. †Here is no need of a busy search, a tiresome indagation, (the difficulty whereof makes the more slothful, rather trust than try) a chaining together of consequences. The soul hath its clothing (its vestment of light) upon as cheap terms as the lilies theirs; doth neither toil nor spin for it: and yet Solomon, in all the glory of his famed wisdom, was not arrayed like it. This knowledge saves the expense of study; is instantaneous, not successive. The soul now sees more, at one view, in a moment, than before in a life's time: as a man hath a speedier, and more grateful prospect of a pleasant country, by placing himself in some commodious station, that commands the whole region, than by travelling through it. It is no pains to look upon what offers itself to my eye. Where there is a continued series of consequences, that lie naturally connected, the soul pleasingly observes this continuity; but views the whole frame, the whole length of the line, at once (so far as its limited capacity can extend) and needs not discuss every particle, severally, in this series of truths, and proceed *gradatim*, from the knowledge of one truth to another; in which case only one, at once, would be present to its view. It sees things that are connected, not because they are so: *atque ut homini sedenti ad ripam fluminis, sola aqua presens est quæ ei hoc temporis punctulo observatur; eidem vero homini, totum flumen presens esset, si supra summam aeris regionem erectus, uno aspectu fontem et ostium fluminis posset aspiceret: Ita oculo Dei, &c.* as a man, conveniently placed in some eminent station, may possibly see, at one view, all the successive parts of a gliding stream: but he that sits by the water's side, not changing his place, sees the same parts, only because they succeed; and these that pass, make way for them that follow, to come under his eye: so doth a learned man describe the unsuccessful knowledge of God; of which the glorified souls way of knowing, is an imitation; as the very words seeing and beholding (which it is so frequently set forth by in scripture) do naturally import. Yet that, as to them, all ratiocination shall be excluded that state, I see no reason to admit; though with God it can have no place. And as he is reckoned to live a pleasanter life, that

†Nonnulli tædio investigandæ veritatis, cuilibet opinioni potius ignavi succumbunt; quam in exploranda veritate, pertinaci diligentia, perseverare volunt: there are some men who from the difficulty of investigating truth, indolently fall in with any sentiment proposed to them, rather than persevere in the research with a determined diligence. Min: Felix Oct. 9.

spends upon a plentiful estate; than he that gets his bread by the sweat of his brows: so this more easy way of knowing, must needs be reckoned more pleasing. This knowledge is as Jacob's venison, not hunted for but brought to hand. The race is not here to the swift. The unlearned idiot knows as much as the profoundest Rabbi (at least with as much satisfaction;) and all arms are of an equal size; or are content with their own measure.

Secondly. It is more certain. For what do we use to reckon so certain as what we see with our eyes? Better (even in this respect) is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire. While here, the mind is carried, with most earnest desire, to pursue knowledge, it very often mistakes its way, and miserably wanders. In our most wary ratiocinations, we many times shoot at rovers: but when we know by this vision, our mark is immediately presented to our eye. We are in danger to be imposed upon by delusive appearances of things. We look through no fallacious mediums, are held in no suspense; puzzled with no doubts, whether such consequences will hold, such conclusions be rightly inferred; and so are not retarded from giving a present unwavering assent. Here are no perplexing intricacies, no dubious hallucinations, or uncertain guesses. We see things, as they are, by a simple and undeceiving light, with both subjective, and objective certainty, being secure both from doubt, and error.

[2.] Faith. How magnificent things doth scripture speak of this grace! which the experience also of such as have been wont to live by it (that is to make it the governing principle of their lives) doth abundantly confirm. How clear are its apprehensions! it is the *ἔλεγχος* (Heb. 11. 1.) evidence of things not seen: how sweet its enjoyments! whom not seeing ye love; and though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. 1. Pet. 1. 8. Even the heathen theology hath magnified it above knowledge, "What is it (saith one) that unites us with the self-goodness, and so joins us thereto, that it quiets or gives rest to all our actions and motions? I will express it in one word; it is faith itself, which unspeakably and after a hidden manner, doth unite and conjoin happy souls with the self-good. For (saith he) it concerns us not, either in a way of science, *ἔγνωσκῶς, ἐδὲ ἀτελῶς, ἀλλ' ἐπίδοιτας ἑαυτὸς τῷ θεῷ φωτί, &c.* or with any imperfection, to inquire after the good; but to behold ourselves in the divine light, and so shutting our eyes, to be placed in the unknown and secret unity of beings. Proclus in *Plat. Theol.* And a later writer (Picus Mirand.) gives us this, as a conclusion from that former author, that as faith, which is credulity, is below science; so that faith, which is truly so called, is, super-substantially, above science and intelligence, immediately uniting us to God. But it is evident, intuitive knowledge far exceeds even faith also.

First, It is more distinct and clear. Faith is taking a thing upon report; (Isa. 53. 1.) Who hath believed our report? And they are more general, languid apprehensions, we have of things this way. Faith enters at the ear; it comes by hearing. Rom. 10. 17. And if we compare the perceptions of those two external senses, that of hearing, and sight: the latter is unspeakably more clear and satisfying. He that hath knowledge of a foreign country, only by report of another, hath very indistinct apprehensions of it, in comparison of him who hath travelled it himself. While the queen of Sheba only heard of Solomon's glory, she could not satisfy herself, without an *αὐτοψία* the sight of her own eye; and when she saw it, she saith, the one half was not told her of what she now beheld. The ear more slowly and gradually receives, and the tongue more defectively expresses to another, an account of things: than one's ocular inspection would take it in. But, as to the excellency of this intuitive knowledge above faith; the comparison lies not, between knowing by the ministry of a more noble sense, and a less noble; but knowing by dependance on a less noble, and without dependance upon any at all. When God hath been pleased to afford discoveries, in that way of vision, to men in the body, (his prophets, &c.) he hath usually bound up their senses, by sleep, or trances; sense hath had no part or lot in this matter; unto believing it must necessarily concur.

Secondly. More effective. What we see, even with our external eye, much more powerfully moves our heart, than what we only give credit to, upon hearsay. The queen of Sheba much admired, no doubt, Solomon's famed splendor, and magnificence, while she only heard of it; but when she saw it, it puts her into an ecstasy; it ravished away her soul; she had no more spirit, &c. What would the sight of the divine glory do, if God did not strengthen with all might: were there not as well glorious power to support, as powerful glory to transform! Job had heard of God, by the hearing of the ear, but when once his eye saw him, (whether that were by the appearance of any sensible glory: which is probable enough, for it is said, the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind: or whether by a more immediate revelation, it is less-material) what work did it make in his soul! The devils believe, and tremble; so impressive are the pre-apprehensions of judgment to come, and the consequents thereof, with them; yet their present torment, thence, is no torment, in comparison ("art thou come to torment us before the time?") of what they expect. Let wicked men consider this, (they will have their intuition in hell too;) were your belief, and terror thereupon, with reference to the eternal judgment, and the impending wrath of God, equal to what the devils themselves have, upon the same account; actual sensation will make you more exceed yourselves in point of misery, than the devils do now exceed

you. There is, no doubt, a proportionable difference between the impressions of present faith, and future vision with holy souls. Now, not seeing, yet believing, they rejoice, with joy unspeakable. Their present joy cannot be spoken; their future then cannot be thought! Experience daily tells us; how greatly, sensible, present objects have the advantage upon us, beyond those that are spiritual and distant, though infinitely more excellent and important. When the tables are turned, the now sensible things disappear; a new scene of things invisible and eternal, is immediately presented to our view; when the excellency of the objects, the disposedness of the subjects, the nature of the act, shall all multiply the advantages, on this part, how affective will this vision be, beyond what we have ever found the faint apprehensions of our so much disadvantaged faith to amount to; a kind message from an indulgent father, to his far-distant son, informing of his welfare, and yet continuing love, will much affect; but the sight of his father's face, will even transport, and overcome him with joy.

But further consider this intuition a little more particularly and absolutely in itself. So, you may take this somewhat distincter account of it, in some few particulars, corresponding to those, by which the object (the glory to be beheld,) was lately characterized.—It will be a *vigorous, efficacious*, intuition; as that which it beholds is the most excellent, even the *divine*, glory. Such an object cannot be beheld, but with an eye full of lively vigor; a sparkling, a radiant eye: a weak eye would be struck blind, would fail, and be closed up at the first glance. We must suppose, then, this vision to be accompanied with the highest vitality, the strongest energy, a mighty plenitude of spirit and power no less than the divine: nothing but the divine power can sufficiently fortify the soul to behold divine glory. When the apostle speaks only of his desire of glory, he that hath wrought us to this selfsame thing (saith he) is God, he that hath moulded us, suitably framed us (as the word signifieth) for this thing, is God: it is the work of a Deity to make a soul desire glory: certainly then, it is his work to give the power of beholding it. And by how much the more of power, so much the more of pleasure in this vision. Weak sight would afford but languid joy: but when the whole soul, animated with divine power and life, shall seat itself in the eye; when it shall be as it were, all eye, (as one said of God, whom now it perfectly imitates) and be wholly intent upon vision; apply itself thereto with all its might, as its only business; (S. Hieronym;) what satisfying joys doth it now taste! renewed by every repeated view! how doth it now, as it were, prey upon glory; as the eye of the eagle upon the beams of the sun! We meet with the expression of *aures bibulae*; *thirsty ears*; here will be *oculi bibuli*, *thirsty eyes*: a soul ready to drink in glory at the eye. If vision be by

intromission, what attractive eyes are here, drawing in glory, feeding upon glory? If by extramission, what piercing darting eyes, sending forth the soul at every look to embrace the glorious object.

There is great power that now attends realizing thoughts of God: whether it appear in the consequent working of the soul directly towards God; or by way of reflection upon itself. If directly towards God; how mightily is he admired! "Who is a God like unto thee?" If by reflection upon our own sin, and vileness; how deeply doth it humble!—"Now mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself—Woe is me, I am undone,—Mine eyes have seen the Lord of glory." If by way of reflection, upon our interest in him, or relation to him; how mightily doth it support and comfort! "I will look to the Lord—my God will hear me." Mic. 7. 7. How full of rich sense is that scripture, They looked to him and were lightened! Psal. 34. 5. One look clothed them with light, cast a glory upon their souls, filled them with life and joy; it was but a thought, the cast of an eye, and they were as full as hearts could hold. Oh the power then of these heavenly visions! when we dwell in the views of that transforming glory!—This will be a *comprehensive* intuition; as its object is *entire* glory. I mean comparatively, not absolutely comprehensive. More of the divine glory will be comprehended, unspeakably, than before. It is called, we know by the schoolmen, the knowledge of *comprehensors*, in contradiction to that of *viators*. We shall better be able to discern the divine excellencies together; have much more adequate conceptions; a fuller, and more complete notion of God: we shall see him as he is. It is too much observable, how in our present state, we are prejudiced by our partial conceptions of him; and what an inequality they cause in the temper of our spirits. For wicked men, the very notion they have of God, proves fatal to their souls, or is of a most destructive tendency; because they comprehend not together what God hath revealed of himself. Most usually, they confine those few thoughts of God they have, only to his mercy; and that exclusively, as to his holiness and justice; hence their vain and mad presumption. The notion of an unholy (or a not-holy, and not-just) God, what wickedness would it not induce? "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself:" a God after their own hearts; then the reins are let loose. More rarely, when the conscience of guilt hath arrested the self-condemned wretch, God is thought of, under no other notion, than of an irreconcilable enemy and avenger; as one thirsting after the blood of souls, and that will admit of no atonement. So without all pretence, and so flatly contrary to all his discoveries of himself, do men dare to affix to him black and horrid characters, forged only out of the radicated and inveterate hatred of their own hearts against him, (that never take

up good thoughts of any one :) only because they have no mind to acquaint themselves with him ; and that they may have some colour for their affected distance : and so, perhaps, never return ; but perish under a horrid wilful despair. And even the people of God themselves are too apt sometimes, so wholly to fix their eye upon love and grace, that they grow into an unbecoming, un-creaturely familiarity ; while the thoughts of infinite majesty, adorable greatness and glory are asleep. Sometimes possibly, they apprehend vindictive justice, the indignation and jealousy of God against sin, (precluding meanwhile, the consideration of his indulgent compassions towards truly humble and penitent souls) to that degree of affrightment and dread, that they grow into an unchildlike strangeness towards him, and take little pleasure in drawing nigh to him. But when, *now* our eye shall take in the discovery of divine glory equally ; how sweet and satisfying a pleasure will arise from that grateful mixture of reverent love, humble joy, modest confidence, meek courage, a prostrate magnanimity, a triumphant veneration ; a soul shrinking before the divine glory into nothing, yet not contenting itself with any less enjoyment, than of him, who is all in all !

There is nothing here in this complexion, or temper of soul, but hath its warrant, in the various aspect of the face of God comprehensively beheld ; nothing but what is (even by its suitability) highly grateful, and pleasing.—It will be *fixed, steady* intuition, as its object is *permanent* glory. The vision of God can neither infer, nor admit weariness. The eye cannot divert ; its act is eternally delectable, and affords an unvariable, undecaying pleasure. Sensual delights soon end in loathing ; quickly bring a glutting surfeit ; and degenerate into torments,\* when they are continued and unintermittent. A philosopher in an epistle which he writes to a friend, from the court of Dionysius, where he was forcibly detained, thus bemoans himself, Κακοδαμουνῶμεν, ὧ Ἀντισθένης, ἔ μισηγίως, &c. “ *We are unhappy, O Antisthenes, beyond measure ; and how can we but be unhappy, that are burdened by the tyrant every day with sumptuous feasts, plentiful computations, precious ointments, gorgeous apparel ? and I knew as soon as I came into this island and city, how unhappy my life would be.*” *Socratico rum. Epis. 9.* This is the nature and common condition of even the most pleasing sensible objects ; they first tempt, then please a little, then disappoint, and lastly vex. The eye that beholds them, blasts them quickly, rifles and deflowers their glory ; and views them with no more delight at first, than disdain afterwards. Creature-enjoyments have a bottom, are soon drained and drawn dry ; hence there must be fre-

\* Proba istas, quæ voluptates vocantur, ubi modum transcenderint, pœnas esse : prove by experience that what are called pleasures when they exceed proper bounds become pains. Sen. Ep. 83.



quent diversions; other pleasures must be sought out; and are chosen, not because they are better, but because they are new.

This demonstrates the emptiness, and vanity of the creature. Affection of variety only proceeds from sense of want; and is a confession, upon trial, that there is not in such an enjoyment what was expected. Proportionably, in the state of glory, a constant indeficient fulness, renders the blessed soul undesirous of any change. There is no need of varieties, of diversions: what did once please, can never cease to do so. This glory cannot fade or lose any thing of its attractive power. The faculty cannot languish, or lose the disposition, by which it is contempered and made proportionable thereto. Hence no weariness can ensue. What! a soul in which the love of God is perfected grow weary of beholding him! The sun will sooner grow weary of shining; the touched needle of turning itself to its wonted point; every thing will sooner grow weary of its centre; and the most fundamental laws of nature be sooner antiquated and made void for ever. The eye of the fool, Solomon tells us, is in the ends of the earth; (Prov. 17. 24.) His only, is a rolling wandering eye, that knows not where to fix. Wisdom guides, and fixes the eye of the holy soul; determines it unto God only: I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel, my reins also instruct me,—I have set the Lord always before me. Psal. 16. 7. 8. Surely heaven will not render it less capable of dijudication; of passing a right judgment of the excellency and worth of things. And here, a rational judgment will find no want; and irrational will find no place. Therefore, as permanent glory will certainly infer a perpetual vision; perpetuated vision will as certainly perpetuate the soul's satisfaction, and blessedness.—It will be a *possessive* intuition: as it is an *appropriate* glory which it pitches upon. It will be the language of every look, "This glory is mine." The soul looks not upon it shyly, as if it had nothing to do with it; or with slight and careless glances: but the very posture of its eye, speaks its interest, and proclaims the pretensions it hath to this glory. With how different an aspect, doth a stranger passing by, and the owner, look upon the same house, the same lands; A man's eye lays his claim for him, and avows his right. A grateful object that one can say is his own, he arrests it with his eye; so do saints with appropriative looks behold their God, and the divine glory. Even with such an eye as he was wont to behold them; To this man will I look, &c. (Isa. 66. 1. 2.) that is, as the place of my rest, mentioned before; he designs him with his eye. Which is the import of that expression, The Lord knows who are his; (2. Tim. 2. 19.) his eye marks them out; owns them as his own; as concerning others, whom he disowns, the phrase is, I know you not. And how vastly different is such an intuition, from that, when I look upon a thing, with a hungry, lingering eye, which I must never

enjoy or never expect to be the better for? This vision is frui-  
tive, unites the soul with the blessed object which kind of sight  
is meant, when actual blessedness, is so often expressed by see-  
ing God. We see then what vision, the sight of God's face  
contributes to the satisfaction of blessed souls.

## CHAPTER VII.

Having considered in the preceding chapters, what vision contributes to sat-  
isfaction in reference to the *object* and the *act* of vision, we come now to in-  
quire *Secondly*, Wherein assimilation (the likeness or glory of God impress-  
ed) contributes unto satisfaction: where is particularly propounded to be  
shewn. 1, What pleasure it involves. 2. What it disposes to. (1) What it  
involves in the *esse, being* of it. (2) What in the *cognosci, knowledge* of it.  
The pleasure of being like God discovered, shewing concerning the image  
of God [1] Generally, that it is the soul's health and soundness restored;  
that it is a vital, an intimate, a connatural, a perfect image.

Our next business, is to discover,

*Secondly*. What assimilation, or the impressed likeness of  
God, may further add to this satisfied state; or, what satisfying  
pleasure the blessed souls find in this, that it is like God. And  
here we are distinctly to inquire into—the pleasure which such  
an assimilation to God involves in itself, and—that which it tends  
to or disposes.

1. The pleasure it involves in itself; or, which is taken in it  
abstractly considered; which we may more particularly unfold  
by shewing—the pleasure involved, in being like God: and—in  
knowing or reflecting upon the same: the *esse* and the *cognosci*  
of this assimilation.

(1.) The pleasure in being like God; which may be discov-  
ered both by a general consideration hereof, and by instancing in  
some particulars, wherein blessed souls shall be like him.

[1.] It is obvious to suppose an inexpressible pleasure, in the  
very feeling, the inward sensation, the holy soul will have of  
that happy frame in *general*, whereinto it is now brought; that  
joyful harmony, that entire rectitude it finds within itself. You  
may as soon separate light from a sun-beam, as pleasure from  
such a state. This likeness or conformity to God is an *εὐχρηστώ*  
a perfect temperament; an athletic healthiness; a strong sound  
constitution of soul. Do but imagine, what it is to a man's body,  
after a wasting sickness, to find himself well. Frame a notion  
of the pleasure of health and soundness, when, both, all the  
parts and members of the body are in their proper places and

proportions ; and a lively, active vigor, a sprightly strength possesses every part, and actuates the whole ; how pleasant is this temper ! If we were all body, there could be no greater felicity than this. But by how much the more noble any creature is, so is it capable of more exquisite pains, or pleasures. \*Sin is the sickness and disease of the soul ; enfeebles all its powers, exhausts its vigor, wastes his strength. †You know the restless tossings, the weary rollings to and fro, of a diseased languishing body ; such is the case of a sinful soul. Let it but seriously bethink itself, and then speak its own sense, (but here is the malignity of the disease, it cannot be serious, it always raves ;) What will it be ? “O I can take no rest !” The way of wickedness is called a way of pain : Psal. 139. 24. Sinners would find it so, if the violence of the disease had not bereft them of sense. Nothing savours with me ; I can take comfort in nothing. The wicked are as a troubled sea, (as their name imports) that cannot rest, whose waters, &c. Isa. 56. 20. The image of God, renewed in holiness and righteousness, is health restored, after such a consuming sickness ; which, when we awake, when all the drowsiness that attends our disease is shaken off, we find to be perfect. The fear of the Lord (an ordinary paraphrase of holiness or piety) is said to be health to the navel, and marrow to the bones. Our Lord Jesus invites wearied sinners to come to him, to take his yoke on them, to learn of him, (Matt. 11. 28.) that is to imitate him, to be like him, and promises they shall find rest to their souls. How often do we find grace and peace, in conjunction, in the apostles’ salutations and benedictions ? We are told that the ways of divine wisdom (that is which it prescribeth) are all pleasantness and peace ; (Prov. 3. 13.) that in keeping the commandments of God, there is great reward, (Psal. 19. 11.) that they are not grievous, (1 John, 5. 3.) that is (for there seems to be a *meiosis* in the expression) are joyous, pleasant. And what are his commandments, but those expresses of himself, wherein we are to be like him, and conform to his will ? The kingdom of God (that holy order which he settles in the spirits of men ; his law transcribed and impressed upon the soul ; which is nothing else but its conformation and likeness to him-

\*Τιμιώτερον ψυχῆ σώματος, τὸ δὲ τιμιώτερον ἀγαθὸν μείζον· τὸ δὲ τῷ μείζονι, ἀγαθῷ ἐναντίον, μείζον κακόν· ἀγαθὸν δὲ μείζον ὑγίαι ψυχῆς ὑγείας σώματος· μείζον ἐν κακῷ, νόσος ψυχῆς, νόσος σώματος νόσος ψυχῆς μοχθηρία, &c. The mind is more noble than the body and as it is more noble it contains the greater good, while whatever is contrary to it must be the greater evil. Now the health of the soul is a greater good than that of the body ; consequently the sickness of the soul is a greater evil than that of the body. The sickness of the soul is sin, &c. Max. Tyr. dissert. 41.

†Hinc illud et tædium et displicentia sui, et nusquam residentis animi volutatio, &c. hence that weariness that internal disgust and agitation of the perpetually unsettled mind, &c. Sen. de Tranquanimi.

self: ) is righteousness, and then peace. Rom. 14. 17. The φρόνημα Πνεύματος, (Rom. 8. 6.) that *notion* and *judgment*, and *savour* of things; that excellent temper of mind and heart; (for that is the extent of the expression) whereof the holy Spirit of God is both the author and pattern, is life and peace; involves them in itself. When one thing is thus, in *casu recto*, predicated of another, it speaks their most intimate connexion, as Rom. 14. 17. above: so 1 John. 5. 3. This is love that, &c. So here, such a mind is life and peace, though the copula be not in the original, it is fitly supplied in the translation;) You cannot separate life and peace from such a mind: it hath no principle of death or trouble in it. Let such as know any thing of this blessed temper and complexion of soul, compare this scripture and their own experience together; when, at any time, they find their souls under the blessed empire and dominion of a spiritual mind; when spirituality wholly rules and denominates them: are not their souls the very region of life and peace? both these in conjunction, life and peace? not raging life, not stupid peace; but a placid, peaceful life, a vital vigorous rest and peace: it is not the life of a fury, nor peace of a stone: life that hath peace in it, and peace that hath life in it. Now can the soul say, "I feel myself well; all is now well with me." Nothing afflicts the spiritual mind, so far, and while it is such: it is wrapt up, and clothed in its own innocency and purity; and hereby become invulnerable, not liable to hurtful impressions.\* Holiness (under the name of light, for that is, by the context, the evident meaning of the word there) is by the apostle spoken of as the christian's armour. (Rom. 13. 12.) Put on, saith he, the armour of light, in opposition to the works of darkness, which he had mentioned immediately before. Strange armour! that a man may see through. †A good man's armour is, that he needs none: his armour is an open breast; that he can expose himself; is fearless of any harm. Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? It should be read imitators; so the word signifies ‡; and so, whereas following is either of a pattern, or an end; the former must be meant here, by the natural importance of that word. And hence, by "that which is good" (Τὸ ἀγαθόν) is not to be understood created goodness; for it is not enough to imitate that goodness; for so we must be good; but the words are capable of being read, him that is good,

\*Invulnerable est non quod non feritur, sed quod non læditur. Sen de constantia sapientis, sive quod in sapientem non cadit injuria; to be invulnerable is not to be free from all attacks, but to be uninjured by them. Seneca on the constancy of the wise man or his superiority to injuries.

† Integer vitæ scelerisque purus, &c. He that is of an upright life and free from vice. Hor. ‡Μιμηται.

or (which is all one) the good. \*And so it is the increate good, the blessed God himself, formally considered under the notion of good. Nothing can harm you if you be like God, that is the plain sense of this scripture. Likeness to God, is armour of proof, that is an imitation of him, namely in his moral goodness; which holiness as a general name of it comprehends. A person truly like God, is secure from any external violence; so far as that it shall never be able to invade his spirit. He is in spirit far raised above the tempestuous, stormy region, and converses where winds and clouds have no place.

Nor can, so far as this temper of soul prevails, any evil grow upon such a mind within itself. It is life and peace; it is light and purity; for it is the image, the similitude of God. God is light, and with him is no darkness at all. 1 John. 1. 5. Holy souls were darkness, but they are light in the Lord. Eph. 5. 8. He the Father of light, they the children of light. Jam. 1. 19. They were darkness: not in the dark; but, in the abstract "darkness:" as if that were their whole nature; and they nothing else but an impure mass of conglobated darkness. †So, ye are light: as if they were that, and nothing else; nothing but a sphere of light. Why suppose we such a thing, as an entire sphere of nothing else but pure light? What can work any disturbance here or raise a storm within it? A calm, serene thing; perfectly homogeneous, void of contrariety, or any self-repugnant quality: how can it disquiet itself? We cannot yet say, that thus it is with holy souls in their present state, according to the highest literal import of these words, Ye are light: but thus it will be when they awake; when they are satisfied with this likeness. They shall then be like God fully, and throughout. O the joy and pleasure of a soul made after such a similitude! Now glory is become as it were their being; they are glorified. Glory is revealed into them, transfused throughout them. Every thing that is conceivable under the notion of an excellency competent to created nature, is now to be found with them; and they have it in-wrought in their very beings. So that in a true sense it may be said, that they are light; they not only have such excellencies, but they are them: as the moralist saith of the wise, or virtuous man, *Omnia non tam habere quam esse, that he not so properly hath all things, as is all things. Sen.* It is said of man, in respect of his naturals, he is the image and glory of God. 1 Cor. 11. 7. As for his supernatural excellencies,

\* As Plato and his followers used the expression τοῦ αγαθοῦ, fully according to the sense of Mat. 19. 17.

† Σφαῖρα ψυχῆς αυτοειδῆς, "ὅταν μὴτε ἐκτείνηται ἐπὶ τε, μὴτε ἔσω συντρέχη, μὴτε συνίζανη, ἀλλὰ φωτὶ λαμπηται, &c. the mental sphere is harmonious; when it is insusceptible neither of attraction from without nor of confusion within, but is irradiated with light. Marc. Antonian. lib. 11.

though they are not essential to man, they are more expressive of God; and are now become so inseparable from the nature of man too, in this his glorified state, that he can as soon cease to be intelligent, as holy. The image of God, even in this respect, is not separable from him: nor blessedness (surely) from this image. As the divine excellencies, being in their infinite fullness in God, are his own blessedness: so is the likeness, the participation of them in the soul, that now bears this image, its blessedness. Nothing can be necessary to its full satisfaction, which it hath not in itself, by a gracious vouchsafement and communication. The good man (in that degree which his present state admits of,) Solomon tells us, is satisfied from himself: (Prov. 14. 14.) he doth not need to traverse the world, to seek his happiness abroad; he hath the matter of satisfaction, even that goodness which he is now enriched with, in his own breast and bosom: yet he hath it all by participation from the fountain-goodness.\* But that participated goodness is so intimately one with him, as sufficiently warrants and makes good the assertion, he is satisfied from himself: namely from himself, not primarily or independently; but by derivation from him, who is all in all, and more intimate to us, than we to ourselves. And what is that participated goodness, but a degree of the divine likeness? But when that goodness shall be fully participated: when this image and imitation of the divine goodness, shall be complete and entire; then shall we know the rich exuberant sense of those words. How fully will this image or likeness satisfy them! And yet more distinctly, we may apprehend how satisfying this likeness or image impressed will be, if a little further deferring the view of the particulars of this likeness which we have designed to instance in, we consider these general properties of it.

First. It is a vital image: not the image only of him that lives, the living God: but it is his living and soul-quickening image. It is the likeness of him, in that very respect; an imitation and participation of the life of God; by which, once revived, the soul lives that was dead before. It is not a dead picture, a dumb shew, an unmoving statue; but a living, speaking, walking, image; that wherewith the child is like the father: the very life of the subject where it is; and by which it lives as God, speaks and acts conformably to him. An image, not such a one as is drawn with a pencil, that expresses only color and figure; but such a one as is seen in a glass† that represents life and motion, as was noted from a worthy author before. It is even, in its first

\* *Intimo nostro intimior. Esse nostrum laudabile: more intimate than our inmost soul. The very possession is an honor. Gibeut. de libertate, ex Plat. and Aug.*

† *Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat: just so did he carry his eyes, his hands, his countenance.*

and more imperfect draught, an analogical participation (as we must understand it) of the divine nature; (2 Pet. 1. 4.) before which first tincture, those prelude touches of it upon the spirit of man, his former state is spoken of as an alienation from the life of God; (Eph. 4. 18.) as having no interest, no communion therein. The putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, (ver. 23. 34.) is presently mentioned, in direct opposition to that dismal state, implying that to be a participation of the divine life: and certainly, so far as it is so, it is a participation of the divine blessedness too.

Secondly. It is an image most intimate, therefore, to its subject. Glory it is: but not a superficial skin-deep glory; such as shone in Moses' face which he covered with a vail. It is thoroughly transformative; changes the soul throughout; not in external appearance, but in its very nature. All outward embellishments would add little felicity to a putrid, corrupt soul. That, would be but painting a sepulchre: This, adds ornament unto life; and both, especially to the inward man. It is not paint in the face, while death is at the heart; but it is the radication of such a principle within as will soon form and attemper the man universally to itself. It is glory: blessedness participated, brought home and lodged in a man's own soul, in his own bosom; he cannot then but be satisfied. A man may have a rich stock of outward comforts, and while he hath no heart to enjoy them, be never the happier. But it is impossible, that happiness should be thus lodged in his soul, made so intimate, and one with him; and yet, that he should not be satisfied, not be happy.

Thirdly. An image connatural to the spirit of man. Not a thing alien, and foreign to his nature, put into him purposely, as it were, to torment and vex him; but an ancient well-known inhabitant, that had place in him from the beginning. Sin is the injurious intruder; which therefore puts the soul into a commotion, and permits it not to rest, while it hath any being there. This image calms it, restores it, works a peaceful, orderly composure within; returns it to itself, to its pristine, blessed state; being re-seated there, as in its proper, primitive subject. For though this image, in respect of corrupted nature be supernatural; in respect of institute, and undefiled nature, it was in a true sense natural, as hath been demonstrated by divers of ours against the papists; and upon the matter, yielded by some of the more moderate among themselves.\* At least it was connate with human nature, consentaneous to it, and perfective of it. We are speaking, it must be remembered, of that part of the divine image, that consists in moral excellencies; there being another part

\* As may be seen by comparing what Estius says to the two questions, 1. *An gratia fuerit primo homini naturalis?* 2. *Utrum originalis justitia fuerit homini supernaturalis?* 1. Whether grace was natural to the first man? 2. Whether original righteousness was supernatural to man? 1. 2. dist. 25.

of it, as hath been said, that is, even in the strictest sense, natural. There is nothing in the whole moral law of God, (in conformity whereunto this image did, *ab origine, originally*, consist) nothing of what he requires from man, that is at all destructive of his being, prejudicial to his comforts, repugnant to his most innate principles: nothing that clashes with his reason, or is contrary to his interest: or that is not, most directly, conservative of his being and comforts agreeable to his most rational principles, subservient to his best and truest interest. For what doth God the Lord require, but fear and love, service, (Deut. 10. 12. Mic. 6. 8.) and holy walking from an entire and undivided soul? what, but what is good; not only in itself, but for us; and in respect whereof, his law is said to be holy, just and good? Rom. 7. 12. And what he requireth, he impresseth. This law, written in the heart, is this likeness. How grateful then will it be, when after a long extermination and exile, it returns and re-possesses the soul, is recognized by it, becomes to it a new nature, (yea, even a divine) a vital, living law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Rom. 8. 2. What grievance, or burden, is it to do the dictates of nature? actions that easily and freely flow from their own principles? and when blessedness itself is infolded in those very acts and inclinations? How infinitely satisfying and delightful will it be, when the soul shall find itself connaturalized to every thing in its duty: and shall have no other duty incumbent on it than to be happy! when it shall need no arguments, and exhortations to love God; nor need be urged and pressed, as heretofore, to mind him, to fear before him! when love, and reverence, and adoration, and praise; when delight, and joy, shall be all natural acts: can you separate this, in your own thoughts, from the highest satisfaction?

Fourthly. This image will be now perfect: every way, fully perfect.—In *all its parts*; as it is in the first instant of the soul's entrance into the state of regeneration; the womb of grace knows no defective maimed births. And yet here is no little advantage, as to this kind of perfection. For now those lively lineaments of the new creature all appear, which were much obscured before; every line of glory is conspicuous, every character legible, the whole entire frame of this image is, in its exact symmetry and apt proportions, visible at once. And it is an unspeakable addition to the pleasure of so excellent a temper of spirit, that accrues from the discernible entireness of it. Heretofore, some gracious dispensations have been to seek, (through the present prevalence of some corruption or temptation) when there was most need and occasion for their being reduced into act. Hence the reward and pleasure of the act, and improvement of the principle, were lost together. Now, the soul will be equally disposed, to every holy exercise that shall be suitable to its state. Its temper shall be even and symmetrical; its



motions uniform, and agreeable: nothing done out of season; nothing seasonable omitted, for want of a present disposition of spirit thereto. There will be not only an habitual, but actual entireness of the frame of holiness in the blessed soul.—Again this image will be *perfect in degree*; so as to exclude all degrees of its contrary, and to include all degrees of itself. There will now be no longer any colluctation with contrary principles; no law in the members warring against the law of the mind; no lustings of the flesh against the spirit. That war is now ended in a glorious victory, and eternal peace. There will be no remaining blindness of mind, nor error of judgment, nor perverseness of will, nor irregularity or rebellion of affections: no ignorance of God, no aversation from him, or disaffection towards him. This likeness removes all culpable dissimilitude or unlikeness. This communicated glory fills up the whole soul, causes all clouds and darkness to vanish, leaves no place for any thing that is vile or inglorious; it is pure glory, free from mixture of any thing that is alien to it. And it is itself full. The soul is replenished, not with airy, evanid shadows; but with substantial, solid glory, a massive, weighty glory, (2 Cor. 4. 17.) for I know not but subjective glory may be taken in within the significancy of that known scripture, if it be not more principally intended: in as much as the text speaks of a glory to be wrought out by afflictions, which are the files and furnaces, as it were, to polish or refine the soul into a glorious frame. It is cumulated glory, glory added to glory. Here it is growing progressive glory, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. 2 Cor. 3. 18. It shall, now, be stable, consistent glory: that carries a self-fulness with it (which some include also in the notion of purity\*:) it is full of itself, includes every degree requisite to its own perfection. God hath now put the last hand to this glorious image, added to it its ultimate accomplishments. Now, a conformity to Christ, even in the resurrection from the dead, in his glorious state, is fully attained. That prize of the high calling of God is now won. And the humble sense of not having attained as yet, and of not being already perfect (in which humility, the foundation of the temple of God in a saint is laid, and the building raised) is turned into joyful acclamations, "Grace, grace!" for the laying on of the top-stone, the finishing of this glorious work. And when this temple is filled with the glory of the Lord, the soul itself replenished with the divine fulness, will not its joys be full too? For here is no sacrifice to be offered but that of praise, and joy is the proper seasoning for that sacrifice.

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\*Purum est quod est plenum sui, et quod minimum habet alieni: that is pure which possesses a self-fulness, and which has the least of what is foreign to itself.

Now, the new creature hath arrived to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The first formation of this spiritual, as well as of the natural man, was hidden and secret; it was curiously wrought, and in a way no more liable to observation, than that of framing the child in the womb; as that is as hidden as the concoction of minerals, or precious stones, in the lower parts of the earth. No secrets of nature can outvie the mysteries of godliness. Its growth is also by very insensible degrees, as it is with the products of nature; but its arrival to perfection is infinitely more strange, than any thing in nature ever was. How sudden and wonderful is the change; when, in the twinkling of an eye, the blessed soul instantly awakes out of drowsy languishings, and miserable weakness, into perfect strength and vigor! As a man is, so is his strength; and as his strength is, so is his joy and pleasure. The sun is said to go forth as a strong man, rejoicing to run his race. Psal. 19. 5. When a man goes, in the fullness of his strength, upon any enterprize; how do his blood and spirits triumph beforehand! no motion of hand, or foot, is without a sensible delight. The strength of a man's spirit is, unspeakably, more than that of the outward man; its faculties and powers more refined and raised: and hence are rational or intellectual exercises and operations, much more delightful than corporal ones can be. But (still, as the man is, so is his strength) it is an incomparably greater strength that attends the heaven-born man. This man born of God, begotten of God, after his own likeness; this hero this Son of God, was born to conflicts, to victories to triumphs. While he is yet but in his growing age, he overcomes the world (as Hercules the serpents in his cradle;) overcomes the wicked one, and is at last more than conqueror. A mighty power attends godliness; "a spirit of power, and of a sound mind;" but how much this divine creature grows, so much the more like God: and, being perfect, conflicts cease; he had overcome and won the crown before. And now all his strength runs out into acts of pleasure. Now when he shall go forth in his might to love God, (as we are required to love him now with all our might) and every act of praise shall be an act of power, done with a fulness of strength (as it is said their praises, at the bringing home of the ark, were with all their might) O! what will the pleasure be that shall accompany this state of perfection! Perfect power, and perfect pleasure are here met, and shall for ever dwell together, and be always commensurate to one another. They are so, here, in their imperfect state: our feeble, spiritless duties, weak, dead prayers: they have no more sweetness than strength, no more pleasure than power in them. Therefore we are listless, and have no mind to duties, as we find we are more frequently destitute of a spiritual liveliness and vigor therein. When a spirit of might and power goes on with us in the wont-

ed course of our converses with God, we then forecast opportunities; and gladly welcome the season, when it extraordinarily occurs, of drawing nigh to him. It cannot be thought, that the connexion and proportion between these should fail in glory; or that, when every thing else is perfect, the blessed soul itself made perfect, even as God himself is perfect, in this bearing his likeness, should be unlike him in bliss; or its satisfaction be imperfect.

### CHAPTER VIII.

The satisfaction carried in the glory of God impressed, having been considered in the preceding chapters *generally*, it is now [2] shown by instances; certain particulars of this impression instanced in a dependent frame of spirit, subjection or self-devoting; love, purity, liberty, tranquillity.

But besides the general consideration of this likeness, we shall instance,

[2.] In some of the particular excellencies comprehended in it, wherein the blessed shall imitate and resemble God; whence we may further estimate the pleasure and satisfaction, that being like God will afford. Only here let it be remembered, that as we all along in this discourse, speak of likeness to God in respect of moral excellencies; so by likeness to him, in respect of these, we understand, not only a participation of those which are communicable; but a correspondent impress also, as to those that are incommunicable; as hath been more distinctly opened in the propositions concerning this likeness. Which being premised, I shall give instances of both kinds, to discover somewhat of the inexpressible pleasure of being thus conformed to God. And here, premitting the impress of knowledge of which we have spoken under the former head of vision; we shall instance,

First. In a dependent frame of spirit: which is the proper impress of the divine all-sufficiency, and self-fulness, duly apprehended by the blessed soul. It is not easy to conceive a higher pleasure, than this, compatible to a creature,—the pleasure of dependence; yea, this is a higher than we can conceive. Dependence (which speaks the creature's *σχεσις* or habitude to its principle, as the subserviency which imports its habitude to its end) is twofold:—Natural: which is common and essential to all creatures; even when no such thing is thought on, or considered by them. The creatures live, move, and have their beings in God, whether they think of it or no.—Voluntary, or rational: which is

*de facto*, peculiar ; and *de jure*, common, to reasonable creatures as such. A dependence that is, ἐκ ἀποαρτιότητος, *elective* ; and, with a foregoing reason, (which I understand by elective, not a liberty of doing, or not doing it) and concomitant consideration of what we do, and animadversion of our own act : when knowingly and willingly, understanding ourselves in what we do, we go out of ourselves, and live in God. This is the dependance of which I speak. And it cannot but be attended with transcendent pleasure in that other state, when that knowledge and animadversion shall be clear and perfect : both, as this dependance imports,—A nullifying of self : and magnifying (I may call it omnifying) of God, a making him all in all. As it imports (which it doth most evidently) a *self-annihilation*, a *pure nullifying of self*, it is a continual recognition of my own nothingness, a momentarily, iterated confession, that my whole being is nothing, but a mere puff of precarious breath, a bubble raised from nothing by the arbitrary *fiat* of the great Creator ; reducible, had he so pleased, any moment, to nothing again. These are true and just acknowledgments, and to a well tempered soul infinitely pleasant, when the state of the case is thoroughly understood (as now it is) and it hath the apprehension clear ; how the creation is sustained, how, and upon what terms its own being, life and blessedness are continued to it ; that it is, every moment, determinable upon the constancy of the Creator's will, that it is not simply nothing. It is not possible, that any thing should hinder this consideration from being eternally delightful ; but diabolical uncreaturely pride, that is long since banished heaven, and that banished its very subjects thence also. Nothing can suit that temper, but to be a God ; to be wholly independent ; to be its own sufficiency. The thoughts of living at the will and pleasure of another, are grating ; but they are only grating to a proud heart, which, here, hath no place. A soul naturalized to humiliations, accustomed to prostrations, and self-abasements, trained up in acts of mortification, and that was brought to glory, through a continued course and series of self-denial ; that ever since it first came to know itself, was wont to depend for every moment's breath, for every glimpse of light, for every fresh influence (I live, yet not I—Gal. 2. 20.) with what pleasure doth it, now, as it were vanish before the Lord ! what delight doth it take to diminish itself, and as it were disappear ; to contract and shrivel up itself, to shrink even into a point, into a nothing, in the presence of the divine glory ; that it may be all in all ! Things are now pleasant (to the soul, in its right mind) as they are suitable ; as they carry a comeliness and congruity in them : and nothing, now appears more becoming, than such a self-annihilation. The distances of Creator and creature, of infinite and finite, of a necessary and arbitrary being, of self-originated and a derived being, of what was from ever-

lasting and what had a beginning; are now better understood than ever. And the soul by how much it is, now, come nearer to God, is more apprehensive of its distance. And such a frame and posture doth hence please it best, as doth most fitly correspond thereto. Nothing is so pleasing to it, as to be as it ought. The temper is most grateful that is most proper, and which best agrees with its state. Dependence therefore is greatly pleasing, as it is a self-nullifying thing. And yet it is, in this respect, pleasing, but as a means to a further end. The pleasure that attends it, is higher and more intense, according as it more immediately attains that end, namely—The magnifying and exalting of God: which is the most connatural thing to the holy soul; the most fundamental and deeply impressed law of the new creature. Self gives place, that God may take it; becomes nothing, that he may be all: it vanishes, that his glory may shine the brighter. Dependance gives God his proper glory. It is the peculiar honor and prerogative of a Deity, to have a world of creatures hanging upon it, staying themselves upon it; to be the fulcrum, the centre of a lapsing creation. When this dependance is voluntary and intelligent, it carries in it a more explicit owning and acknowledgment of God. By how much more this is the distinct and actual sense of my soul, Lord, I cannot live but by thee; so much the more openly and plainly do I speak it out, Lord, thou art God alone: thou art the fulness of life and being; The only root and spring of life; The everlasting I AM; The Being of beings.

How unspeakably pleasant, to a holy soul, will such a perpetual agnition or acknowledgment of God be! when the perpetuation of its being, shall be nothing else than a perpetuation of this acknowledgment; when every renewed aspiration, every motion, every pulse of the glorified soul, shall be but a repetition of it; when it shall find, itself, in the eternity of life, that everlasting state of life which it now possesses, to be nothing else than everlasting testimony that God is God: He is so; for, I am, I live, I act, I have the power to love him; none of which could otherwise be. When amongst the innumerable myriads of the heavenly host, this shall be the mutual, alternate testimony of each to all the rest throughout eternity, will not this be pleasant? When each shall feel continually the fresh illapses and incomes of God, the power and sweetness of divine influences, the enlivening vigor of that vital breath, and find in themselves, thus we live and are sustained: and are yet as secure, touching the continuance of this state of life, as if every one were a God to himself; and did each one possess an entire God-head. When their sensible dependance on him, in their glorified state, shall be his perpetual triumph over all the imaginary deities, the fancied *Numina*, wherewith he was heretofore provoked to jealousy; and he shall now have no rival left, but be acknowledged and known, to be all in all. How pleasant will it then be, as it were,

to lose themselves in him ! and to be swallowed up in the over-coming sense of his boundless, all-sufficient, every-where flowing fulness ! And then add to this ; they do by this dependance actually make this fulness of God their own. They are now met in one common principle of life and blessedness, that is sufficient for them all. They no longer live a life of care, are perpetually exempt from solicitous thoughts, which here they could not perfectly attain to in their earthly state. They have nothing to do but to depend : to live upon a present self-sufficient good, which alone is enough to replenish all desires : else it were not self-sufficient. \*How can we divide, in our most abstractive thoughts, the highest pleasure, the fullest satisfaction, from this dependance ? It is to live at the rate of a God ; a God-like life : a living upon immense fulness, as he lives.

Secondly. Subjection ; which I place next to dependance, as being of the same allay ; the product of impressed sovereignty ; as the other, of all sufficient fulness. Both impressions upon the creature, corresponding to somewhat in God, most incommunicably appropriate to him. This is the soul's real and practical acknowledgment of the supreme Majesty ; its homage to its Maker ; its self-dedication : than which nothing more suits the state of a creature, or the spirit of a saint. And as it is suitable, it is pleasant. It is that by which the blessed soul becomes, in its own sense, a consecrated thing, a devoted thing, sacred to God ; its very life and whole being referred and made over to him. With what delightful relishes, what sweet gusts of pleasure is this done ! while the soul tastes its own act ; approves it with a full ungainsaying judgment ; apprehends the condignity and fitness of it ; assents to itself herein ; and hath the ready suffrage ; the harmonious concurrence of all its powers ! When the words are no sooner spoken, " Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created ;" but they are resounded from the penetralia, the *inmost bowels*, the most intimate receptacles, and secret chambers of the soul, O Lord, thou art worthy : worthy, that I, and all things should be to thee : worthy, to be the Omega, as thou art the Alpha, the last, as thou art the first ; the end, as thou art the beginning of all things ; the ocean into which all being shall flow, as the fountain from which it sprang. My whole self, and all my powers, the excellencies now implanted in my being, the privileges of my now glorified state, are all worth nothing to me but for thee ; please me only, as they make me fitter for thee. O the pleasure of these sentiments, the joy of such raptures ! when the soul

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\* Τὸ δὲ αὐτάρκες τίθεμεν, ὃ μόνόμενον αἰετὸν ποιεῖ τὸν βίον, καὶ μηδενὸς ἐνδέα : we esteem that to be self-sufficient, which of itself makes life desirable, and leaves no want. Arist. de mor. lib. 1. c. 4.

shall have no other notion of itself, than of an everlasting sacrifice, always ascending to God in its own flames.

For, this devotedness and subjection speak not, barely an act, but a state; a being to the praise of grace: a living God. (Rom. 12. 1.) And it is no mean pleasure that the sincere soul finds, in the imperfect beginnings, the first essays of this life, the initial breathings of such a spirit, its entrance into this blessed state: when it makes the first tender and present of itself to God (as the apostle expresses it:) when it first begins to esteem itself an hallowed thing; separate and set apart for God: its first act of unfeigned self-resignation; when it tells God from the very heart, "I now give up myself to thee to be thine." Never was marriage-covenant made with such pleasure, with so complacential consent. This quitting claim to ourselves, parting with ourselves upon such terms, to be the Lord's for ever: O the peace, the rest, the acquiescence of spirit that attends it! When the poor soul that was weary of itself, knew not what to do with itself, hath now on the sudden found this way of disposing itself to such an advantage; there is pleasure in this treaty. Even the precious breakings and relentings of the soul towards God are pleasant. But O the pleasure of consent! of yielding ourselves to God, as the apostle's expression is, Rom. 6. 13. When the soul is overcome, and cries out, "Lord, now I resign, I yield, possess now thy own right, I give up myself to thee. That yielding is subjection, self-devoting; in order to future service and obedience, To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey &c. ver. 16. And never did any man enrol himself, as a servant to the greatest prince on earth, with such joy. What pleasure is there in the often iterated recognition of these transactions! in multiplying such bounds upon a man's own soul (though done faintly, while the fear of breaking, checks its joy in taking them on!) When in the uttering of these words, I am thy servant, O Lord: thy servant, the son of thine hand-maid, (Psal. 116. 16.) that is, thy born-servant, (alluding to that custom and law among the Jews,) thy servant devoted to thy fear; (Psal. 119. 38.) a man finds they fit his spirit, and are aptly expressive of the true sense of his soul, is it not a grateful thing? And how pleasant is a state of life consequent and agreeable to such transactions and covenants with God! When it is meat and drink to do his will! When his zeal eats a man up; and one shall find himself secretly consuming for God! and the vigor of his soul exhaled in his service! Is it not a pleasant thing so to spend and be spent? When one can in a measure find that his will is one with God's, transformed into the divine will: that there is but one common will and interest, and end between him and us: and so, that in serving God we reign with him; in spending ourselves for him, we are perfected in him. Is not this a pleasant life? Some heathens have spoken at such a rate of

this kind of life, as might make us wonder and blush. One speaking of a virtuous person, (*Seneca de vita beata*, lib. 15.) saith; *et ut bonus miles feret vulnera, &c. he is as a good soldier that bears wounds*, and numbers scars; and last, smitten through with darts, dying, will love the emperor for whom he falls; he will (saith he) keep in mind that ancient precept, follow God. But there are that complain, cry out and groan, and are compelled by force to do his commands, and hurried into them against their will, and what a madness is it (saith he) to be drawn rather than follow? And presently after subjoins, (Epist. 96.) "We are born in a kingdom; to obey God is liberty." The same person writes in a letter to a friend: "If thou believe me when I most freely discover to thee the most secret fixed temper of my soul, in all things my mind is thus formed: I obey not God so properly as I assent to him. I follow him with all my heart, not because I cannot avoid it." And another. (Epictet. Enchir.) "Lead me to whatsoever I am appointed, and I will follow thee cheerfully; but if I refuse, or be unwilling, I shall follow notwithstanding."

A soul cast into such a mould, formed in an obediential subject frame, what sweet peace doth it enjoy! how pleasant rest! Every thing rests most composedly in its proper place. A bone out of joint knows no ease, nor lets the body enjoy any. The creature is not in its place but when it is thus subject, is in this subordination to God. By flying out of this subordination, the world of mankind is become one great disjointed body, full of weary tossings, unacquainted with ease or rest. That soul that is, but in a degree, reduced to that blessed state and temper, is as it were in a new world; so great and happy a change doth it now feel in itself. But when this transformation shall be completed in it; and the will of God shall be no sooner known than rested in with a complacential approbation; and every motion of the first and great mover shall be an efficacious law, or guide and determine all our motions; and the lesser wheels shall presently at the first impulse of the great and master-wheel, without the least rub or hesitation; when the law of sin shall no longer check the law of God; when all the contentions of a rebellious flesh; all the counter-strivings of a perverse, ungovernable heart shall cease for ever; O unconceivable blessedness of this consent, the pleasure of this joyful harmony, this peaceful accord! Obedience, where it is due but from one creature to another, carries its no small advantages with it, and conducibleness to a pleasant unsolicitous life. To be particularly prescribed to, in things, about which our minds would otherwise be tost with various apprehensions, anxious, uncertain thoughts; how great a privilege is it! I cannot forget a pertinent passage of an excellent person of recent memory.\* "And (saith he) for pleasure, I shall pro-

\*Dr. Hammond's sermon of Christ's easy yoke.



fess myself so far from doting on that popular idol, liberty, that I hardly think it possible for any kind of obedience to be more painful than an unrestrained liberty. Were there not true bounds of magistrates, of laws, of piety, of reason in the heart, every man would have a fool, I add, a mad tyrant to his master, that would multiply more sorrows, than briars and thorns did to Adam, when he was freed from the bliss at once, and the restraint of paradise; and was sure greater slave in the wilderness, than in the inclosure. Would but the Scripture permit me that kind of idolatry, the binding my faith and obedience to any one visible infallible judge or prince, were it the pope, or the mufti, or the grand Tartar; might it be reconcileable with my creed, it would certainly be with my interest, to get presently into that posture of obedience. I should learn so much of the Barbarian Ambassadors in Appian, which came on purpose to the Romans to negotiate for leave to be their servants. It would be my policy if not my piety: and may now be my wish, though not my faith, that I might never have the trouble to deliberate, to dispute, to doubt, to choose, (those so many profitless uneasinesses) but only the favor to receive commands, and the meekness to obey them. How pleasureable then must obedience be to the perfect will of the blessed God, when our wills shall also be perfectly attempered and conformed thereunto! Therefore are we taught, *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Perfectissimum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum: what is most perfect in its kind, gives rule to the rest.*

Thirdly. Love. This is an eminent part of the image or likeness of God in his saints; as it is that great attribute of the divine being that is, alone, put to give us a notion of God; God is love (1 John 4. 8. 16.) This is an excellency (consider it whether in its original, or copy) made up of pleasantness. All love hath complacency or pleasure in the nature and most formal notion of it. To search for pleasure in love is the same thing as if a man should be solicitous to find water in the sea, or light in the body of the sun. Love to a friend is not without high pleasure, when especially he is actually present, and enjoyed, love to a saint rises higher in nobleness and pleasure, according to the more excellent qualification of its object. It is now in its highest improvement, in both these aspects of it; where whatsoever tends to gratify our nature, whether as human, or holy, will be in its full perfection. Now doth the soul take up its stated dwelling in love, even in God who is love; and as he is love: it is now enclosed with love, encompassed with love, it is conversant in the proper region, and element of love. The love of God is now perfected in it. That love which is not only participated from him, but terminated in him, that perfect love (1 John. 4. 18.) casts out tormenting fear: so that here is pleasure without mixture. How naturally will the blessed soul now dissolve and

melt into pleasure ! It is new framed on purpose for love-embraces and enjoyments. It shall now love like God, as one composed of love. It shall no longer be its complaint and burden, that it cannot retaliate in this kind ; that being beloved it cannot love.

Fourthly. Purity. Herein also must the blessed soul resemble God, and delight itself. Every one that hath this hope, (namely of being hereafter like God, and seeing him as he is) purifieth himself as he is pure. A god-like purity is intimately connected with the expectation of future blessedness, much more with the fruition. "Blessed are the pure in heart ; besides the reason there annexed, for they shall see God," (which is to be considered under the other head, the pleasure unto which this likeness disposes) that proposition carries its own reason in itself. It is an incomparable pleasure that purity carries in its own nature : as sin hath in its very nature, besides its consequent guilt and sorrow, trouble and torment beyond expression. Whatsoever defiles, doth also disturb : nor do any but pure pleasures deserve the name. \*An Epicurus himself will tell us, *there cannot be pleasure without wisdom, honesty and righteousness*. It is least of all possible there should, when once a person shall have a right knowledge of himself, and (which is the moral impurity whereof we speak) the filthiness of sin. I doubt not but much of the torment of hell, will consist in those too late, and despairing self-loathings, those sickly resentments, the impure wretches will be possessed with, when they see what hideous deformed monsters their own wickedness hath made them. Here the gratifications of sense that attend it, bribe and seduce their judgments into another estimate of sin : but then it shall be no longer thought of under the more favorable notion of a γλυκύπικρον they shall taste nothing but the gall and wormwood. It is certainly no improbable thing, but that reason being now so fully rectified and undeceived, vizors torn off, and things now appearing in their own likeness ; so much will be seen, and apprehended of the intrinsic evil and malignity of their vitiated natures, as will serve for the matter of further torment ; while yet such a sight can do no more to a change of their temper, than the devil's faith doth to theirs. Such sights being accompanied with their no-hope of ever attaining a better state, do therefore no way tend to mollify or demulce their spirits, but to increase their rage and torment. It is however out of question, that the purity of heaven will infinitely enhance the pleasure of it : for it is more certain, the intrinsical goodness of holiness (which term I need not among these instances ; inasmuch as the thing admits not of one entire notion, but lies partly under this head, partly under

\*Whose doctrine as to this matter of pleasure, is not so much to be blamed as his practice; if both be rightly represented to us.

(Ex. Cicer. 1. de Fin.) Ὀυ'κ ἔστιν ἡδέως ζῆν ἀνευ τῆ φρονησέως καὶ δικαιοσέως.

the second, that of devotedness to God) will be fully understood in heaven, than the intrinsical evil of sin in hell: and when it is understood, will it not effect? will it not please? Even here, how pleasing are things to the pure (but in degree so) that partipate of the divine purity! Thy word is very pure, saith the psalmist, Psal. 117, 140. therefore thy servant loveth it. Under this notion do holy ones take pleasure in each other; because they see somewhat of the divine likeness, their Father's image, in one another: will it not be much more pleasing to find it each one perfect in himself? to feel the ease and peace, and rest, that naturally goes with it? A man that hath any love of cleanliness, if casually plunged into the mire, he knows not what to do with himself, he fancies his own clothes to abhor him (as Job rhetorically speaks, Job. 9.) so doth as natural a pleasure attend purity; it hath it even in itself. The words of the pure (saith the wise man) are pleasant words (Prov. 15. 20.) words of pleasantness it might be read. That pure breath that goes from him, is not without a certain pleasurable accompanying it. And if so to another, much more to himself, especially when every thing corresponds; and (as the expression is) he finds himself clean throughout.

Fifthly. Liberty, another part of the divine likeness, wherein we are to imitate God, cannot but be an unspeakable satisfaction. Supposing such a state of the notion of the liberty as may render it really a perfection; which otherwise it would be a wickedness to impute to God, and an impossibility to partake from him. I here speak of the moral liberty of a saint, as such; not of the natural liberty of a man, as a man: and of the liberty consummate of saints in glory not of the inchoate imperfect liberty of saints on earth. And therefore the intricate controversies about the liberty of the human will, lie out of our way, and need not give us any trouble. It is out of question that this liberty consists not (what ever may be said of any other) in an equal propension to good or evil; nor in the will's independency on the practical understanding; nor in a various uncertain mutability, or inconstancy; nor is it such as is opposed to all necessity; it is not a liberty from the government of God,\* nor from a determination to the simply best, and most eligible objects. But it is a liberty from the servitude of sin, from the seduction of a misguided judgment, and the allurements of any insnaring forbidden object: consisting in an unbounded amplitude and enlargedness of soul towards God, and indetermination to any inferior good: resulting from an entire subjection to the divine will, a submission to the order of God, and steady adherence to him.

\*Which is a no more desirable state than that which, I remember, the historian tells us was the condition of the Armenians; who having cast off the government that was over them, became *Incerti, solutique et magis sine Domino quam in libertate*. Unsettled, licentious, and rather in a state of anarchy than of freedom.

And unto which the many descriptions and elogies agree most indisputably, which from sundry authors are congested together by Gibieuf,\* in that ingenious tractate of liberty. As that, he is free that lives as he will, (from Cicero insisted on by S. Aug. de Civit. Dei lib. 14. c. 25.) that is who never wishes any thing, nor fears any thing; who in all things acquiesces in the will of God; who minds nothing but his own things, and accounts nothing his own but God; who favors nothing but God; who is moved only by the will of God. Again; he is free, that cannot be hindered, being willing, nor forced being unwilling (from Epictetus) that is who hath always his will; as having perfectly subjected it to the will of God, as the same author explains himself. Again; he is free that is master of himself (from the Civilians) that is (as that liberty respects the spirit of a man) that hath a mind independent on any thing foreign and alien to himself. That only follows God (from Philo Judeus;) that lives according to his own reason (from Aristotle :) with many more of like import; that alone does fully and perfectly suit that state of liberty the blessed soul shall hereafter eternally enjoy; as that author often acknowledges.

This is "the glorious liberty of the children of God; the liberty wherewith the Son makes free. Liberty indeed, measured and regulated by the royal law of liberty, and which is perfected only in a perfect conformity thereto. There is a most servile † liberty, a being free from righteousness, ‡ which under that specious name and show, enslaves a man to corruption: || and there is as free service, by which a man is still the more free, by how much the more he serves, and is subject to his superior's will, and governing influences; and by how much the less possible it is, he should swerve therefrom. § The nearest approaches there-

\**Libertas nostra non est subjectio ad Deum formaliter, sed amplitudo consequens eam.* Our liberty consists formally not in our subjection unto God, but in that enlargedness of soul which is its result. Gibieuf, *De libert. Dei et creaturæ*, lib. 1. c. 32.

†*Quam invexere sibi, adjuvant servitatem. Et sunt, quodammodo, propria Libertate captivi.* They promote the servitude which they have brought upon themselves. And they are in a sense slaves to their liberty. (Boeth. ex Gib.) *Nectit quæ valeat trahi catenam.* He forges his own chain. *Sen. Trag.*

‡*Rom. 6. 20.*

||*2 Pet. 2.*

§*Liberior quo divinæ gratiæ subjectior. Primum Liberum arbitrium, quod homini datum est, quando primum creatus est rectus, potuit non peccare; sed potuit et peccare. Hoc autem novissimum eò potentius erit, quo peccare non potuit.* The more subject to divine grace the more free. That original free will which was given to men when he was created in rectitude gave the power of avoiding sin; but it also gave the power of committing it; whereas that which is now bestowed is inferior to the former as it includes the possibility of sinning. *Aug. de Civitat. Dei lib. 22. c. 30.*

fore of the soul to God; its most intimate union with him, and entire subjection to him in its glorified state, makes its liberty consummate. Now is its deliverance complete, its bands are fallen off; it is perfectly disentangled from all the snares of death, in which it was formerly held; it is under no restraints, oppressed by no weights, held down by no clogs; it hath the free exercise of all its powers; hath every faculty and affection at command. How unconceivable a pleasure is this? With what delight doth the poor prisoner entertain himself, when his manacles and fetters are knocked off! when he is enlarged from his loathsome dungeon, and the house of his bondage; breathes in a free air; can dispose of himself, and walk at liberty whither he will! The bird escaped from his cage, or freed from his line and stone, that resisted its vain and too feeble strugglings before; how pleasantly doth it range! with what joy doth it clap its wings, and take its flight! A faint emblem of the joy, wherewith that pleasant cheerful note shall one day be sung and chanted forth, Our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. There is now no place for such a complaint, I would, but I cannot; I would turn my thoughts to glorious objects, but I cannot. The blessed soul feels itself free from all confinement: nothing resists its will, as its will doth never resist the will of God. It knows no limits, no restraints; is not tied up to this or that particular good; but expatiates freely in the immense universal all-comprehending goodness of God himself.\* And this liberty is the perfect image and likeness of the liberty of God, especially in its consummate state. In its progress towards it, it increases as the soul draws nearer to God; which nearer approach is not in respect of place or local nearness, but likeness and conformity to him; in respect whereof, as God is most sublime and excellent in himself, so is it in him. Its consummate liberty is, when it is so fully transformed into that likeness of God, as that he is all to it, as to himself: so that as he is an infinite satisfaction to himself; his likeness in this respect, is the very satisfaction itself of the blessed soul.

\* *Libertas nostra inhæret divinæ, ut exemplari et in perpetua ejus imitatione versatur, sive ortum, sive progressum, sive consummationem ejus intuearis: Libertas nostra, in ortu, est capacitas Dei. In progressu, libertas res est longe clarior: progressus enim attenditur penes accessum hominis ad Deum; qui quidem non locali propinquitate, sed imitatione, et assimilatione constat, et ea utique imitatione et assimilatione secundum quam, sicut Deus est sublimis, et excelsus seipso ita homo est sublimis, et excelsus Deo, et altitudo ejus Deus est ut inquit D. Augustinus. Our liberty follows the liberty of God as its pattern, and consists in the perpetual imitation of him, whether you consider its rise, or progress, or consummation. Our liberty in its rise is the power of God: in its progress, liberty is a thing greatly increasing in brightness; for that progress is according to the nearer approach of man to God, which consists not in local nearness, but an imitation and conformity to him, so that as God is sublime and excellent in himself; so man is sublime and excellent in God: and God is his exaltation as saith Augustine. Con-*

Sixthly. Tranquillity. This also is an eminent part of that assimilation to God, wherein the blessedness of the holy soul must be understood to lie: a perfect composure, a perpetual and everlasting calm, an eternal vacancy from all unquietness or perturbation. Nothing can be supposed more inseparably agreeing to the nature of God than this: whom scripture witnesses to be without variableness or shadow of change. There can be no commotion without mutation, nor can the least mutation have place in a perfectly simple and uncompounded nature: whence even pagan reason hath been wont to attribute the most undisturbed and unalterable tranquillity to the nature of God. Balaam knew it was incompatible to him to lie, or repent. And (supposing him to speak this from a present inspiration) it is their common doctrine concerning God. *Omnes turbula tempestates que procul a Deorum caelestium tranquillitate exulant, &c.* (*Apuleius de Deo Socratis.*) Any, the least troubles and tempests are far exiled from the tranquillity of God; for all the inhabitants of heaven do ever enjoy the same stable tenor, even an eternal equality of mind. And a little after speaking of God, saith he, it is neither possible he should be moved by the force of another, for nothing is stronger than God: nor of his own accord, for nothing is more perfect than God. And whereas there is somewhat that is mutable, and subject to change; somewhat that is stable and fixed. Another saith—Ἐν ποτέρῃ τῶν φύσεων τῶν θεῶν τακτέον; ἄρα οὐκ ἐν στασιμώτερά καὶ ἑδραιωτέρα, καὶ ἀπηλλαγμένη τῆ ῥεύματος τατα, &c. *In which of those natures shall we place God? must we not in that which is more stable and fixed, and free from this fluidness and mutability? For what is there among all beings, that can be stable or consist, if God do not by his own touch stay and sustain the nature of it?* (Max. Tyr.) desert. 1.

Hence it is made a piece of conformity, of likeness to God, by another who tells his friend, *Quod desideras autem magnum, summum est, Deoque vicinum; non concuti.* It is a high and great thing which thou desirest, and even bordering upon a Deity; not to be moved. (*Sen. de tranquil. Animi.*) Yea, so hath

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summatio denique libertatis est, cum homo in Deum, felicissimo gloriæ caelestis statu transformatur; et Deus omnia illi esse incipit. Qui quidem postremus status, eo differt a priore;—quippe homo tum non modo inalligatus est creaturis, sed nec circa illas procedit, ut faciebat cum esset, in creaturis se infundit, nec per illas procedit, ut faciebat cum esset, viator: sed in solo Deo, et conquiescit et effundit se placidissime, et motus ejus, cum sit ad presentissimum et conjunctissimum bonum, similior est quieti quam motui. The consummation of liberty therefore is when man is transformed into the likeness of God in the happy state of celestial glory, and when God begins to be his all. Which last state is so different from the preceding, because then man is not only unfettered from the creatures, but is not at all concerned about them, even with respect to his final object, he neither immerses himself in them nor falls by them, as was the case when he was a pilgrim: but in God alone he both rests and pours himself out with the greatest tranquillity; and the very motion of his soul as it is towards a most immediately and perfect good is more like rest than motion.

this doctrine been insisted on by them, that (while other divine perfections have been less understood,) it hath occasioned the stoical assertion of fatality to be introduced on the one hand, and the Epicurean negation of providence on the other; lest any thing should be admitted that might seem repugnant to the tranquillity of their Numina. But we know that our God doth whatsoever pleaseth him, both in heaven and earth; and that he doth all according to the wise counsel of his holy will; freely, not fatally, upon the eternal prevision, and foresight of all circumstances and events: so that nothing can occur that is new to him, nothing that he knows not how to improve to good; or that can therefore infer any alteration of his counsels, or occasion to him the least perturbation or disquiet in reference to them.

Holy souls begin herein to imitate him, as soon as they first give themselves up to his wise and gracious conduct. It is enough that he is wise for himself and them. Their hearts safely trust in him. They commit themselves, with unsollicitous confidence, to his guidance; knowing he cannot himself be mis-led, and that he will not mis-lead them: as Abraham followed him, not knowing whither he went. And thus, by faith, they enter into his rest. They do now in their present state, only enter into it, or hover about the borders: their future assimilation to God in this, gives them a stated settlement of spirit in this rest. They before did owe their tranquillity to their faith: now to their actual fruition. Their former acquiescency, and sedate temper was hence, that they believed God would deal well with them at last: their present, for that he hath done so. Those words have now, their fullest sense (both as to the rest itself which they mention; and the season of it) Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. Psal. 116. 7. The occasions of trouble, and a passive temper of spirit are ceased together. There is now no fear without, nor terror within. The rage of the world is now allayed, it storms no longer. Reproach and persecution have found a period. There is no more dragging before tribunals, nor haling into prisons; no more running into dens and deserts; or wandering to and fro in sheepskins, and goatskins. And with the cessation of the external occasions of trouble, the inward dispositions thereto are also ceased. All infirmities of spirit, tumultuating passions, unmortified corruptions, doubts, or imperfect knowledge of the love of God, are altogether vanished, and done away for ever. And indeed, that perfect cure wrought within, is the soul's great security from all future disquiet. A well tempered spirit hath been wont strangely to preserve its own peace in this unquiet world. Philosophy hath boasted much in this kind; and Christianity performed more. The philosophical *(γαλήνη, or)* calmness of mind, is not without its excellency and praise: "That stable settlement and fixedness of spirit, that *εὐθυμία* (as the moralist tells us, it was

wont to be termed among the Grecians, and which he calls tranquillity;) when the mind is always equal, and goes a smooth, even course, is propitious to itself, and beholds the things that concern it with pleasure, and interrupts not this joy, but remains in a placid state, never at any time exalting or depressing itself." But how far doth the Christian peace surpass it! (Sen. de tranquill. anim.) that peace which passeth all understanding; Phil. 4. 7.) that amidst surrounding dangers, enables the holy soul to say (without a proud boast) None of all these things move me: (Act. 20. 24.) the peace that immediately results from that faith, which unites the soul with God, and fixes it upon him as its firm basis: when it is kept in perfect peace, by being stayed upon him, because it trusts in him: when the heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; filled full of joy and peace, or of joyous peace, (by an *ἐν δὲ δυνάμει*) in believing, Isa. 26. 3. Psal. 112. 7. Rom. 15. 13. And if philosophy and (which far transcends it) christianity, reason and faith, have that statique power, can so compose the soul, and reduce it to so quiet a consistency in the midst of storms and tempests; how perfect and contentful a repose, will the immediate vision, and enjoyment of God afford it, in that serene and peaceful region, where it shall dwell forever, free from any molestation from without, or principle of disrest within!

## CHAPTER IX.

(2.) The pleasure arising from knowing, or considering ourselves to be like God from considering it, [1.] Absolutely, [2.] Comparatively, or respectively; First, To the former state of the soul. Secondly, To the state of lost souls. Thirdly, To its pattern. Fourthly, To the way of accomplishment. Fifthly, To the soul's own expectations. Sixthly, To what it secures. 2. The pleasure whereto it disposes. (1.) Of Union, (2.) Communion—a comparison of this righteousness, with this blessedness.

(2.) Here is also to be considered, the pleasure and satisfaction involved in this assimilation to God, as it is known or reflected on, or that arises from the *cognosci* of this likeness. We have hitherto discoursed of the pleasure of being like God, as that is apprehended by a spiritual sensation, a feeling of that inward rectitude, that happy pleasure of souls now perfectly restored: we have yet to consider a further pleasure, which accrues from the soul's animadversion upon itself, its contemplating itself thus happily transformed. And though that very sensation be not without some animadversion (as indeed no sensible percep-



tion can be performed without it,) yet we must conceive a consequent animadversion, which is much more explicit and distinct; and which therefore yields a very great addition of satisfaction and delight: as when the blessed soul shall turn its eye upon itself, and designedly compose and set itself to consider its present state and frame; the consideration it shall now have of itself and this likeness impressed upon it, may be either absolute, or comparative and respective.

[1.] Absolute. How pleasing a spectacle will this be, when the glorified soul shall now intently behold its own glorious frame? when it shall dwell in the contemplation of itself? view itself round on every part, turn its eye from glory to glory, from beauty to beauty, from one excellency to another: and trace over the whole draught of this image, this so exquisite piece of divine workmanship, drawn out in its full perfection upon itself? when the glorified eye, and divinely enlightened and inspirited mind, shall apply itself to criticise, and make a judgement upon every several lineament, every touch and stroke; shall stay itself, and scrupulously insist upon every part; view at leisure every character of glory the blessed God hath instamped upon it; how will this likeness now satisfy! And that expression of the blessed apostle (taken notice of upon some other occasion formerly) "the glory to be revealed in us," seems to import in it a reference to such a self-intuition. What serves revelation for, but in order to vision? what is it, but an exposing things to view? And what is revealed in us, is chiefly exposed to our own view. All the time, from the soul's first conversion till now, God hath been as it were at work upon it, (He that hath wrought us to, &c. 2. Cor. 5. 5.) hath been laboring it, shaping it, polishing it, spreading his own glory upon it, inlaying, enameling it with glory: now at last, the whole work is revealed, the curtain is drawn aside, the blessed soul awakes. "Come now," saith God, "behold my work, see what I have done upon thee, let my work now see the light; I dare expose it to the censure of the most curious eye, let thine own have the pleasure of beholding it." It was a work carried on in a mystery, secretly wrought (as in the lower parts of the earth, as we alluded before) by a spirit that came and went no man could tell how. Besides, that in the general only we knew we should be like him, it did not yet appear what we should be; now it appears: there is a revelation of this glory. O the ravishing pleasure of its first appearance! and it will be a glory always fresh and flourishing, (as Job's expression is, "my glory was fresh in me") and will afford a fresh, undecaying pleasure for ever.

[2.] The blessed soul may also be supposed to have a comparative and respective consideration of the impressed glory. That is, so as to compare it with, and refer it to several things that may come into consideration with it: and may so heighten its own delight in the contemplation thereof.

First. If we consider this impression of glory, in reference to its former loathsome deformities that were upon it, and which are now vanished and gone : how unconceivable a pleasure will arise from this comparison ! When the soul shall consider at once what it is, and what once it was, and thus bethink itself : I that did sometimes bear the accursed image of the prince of darkness, do now represent and partake of the holy, pure nature of the Father of lights : I was a mere chaos, a hideous heap of deformity, confusion and darkness, but he that made light to shine out of darkness, shined into me, to give the knowledge of the light of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ ; (2. Cor. 4. 6.) and since, made my way as the shining light, shining brighter and brighter unto this perfect day. Prov. 4. 18. I was a habitation for dragons, a cage of noisome lusts, that as serpents and vipers, were winding to and fro through all my faculties and powers, and preying upon my very vitals ; then was I hateful to God, and a hater of him ; sin and vanity had all my heart ; the charming invitations, and allurements of grace, were as music to a dead man ; to think a serious thought of God, or breathe forth an affectionate desire after him, was as much against my heart, as to pluck out mine own eyes, or offer violence to mine own life ; after I began to live the spiritual, new life, how slow and faint was my progress and tendency towards perfection ! how indisposed did I find myself to the proper actions of that life ; to go about any holy, spiritual work, was too often, as to climb a hill, or strive against the stream ; or as an attempt to fly without wings. I have sometimes said to my heart, Come, now let us go pray, love God, think of heaven ; but O how listless to these things ! how lifeless in them, impressions made, how quickly lost ! gracious frames, how soon wrought off and gone ! characters of glory razed out, and overspread with earth and dirt ! divine comeliness hath now at length made me perfect : the glory of God doth now inclothe me ; they are his ornaments I now wear. He hath made me, who lately lay among the pots, as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold ; he hath put another nature into me, the true likeness of his own holy divine nature ; he hath now perfectly mastered and wrought out the enmity of my heart against him : now to be with God is my very element : loving, admiring, praising him, are as natural as breathing once was. I am all spirit and life, I feel myself disburdened, and unclogged of all the heavy, oppressive weights that hung upon me : no body of death doth now incumber me, no deadness of heart, no coldness of love, no drowsy sloth, no averseness from God, no earthly mind, no sensual inclinations or affections, no sinful divisions of heart between God and creatures : he hath now the whole of me : I enjoy and delight in none but him : O blessed change ! O happy day !

Secondly. If in contemplating itself, clothed with this likeness, it respects the state of damned souls, what transports must that occasion! what ravishing resentments! when it compares human nature in its highest perfection, with the same nature in its utmost depravation, (an unspeakably more unequal comparison than that would be, of the most amiable lovely person, flourishing in the prime of youthful strength and beauty, with a putrified rotten carcass, deformed by the corruption of a loathsome grave,) when glorified spirits shall make such a reflection as this: Lo, here we shine in the glorious brightness of the divine image; and behold yonder deformed accursed souls: they were as capable of this glory as we; had the same nature with us, the same reason, the same intellectual faculties and powers; but what monsters are they now become? They eternally hate the eternal excellency. Sin and death are finished upon them. They have each of them a hell of horror and wickedness in itself. Whence is this amazing difference! Though this cannot but be an awful wonder, it cannot also but be tempered with pleasure and joy.

Thirdly. We may suppose this likeness to be considered in reference to its pattern, and in comparison therewith; which will then be another way of heightening the pleasure that shall arise thence. Such a frame and constitution of spirit is full of delights in itself: but when it shall be referred to its original, and the correspondency between the one and the other be observed and viewed; how exactly they accord, and answer each other, as face doth face in the water: this cannot still but add pleasure to pleasure, one delight to another. When the blessed soul shall interchangeably turn its eye to God, and itself; and consider the agreement of glory to glory; the several derived excellencies to the original; He is wise, and so am I; holy, and so am I: I am now made perfect as my heavenly Father is; this gives a new relish to the former pleasure. How will this likeness please under that notion, as it is his; a likeness to him! O the accent that will be put upon those appropriate words, to be made partakers of his holiness, and of the divine nature! Personal excellencies in themselves considered, cannot be reflected on, but with some pleasure; but to the ingenuity of a child, how especially grateful will it be, to observe in itself such and such graceful deportments, wherein it naturally imitates its father! So he was wont to speak, and act, and demean himself. How natural is it unto love to affect and aim at the imitation of the person loved! So natural it must be to take complacency therein; when we have hit our mark, and achieved our design. The pursuits and attainments of love are proportionable and correspondent each to other. And what heart can compass the greatness of this thought, to be made like God! Lord, was there no lower pattern than thyself, thy glorious blessed self, according to

which to form a worm! This cannot want its due resentments in a glorified state.

Fourthly. This transformation of the blessed soul into the likeness of God, may be viewed by it, in reference to the way of accomplishment: as an end, brought about by so amazing stupendous means: which will certainly be a pleasing contemplation. When it reflects on the method and course insisted on, for bringing this matter to pass; views over the work of redemption in its tendency to this end, the restoring God's image in souls; (Phil. 2. 7.) considers Christ manifested to us, in order to his being revealed and formed in us: that God was made in the likeness of man to make men after the likeness of God; that he partook with us of the human nature, that we might with him partake of the divine; that he assumed our flesh, in order to impart to us his Spirit: when it shall be considered, for this end had we so many great and precious promises; (2 Pet. 1. 4.) for this end did the glory of the Lord shine upon us through the glass of the gospel; (2 Cor. 3. 18.) that we might be made partakers, &c. that we might be changed; &c. Yea, when it shall be called to mind, (though it be far from following hence, that this is the only or principal way, wherein the life and death of Christ have influence, in order to our eternal happiness) that our Lord Jesus lived for this end, that we might learn so to walk, as he also walked; that he died that we might be conformed to his death; that he rose again that we might with him attain the resurrection of the dead; that he was in us the hope of glory, that he might be in us (that is, the same image that bears his name) our final consummate glory itself also: with what pleasure will these harmonious congruities, these apt correspondencies, be looked into at last! Now may the glorified saint say, I here see the end the Lord Jesus came into the world for, I see for what he was lifted up, made a spectacle; that he might be a transforming one: what the effusions of his Spirit were for; why it so earnestly strove with my wayward heart. I now behold in my own soul, the fruit of the travail of his soul. This was the project of redeeming love, the design of all powerful gospel-grace. Glorious achievements! blessed end of that great and notable undertaking! happy issue of that high design!

Fifthly. With a reference to all their own expectations and endeavors. When it shall be considered by a saint in glory; the attainment of this perfect likeness to God, was the utmost mark of all my designs and aims; the term of all my hopes and desires: this is that I longed and labored for; that which I prayed and waited for; which I so earnestly breathed after, and restlessly pursued: it was but to recover the defacedness of God: to be again made like him, as once I was. Now I have attained my end; I have the fruit of all my labor and travels; I see now the truth of those (often) encouraging words, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Be not weary in well-doing, for ye shall reap, if ye faint not : what would I once have given for a steady, abiding frame of holiness, for a heart constantly bent and biased toward God ; constantly serious, constantly tender, lively, watchful, heavenly, spiritual, meek, humble, cheerful, self-denying ? how have I cried and striven for this, to get such a heart ! such a temper of spirit ! how have I pleaded with God and my own soul, in order hereto ! how often over have I spread this desire before the searcher and judge of hearts ; Turn me out of all my worldly comforts, so thou give me but such a heart ; let me spend my days in a prison, or a desert, so I have but such a heart ; I refuse no reproaches, no losses, no tortures, may I but have such a heart ? How hath my soul been sometimes ravished with the very thoughts of such a temper of spirit, as hath appeared amiable in my eye, but I could not attain ? and what a torture again hath it been that I could not ? What grievance in all the world, in all the days of my vanity, did I ever find comparable to this ; to be able to frame to myself by Scripture, and rational light and rules, the notion and idea of an excellent temper of spirit ; and then to behold it, to have it in view, and not be able to reach it, to possess my soul of it ? What indignation have I sometimes conceived against mine own soul, when I have found it wandering, and could not reduce it ; hovering, and could not fix it ; dead, and could not quicken it ; low, and could not raise it ? How earnestly have I expected this blessed day, when all those distempers should be perfectly healed, and my soul recover a healthy, lively, spiritual frame ? What fresh ebullitions of joy will here be, when all former desires, hopes, endeavors are crowned with success and fruit ! This joy is the joy of harvest. They that have sown in tears, do now reap in joy. They that went out weeping, bearing precious seed ; now with rejoicing, bring their sheaves with them. Psal. 126. 6.

Sixthly. In reference to what this impressed likeness shall for ever secure to it : an everlasting amity and friendship with God ; —that *it* shall never sin, nor *he* ever frown more.—That it shall sin no more. The perfected image of God in it, is its security for this : for it is holy throughout ; in every point conformed to his nature and will ; there remains in it nothing contrary to him. It may therefore certainly conclude, it shall never be liable to the danger of doing any thing, but what is good in his sight : and what solace will the blessed soul find in this ! If now an angel from heaven should assure it, that from such an hour it should sin no more, the world would not be big enough to hold such a soul. It hath now escaped the deadliest of dangers, the worst of deaths, (and which even in its present state, upon more deliberate calmer thoughts it accounts so) the sting of death, the very deadliness of death ; the hell of hell itself. The deliverance is now complete which cannot but end in delight and praise.

—That God can never frown more. This it is hence also assured of. How can he but take perfect, everlasting complacency in his own perfect likeness and image; and behold with pleasure his glorious workmanship, now never liable to impairment or decay? How pleasant a thought is this, “The blessed God never beholds me but with delight! I shall always behold his serene countenance, his amiable face never covered with any clouds, never darkened with any frown! I shall now have cause to complain no more; my God is a stranger to me, he conceals himself, I cannot see his face; lo, he is encompassed with clouds and darkness, or with flames and terrors.” These occasions are for ever ceased. God sees no cause, either to behold the blessed soul with displeasure, or with displeasure to avert from it, and turn off his eye. And will not this eternally satisfy! When God himself is so well pleased, shall not we!

2. The pleasure it disposes to. Besides that the inbeing and knowledge of this likeness are so satisfying; it disposes, and is the soul’s qualification for a yet further pleasure:—that of closest union, and most inward communion with the blessed God.

(1.) Union: which (what it is more than relation) is not till now complete. Besides relation it must needs import presence: not physical, or local; for so nothing can be nearer God than it is: but moral and cordial, by which the holy soul with will and affections, guided by rectified reason and judgment, closes with, and embraces him; and he also upon wise forelaid counsel, and with infinite delight and love embraceth it: so friends are said to be one (besides their relation as friends) by a union of hearts. A union between God and the creature, as to kind and nature higher than this, and lower than hypostatical or personal union, I understand not, and therefore say nothing of it. I would fain know what the *Tertium* shall be, resulting from the physical union, some speak of.

But as to the union here mentioned: as, till the image of God be perfected, it is not completed; so it cannot but be perfect then. When the soul is perfectly formed according to God’s own heart, and fully participates the divine likeness, is perfectly like him; that likeness cannot but infer the most intimate union that two such natures can admit: that is, (for nature) a love-union; such as that which our Saviour mentions, and prays to the Father to perfect, between themselves and all believers, and among believers, mutually with one another. Many much trouble themselves about this scripture; (John 17. 21.) but sure that can be no other than a love-union. For, it is such a union as christians are capable of among themselves; for surely he would never pray that they might be one with a union whereof they are not capable. It is such a union as may be made visible to the world. Whence it is an obvious corollary, that the union between the Father and the Son, there spoken of as the pattern

of this, is not their union or oneness in essence (though it be a most acknowledged thing, that there is such an essential union between them;) for, who can conceive that saints should be one among themselves, and with the Father and the Son, with such a union as the Father and the Son are one themselves, if the essential union between Father and Son were the union here spoken of; but the exemplary or pattern-union, here mentioned between the Father and Son, is but a union in mind, in love, in design, and interest; wherein he prays, that saints on earth might visibly be one with them also, that the world might believe, &c. It is yet a rich pleasure that springs up to glorified saints from that love-union (now perfected) between the blessed God and them. It is mentioned and shadowed in Scripture, under the name and notion of marriage-union; in which the greatest mutual complacency is always supposed a necessary ingredient. To be thus joined to the Lord, and made as it were one spirit with him; (1 Cor. 6. 17.) for the eternal God to cleave in love to a nothing-creature, as his likeness upon it engages him to do; is this no pleasure, or a mean one?

(2.) Communion: unto which that union is fundamental and introductive; and which follows it upon the same ground, from a natural propensity of like to like. There is nothing now to hinder God and the holy soul of the most inward fruitions and enjoyments; no animosity, no strangeness, no unsuitableness on either part. Here the glorified spirits of the just have liberty to solace themselves amidst the rivers of pleasure at God's own right hand, without check or restraint. They are pure, and these pure. They touch nothing that can defile, they defile nothing they can touch. They are not now forbidden the nearest approaches to the *once* inaccessible Majesty; there is no holy of holies into which they may not enter, no door locked up against them. They may have free admission into the innermost secret of the divine presence, and pour forth themselves in the most liberal effusions of love and joy: as they must be the eternal subject of those infinitely richer communications from God, even of immense and boundless love and goodness. Do not debase this pleasure by low thoughts, nor frame too daring, positive apprehensions of it. It is yet a secret to us. The eternal converses of the King of glory with glorified spirits, are only known to himself and them. That expression (which we so often meet in our way) "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," seems left on purpose to check a too curious and prying inquisitiveness into these unrevealed things. The great God will have his reserves of glory, of love, of pleasure for that future state. Let him alone awhile, with those who are already received into those mansions of glory, those everlasting habitations: he will find a time for those that are yet pilgrims and wandering exiles, to ascend and enter too. In the mean time, what we know of this

communion may be gathered up into this general account, the reciprocation of loves; the flowing and reflowing of everlasting love, between the blessed soul and its infinitely blessed God; its egress towards him, his illapses into it. Unto such pleasure doth this likeness dispose and qualify: you can no way consider it, but it appears a most pleasurable, satisfying thing.

Thus far have we shown the qualification for this blessedness, and the nature of it; What it prerequisites, and wherein it lies: and how highly congruous it is, that the former of these should be made a prerequisite to the latter, will sufficiently appear to any one that shall, in his own thoughts, compare this righteousness and this blessedness together. He will indeed plainly see, that the natural state of the case and habitude of these, each to other, make this connexion unalterable and eternal; so as that it must needs be simply impossible, to be thus blessed without being thus righteous. For what is this righteousness other than this blessedness began, the seed and principle of it? And that with as exact proportion (or rather sameness of nature) as is between the grain sown and reaped; which is more than intimated in that of the apostle, Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: (Gal. 6. 7. 8.) For he that soweth, to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; (there is the same proportion too) but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting: which though it be spoken to a peculiar case, is yet spoken from a general rule and reason applicable a great deal further. And as some conceive (and is undertaken to be demonstrated) that the seeds of things are not virtually, and formally the very things themselves: (*Dr. Harv. de Ovo.*) so is it here also. The very parts of this blessedness are discernible in this righteousness, the future vision of God in present knowledge of him: for this knowledge is a real initial part of righteousness; the rectitude of the mind and apprehensions concerning God, consisting in conformity to his revelation of himself: present holiness, including also the future assimilation to God: and the contentment and peace that attends it, the consequent satisfaction in glory. But as in glory, the impression of the divine likeness, is that which vision subserves, and whence satisfaction results; so is it here (visibly) the main thing also. The end and design of the Gospel revelation, \*of whole Christianity (I mean systematically considered,) of all Evangelical doctrines and knowledge, is to restore God's likeness and image, from whence joy and peace

\* *Πῶς οὖν γινόμεθα καθ' ὁμοίωσιν; δια' τῶν εὐαγγελίων. Τί ἐστὶ χριστιανισμός; θεῶ ὁμοιώσις: κατὰ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ἀρθρωπῆ φύσει; how then are we made after the likeness of God? By the gospel What is Christianity? The likeness of God, so far as the nature of man admits of it. Greg. Nyss. in verba Faciamus hominem, &c. Gregory Nyssen on the words "Let us make man," &c. Orat. 1.*



result of course, when once the gospel is believed. The gospel is the instrument of impressing God's likeness, in order whereunto it must be understood, and received into the mind. Being so, the impression upon the heart and life is Christianity, habitual and practical, whereupon joy and pleasure (the belief or thorough reception of the gospel thus intervening) do necessarily ensue, Rom. 15. 13. So aptly is the only way or method of seeing God's face, so as to be satisfied with his likeness, said to be, in or through righteousness.

## CHAPTER X.

Having considered the qualified subject, and the nature of this blessedness we come now as proposed in head of chapter II. to consider, *Thirdly*. The season of this satisfaction, which is twofold; at death, and at the resurrection. 1. The former spoken to; wherein is shown, (1.) That this life is to the soul (even of a saint) but as a sleep: (2.) That at death it awakes. 2. As to the latter; that there is a considerable accession to its happiness at the resurrection.

*Thirdly*. The season of this blessedness, comes next to be considered; which (as the words "when I awake," have been concluded here to import) must, in the general, be stated, beyond the time of this present life. Holy souls are here truly blessed, not perfectly; or their present blessedness is perfect only in nature and kind, not in degree. It is, in this respect, as far short of perfection as their holiness is. Their hunger and thirst are present, their being filled is yet future. The experience of saints in their best state on earth, their desires, their hopes, their sighs and groans do sufficiently witness they are not satisfied; or if they be in point of security, they are not in point of enjoyment. The completion of this blessedness is reserved to a better state, as its being the end of their way, their rest from their labors, the reward of their work, (Matt. 5. 6.) doth import and require. Therefore many scriptures that speak of their present rest, peace repose, satisfaction, must be understood in a comparative, not the absolute highest sense. More particularly, in that other state, the season of their blessedness is twofold; or there are two terms from whence (in respect of some gradual or modal diversifications) it may be said severally to commence, or bear date, namely—The time of their entrance upon a blessed immortality, when they shall have laid down their earthly bodies in death; and—of their consummation therein when they receive their bodies glorified, in the general resurrection. Both these may not unfitly

be signified by the phrase in the text "when I awake:" For, though Scripture doth more directly apply the term of awaking to the latter, there will be no violence done to the metaphor, if we extend its signification to the former also. To which purpose it is to be noted, that it is not death formerly, or the disanimating of the body, we would have here to be understood by it, (which indeed sleeping would more aptly signify than awaking) but, what is co-incident therewith in the same period, the ex-citation, and revival of the soul. When the body falls asleep, then doth the spirit awake; and the eye-lids of the morning, even of an eternal day, do now first open upon it.

1. Therefore we shall not exclude from this season the intro-ductive state of blessedness, which takes its beginning from the blessed soul's first entrance into the invisible state. And the fitness of admitting it will appear by clearing these two things—that its condition in this life, even at the best, is in some sort but asleep: and—that when it passes out of it into the invisible regions, it is truly said to awake.

(1.) Its abode in this mortal body, is but a continual sleep; its senses are bound up; a drowsy slumber possesses and suspends all its faculties and powers. Before the renovating change, how frequently do the Scriptures speak of sinners as men asleep? Let not us sleep as do others. Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead, &c. (1. Thes. 5. 6. Eph. 5. 14.) They are in a dead sleep, under the sleep of death; they apprehend things as men asleep. How slight, obscure, hovering notions have they of the most momentous things! and which it most concerns them to have thorough real apprehensions of! All their thoughts of God, Christ, heaven, hell, of sin, of holiness, are but uncertain, wild guesses, blind hallucinations, incoherent fancies; the absurdity and inconcinnity whereof, they no more reflect upon than men asleep. They know not these things, but only dream of them. They put darkness for light, and light for darkness; have no senses exercised to discern between good and evil. The most substantial realities are with them mere shadows and chimeras; fancied and imagined dangers startle them (as it is wont to be with men in a dream) real ones, though never so near them, they as little fear as they. The creature of their own imagination, the lion in the way, which they dream of in their slothful slumber, affrights them; but the real roaring lion that is ready to devour them, they are not afraid of.

And conversion doth but relax, and intermit; it doth not totally break off this sleep: it, as it were, attenuates the consop-iting fumes, doth not utterly dispel them. What a difficulty is it to watch but one hour? There are some lucid and vivid inter-vals, but of how short continuance? how soon doth the awa-kened soul close its heavy eyes and fall asleep again? how often do temptations surprize even such, in their slumbering fits, while,

no sense of their danger can prevail with them to watch and pray (with due care and constancy) lest they enter therein. So well doth the apostle's watch-word suit our case, Awake to righteousness, and sin not, &c. 1 Cor. 15. 34. we keep not our spirits in a watchful considering posture. Our eyes, that should be ever towards the Lord, will not be kept open, and though we resolve, we forget ourselves; before we are aware, we find ourselves overtaken; sleep comes on upon us like an armed man and we cannot avert it. How often do we hear, and read, and pray, and meditate as persons asleep, as if we knew not what we were about? How remarkable useful providences escape either our notice or due improvement, amidst our secure slumbers? How many visits from Heaven are lost to us, when we are, as it were between sleeping and waking, I sleep, but my heart waketh, (Cant. 5. 2.) and hardly own the voice that calls upon us, till our beloved hath withdrawn himself? Indeed, what is the whole of our life here but a dream? the entire scene of this sensible world but a vision of the night; where every man walks but in a vain show? (Psal. 39. 6.) where we are mocked with shadows, and our credulous sense abused by impostures and delusive appearances? Nor are we ever secure from the most destructive, mischievous deception, further than as our souls are possessed with the apprehensions, that this is the very truth of our case; and thence instructed to consider, and not to prefer the shadows of time before the great realities of eternity.

Nor is this sleep casual, but even connatural to our present state, the necessary result of so strict a union and commerce with the body; which is to the in-dwelling spirit, as a dormitory or charnel-house rather than a mansion. A soul drenched in sensuality (a Lethe that hath too little of fiction in it,) and immured in a slothful, putrid flesh, sleeps as it were by fate not by chance, and is only capable of full relief by suffering a dissolution; which it hath reason to welcome as a jubilee, and the instant of departure to sacrifice as he did, \*(with that easy and warrantable change, to make a heathen expression scriptural) *Jehovæ liberatori*, to adore and praise its great deliverer; at least (accounts being once made up, and a meetness in any measure attained for the heavenly inheritance, &c.) hath no reason to regret or dread the approaches of the eternal day, more than we do the return of the sun after a dark and longsome night. But, as the sluggard doth nothing more unwillingly than forsake his bed, nor bears any thing with more regret, than to be awaked out of his sweet sleep, though you should entice him with the pleasures of a paradise to quit a smoky, loathsome cottage;

\*Viz. Seneca. Who at the time of his death sprinkled water upon the servants about him, *addita voce, se liquorem illum libare Jovi liberatori*. Saying at the same time he designed that water as a libation to Jove his deliverer. Tacit. Annal.

so fares it with the sluggish soul, as if it were lodged in an enchanted bed: it is so fast held by the charms of the body, all the glory of the other world is little enough to tempt it out, than which there is not a more deplorable symptom of this sluggish slumbering state, So deep an oblivion (which you know is also naturally incident to sleep) hath seized it of its own country, of its alliances above, its relation to the Father and world of spirits; it takes this earth for its home, where it is both in exile and captivity at once: and (as a prince, stolen away in his infancy, and bred up in a beggar's shed) so little seeks, that it declines a better state. This is the degenerate, torpid disposition of a soul lost in flesh, and inwrapt in stupifying clay; which hath been deeply resented by some heathens. So one brings in Socrates pathetically bewailing this oblivious dreaming of his soul, "which (saith he) had seen that pulchritude (you must pardon him here the conceit of its pre-existence) that neither human voice could utter, nor eye behold, but that now, in this life, it had only some little remembrance thereof, as in a dream; being both in respect of place and condition, far removed from so pleasant sights, pressed down into an earthly station, and there encompassed with all manner of dirt and filthiness." &c. And to the same purpose Plato often speaks in the name of the same person: and particularly of the winged state of the good soul, (*πτερωμα*. In Phædro.) when apart from the body, carried in its triumphant flying chariot (of which he gives a large description, somewhat resembling Solomon's rapturous metaphor, "Before I was aware, my soul made me as the chariots of Amminadib;" (Cant. 6. 12.) but being in the body, it is with it as with a bird that hath lost its wings, it falls a sluggish weight to the earth. Which indeed is the state even of the best, in a degree, within this tabernacle. A sleepy torpor stops their flight; they can fall, but not ascend; the remains of such drowsiness do still hang even about saints themselves. The apostle therefore calls upon such, to wake out of sleep; (Rom. 13. 11.) from that consideration (as we know men are not wont to sleep so intensely towards morning) that now their salvation was nearer than when they believed, that is (as some judicious interpreters understand that place, Aretius, Beza, &c.) for that they were nearer death and eternity, than when they first became christians, though this passage be also otherwise, and not improbably, interpreted. However.

(2.) The holy soul's release and dismissal from its earthly body, which is that we propounded next to be considered, will excuss and shake off this drowsy sleep. Now is the happy season of its awaking into the heavenly, vital light of God; the blessed morning of that long desired day is now dawned upon it; the cumbersome night-vail is laid aside, and the garments of salvation and immortal glory are now put on. It hath passed through

the trouble and darkness of a wearisome night, and now is joy arrived with the morning, as we may be permitted to allude to those words of the Psalmist, (Psal. 30. 5.) though that be not supposed to be the peculiar sense. I conceive myself here not concerned operously to insist in proving, that the souls of saints sleep not in the interval between death and the general resurrection, but enjoy present blessedness. It being besides the design of a practical discourse, which rather intends the propounding and improvement of things acknowledged and agreed, for the advantage and benefit of them with whom they are so; than the discussing of things dubious and controversible. And what I here propound in order to a consequent improvement and application, should methinks pass for an acknowledged truth, among them that professedly believe, and seriously read and consider the Bible, (for mere philosophers that do not come into this account, it were impertinent to discourse with them from a text of Scripture) and where my design only obliges me to intend the handling of that, and to deliver from it what may fitly be supposed to have its ground there; unless their allegations did carry with them the shew of demonstrating the simple impossibility of what is asserted thence to the power of that God whose word we take it to be; which I have not found any thing they say to amount to. That we have reason to presume it an acknowledged thing, among them that will be concluded by Scripture,\* That the soul

\* It is true, that divers of the fathers and others have spoken, some dubiously, some very diminishingly of the blessedness of separate souls; many of those words may be seen together in that elaborate tractate of the learned Parker, de descens. lib. secund. p. 77. Yea, and his own assertion in that very page (be it spoken with reverence to the memory of so worthy a person) argues something gross, and I conceive, unwarrantable thoughts of the soul's dependance on a body of earth. His words are, *Tertium vulnus* (speaking of the prejudices the soul receives by its separation from the body) *omnes operationes etiam suas, quæ sunt præsertim ad extra, extinguit: the third wound of the soul destroys all its operations especially those which are towards external objects.* Where he makes it a difficulty to allow it any operations at all, as appears by the *præsertim* inserted. He first indeed denies it all operations and then more confidently and especially, those *ad extra*. And if he would be understood to exclude it only from its operations *ad extra* (if he take operations *ad extra* as that phrase is wont to be taken) he must then mean by it, all such operations as have their objects, not only those that have their terms to which without the agent, that is, not only all transient but all immanent acts that have their objects without them. As when we say, all God's acts *ad extra* are free; we mean it even of his immanent acts that have their objects without him, though they do not *ponere terminum extra Deum: place their term out of God*; as his election, his love of the elect. And so he must be understood to deny the separate souls, (and that with a *præsertim* too) the operations of knowing God, of loving him, and delighting in him; which are all operations *ad extra*, as having their objects *extra animam*, though their *terminus ad quem* be not so; which makes the condition of the separate souls of saints unspeakably inferior to what it was in the body, and what should occasion so dismal thought of that state of separation, I see not. Scripture gives no ground for them, but evidently

doth not sleep when it ceases to animate its earthly body, many plain texts do evince, which are amassed together by the reverend Mr. Baxter; in his *Saint's Rest*, p. 2. c. 10. some of the principal whereof I would invite any that waver in this matter seriously to consider: as the words of our Saviour to the thief on the cross, This day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23. 43.) That of the apostle, we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. (2. Cor. 5. 8.) And that, I am in a straight, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. (Phil. 1. 23.) that passage, the spirits of just men made perfect, &c. (Heb. 12. 23.) Which are expressions so clear, that it is hard for an industrious caviller to find what to except to them; and indeed, the very exceptions that are put in, are so frivolous, that they carry a plain confession there is nothing colorable to be said. Yea, and most evident it is from those texts; not only that holy souls sleep not, in that state of separation; but that they are awaked by it (as out of a former sleep) into a much more lively and vigorous activity than they enjoyed before; and translated into a state, as much better than their former, as the tortures of a cross are more ungrateful than the pleasures of a paradise; these joys fuller of vitality, than those sickly, dying, faintings; as the immediate presence, and close embraces of the Lord of life are more delectable than a mournful disconsolate absence from him (which the apostle therefore tells us he desired as far better, and with an emphasis which our

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enough speaks the contrary. Reason and philosophy offer nothing, that can render the sense we put upon the fore-mentioned plain scriptures, self-contradictions or impossible. Yea, such as had no other light or guide, have thought the facility of the soul's operations, being separate from its earthly body, much greater by that very separation. And upon this score doth saint Augustine, with great indignation, inveigh against the philosophers (Plato more especially) because they judged the separation of the soul from the body necessary to its blessedness. *Quia videlicet ejus perfectam beatitudinem tunc illi fieri existimant cum omni prorsus corpore exuta, ad Deum simplex, et sola et quodammodo nuda redierit: because indeed they think that its perfect blessedness takes place, when having completely put off the body, it returns in its simple, separate, and as it were naked form to God.* De civit. Dei l. 13. c. 16. unto which purpose the words of Philolaus Pythagoricus, of Plato, of Porphyrius, are cited by Ludovicus Vives, in his comment upon that abovementioned passage. The first speaking thus, *Deposito corpore hominem Deum immortalem fieri: that when the body is laid down man becomes the immortal God.* The second thus—*Trahi nos a corpore ad ima, et a cogitatione superarum rerum subinde revocari, ideo relinquendum corpus, et hic quantum possumus et in altera vita prorsum, ut liberi et expediti, verum ipsi videamus et optimum amemus: that we are borne down by the body to the earth, and are continually recalled from the contemplation of higher things: the body must therefore be relinquished as much as possible even here, and altogether in another life, that free and unincumbered, we may discern truth and love goodness.* The third denies—*Aliter fieri beatum quengquam posse, nisi relinquat corpus et effigatur Deo: that any one can otherwise become happy, but by relinquishing the body, and being absorbed in God.* I conceive it by the way not improbable, that the severity of that pious father against that dogma of the philosophers, might proceed upon this ground, that what they said of the impossibility of being happy in an earthly body, he understood meant by

English too faintly expresses ; for he uses a double comparative *πολλον μλλον κρεισσον* by *much more better* :) and, as a perfected, that is a crowned triumphant spirit, that hath attained the end of its race (as the words import in the agonistical notion\*) is now in a more vivid joyous state, than when, lately, toiling in a tiresome way, it languished under many imperfections. And it is observable, that in the three former scriptures that phrase, of being with Christ, or, being present with him, is the same which is used by the apostle, (1 Thes. 4. 17.) to express the state of blessedness after the resurrection ; intimating plainly, the sameness of the blessedness before and after. And though this phrase be also used to signify the present enjoyment saints have of God's gracious presence in this life (which is also in nature, and kind the same ; ) yet it is plainly used in these scriptures (the two latter more especially) to set out to us such a degree of that blessedness, that in comparison thereof, our present being with Christ is a not-being with him ; our presence with him, now, an absence from him : While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, and, I am in a strait betwixt two, desiring to depart (or having a desire unto dissolution) and to be with Christ, &c. How strangely mistaken and disappointed had the blessed apostle been, had his absence from the body, his dissolution, his release, set him further off from Christ, or made him less capable of converse with him, than before he was ? And how

them of an impossibility to be happy in any body at all ; when it is evidently the common opinion of the Platonists, that the soul is always united with somebody or other, and that even the dæmons have bodies (aerial or ætherial ones ; ) which Plato himself is observed by St. Augustine to affirm whence he would fasten a contradiction on him, *ibid.* not considering (it is likely) that he would much less have made a difficulty, to concede such bodies also to human souls after they had lost their terrestrial ones, as his sectators do not ; who hold they then presently become dæmons. In the mean time it is evident enough, the doctrine of the separate soul's present blessedness, is not destitute of the patronage and suffrage of philosophers. And it is indeed the known opinion of as many of them as ever held its immortality (which all of all ages and nations have done, a very few excepted) for inasmuch as they knew nothing of the resurrection of the body, they could not dream of a sleeping interval. And it is at least a shrewd presumption that nothing in reason lies against it, when no one instance can be given, among them that professedly gave up themselves to its only guidance, of any one, that granting the immortality of the soul, and its separableness from its terrestrial body, ever denied the immediate blessedness of good souls in that state of separation. Nor (if we look into the thing itself) is it at all more unapprehensible that the soul should be independent of the body in its operations than in its existence ? If it be possible enough to form an unexceptionable notion of a spiritual being, distinct and separable from any corporeal substance (which the learned Doctor More hath sufficiently demonstrated in his treatise of the immortality of the soul) with its proper attributes, and powers peculiar to itself ; what can reasonably withhold me from asserting, that being separate from the body, it may as well operate alone, (I mean exert such operations as are proper to such a being) as exist alone ? That we find it here, *de*

\* See Dr. Hammond's annot. in. loc.

absurd would it be to say, the spirits of the just are perfected, by being cast into a stupifying sleep; yea, or being put into any state not better than they were in before? But their state is evidently far better. The body of death is now laid aside, and the weights of sin, that did so easily beset, are shaken off; flesh and sin are laid down together; the soul is rid of its burthen-some bands and shackles, hath quitted its filthy darksome prison (the usual place of laziness and sloth,) is come forth of its drowsy dormitory, and the glory of God is risen upon it. It is now come into the world of realities, where things appear as they are, no longer as in a dream, or vision of the night. The vital quickening beams of divine light are darting in upon it on every side, and turning it into their own likeness. The shadows of the evening are vanished, and fled away. It converses with no objects but what are full themselves, and most apt to replenish it with energy and life. This cannot be but a joyful awaking, blessed season of satisfaction and delight indeed, to the enlightened, revived soul. But,

2. It must be acknowledged, the further and more eminent season of this blessedness will be the general resurrection-day, which is more expressly signified in Scripture by this term of *awaking*; as is manifest in many plain texts, where it is either expressly thus used, or implied to have this meaning in the opposite sense of the word sleep. Dan. 12. 2. John. 14. 12. 2 Cor.

*facto, in fact*, in its present state, acting only with dependance on a body, will no more infer, that it can act no otherwise, than its present existence in a body will that it can never exist out of it, neither whereof amounts to more than the trifling exploded argument *a non esse ad non posse*, that because a thing is not it cannot be, and would be as good sense as to say, such a one walks in his clothes, therefore out of them he cannot move a foot. Yea, and the very use itself which the soul now makes of corporeal organs and instruments, plainly evidences, that it doth exert some action wherein they assist it not. For it supposes an operation upon them antecedent to any operation by them. Nothing can be the instrument which is not first the subject of my action; as when I use a pen, I act upon it in order to my action by it, that is, I impress a motion upon it, in order whereunto I use not that or any other such instrument; and though I cannot produce the designed effect, leave such characters so and so figured, without it; my hand can yet, without it, perform its own action, proper to itself, and produce many nobler effects. When therefore the soul makes use of a bodily organ, its action upon it must needs at last be without the ministry of any organ, unless you multiply to it body upon body in *infinitum*. And if possibly, it perform not some meaner and grosser pieces of drudgery when out of the body, wherein it made use of its help and service before; that is no more a disparagement or diminution, than it is to the magistrate, that law and decency permit him not to apprehend or execute a malefactor with his own hand. It may yet perform those operations which are proper to itself; that is, such as are more noble and excellent, and immediately conducive to its own felicity. Which sort of actions, as cogitation for instance, and dilection, though being done in the body, there is conjunction with them an agitation of the spirits in the brain and heart; it yet seems to me more reasonable, than as to those acts, the spirits are rather sub-



15. 2 Thes. 4. &c. What additions shall then be made to the saints' blessedness, lies more remote from our apprehension ; in as much as Scripture states not the degree of that blessedness which shall intervene. We know, by a too sad instructive experience, the calamities of our present state, and can therefore more easily conceive, wherein it is capable of betterment, by the deposition of a sluggish, cumbersome body, where those calamities mostly have their spring : but then we know less where to fix our foot, or whence to take our rise, in estimating the additional felicities of that future state, when both the states to be compared are so unknown to us. But that there will be great additions is plain enough. The full recompense of obedience, and devotedness to Christ, of foregoing all for him, is affixed by his promise to the resurrection of the just ; The judgment-day gives every one his portion according to his works. Then must the holy, obedient christian hear from his Redeemer's mouth, Come ye blessed of the Father, inherit the kingdom, &c. Till then the devils think their torment to be before their time. It is when he shall appear we shall be like him, and see him as he is. That noted day is the day of being presented faultless with

jects than instruments at all of them ; that the whole essence of these acts is antecedent to the motion of the spirits ; and that motion certainly (but accidentally) consequent, only by reason of the present, but soluble union the soul hath with the body. And that the purity and refinedness of those spirits doth only remove what would hinder such acts, rather than contribute positively thereto. And so little is the alliance between a thought, and any bodily thing, even those very finest spirits themselves ; that I dare say, whoever sets himself closely and strictly to consider and debate the matter with his own faculties, will find it much more easily apprehensible, how the acts of intellection and volition may be performed without those very corporeal spirits than by them. However suppose them never so indispensably necessary to those more noble operations of the soul, it may easily be furnished with them, and in greater plenty and purity, from the ambient air, (or æther) than from a dull torpid body ; with some part of which air, if we suppose it to contract a vital union, I know no rational principle that is wronged by the supposition, though neither do I know any that can necessarily infer it. As therefore the doctrine of the soul's activity out of his earthly body, hath favor and friendship enough from philosophers ; so I doubt not, but upon the most strict and rigid disquisition, it would be as much befriended (or rather righted) by philosophy itself ; and that their reason would afford it as direct and more considerable defence than their authority.

In the mean time, it deserves to be considered with some resentment, that this doctrine should find the generality of learned pagans more forward advocates than some learned and worthy patrons of the Christian faith ; which is only imputable to the undue measure and excess of an, otherwise, just zeal, in these latter, for the resurrection of the body ; so far transporting them, that they became willing to let go one truth, that they might hold another the faster ; and to ransom this at the too dear (and unnecessary) expence of the former : accounting, they could never make sure enough the resurrection of the body, without making the soul's dependance on it so absolute and necessary, that it should be able to do nothing but sleep in the mean while. Whereas it seems a great deal more unconceivable, how such a being as the soul is, once quit of the entanglements and encumbrances of the body, should sleep at all, than how it should act without the body.

exceeding joy. And divers things there are obviously enough to be reflected on, which cannot but be understood to contribute much to the increase and improvement of this inchoate blessedness. The acquisition of a glorified body. For our vile bodies shall be so far transfigured, as to be made like [conform to] the glorious body of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : (μετασχηματίσει, σύμμορφον. Phil. 3. 20. 21.) And this shall be when he shall appear from heaven, where saints here below are required to have their commerce, as the enfranchised citizens thereof, and from whence they are to continue, looking for him in the mean time. When he terminates and puts a period to that expectation of his saints on earth, then shall that great change be made, that is, when he actually appears, at which time the trumpet sounds, and even sleeping dust itself awakes ; (1 Thes. 4. 14. 15. 16.) the hallowed dust of them that slept in Jesus first, who are then to come with him. This change may well be conceived to add considerably to their felicity. A natural congruity and appetite is now answered and satisfied, which did either lie dormant, or was under somewhat an anxious restless expectation before ; neither of which could well consist with a state of blessedness, every-way already perfect. And that there is a real desire and expectation of this change, seems to be plainly intimated in those words of Job, All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come : (chap. 14. 14.) Where he must rather be understood to speak of the resurrection than of death (as his words are commonly mistaken, and misapplied ; ) as will appear by setting down the context from the seventh verse, for there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground : yet through the scent of water, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away ; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth, and dryeth up ; so man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more : they shall not be awaked nor raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret till thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me ! If a man die, shall he live again ? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee ; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands. He first speaks according to common apprehension, and sensible appearance, touching the hopeless state of man in death ; as though it were less capable of reparation than that of some inferior creatures, unto the end of ver. 10. And then gradually discovers his better hope ; betrays this faith, as it were obliquely, touching this point ; lets it break out, first, in some obscure glimmerings, (ver. 11. 12.) giving us, in his *protasis*, a

similitude not fully expressive of his seeming meaning, for waters and floods that fail may be renewed; and in his *Apodosis* more openly intimating, man's sleep should be only till the heavens were no more: which *till* might be supposed to signify *never*, were it not for what follows, ver. 13. where he expressly speaks his confidence by way of petition, that at a set and appointed time, God would remember him, so as to call him out of the grave: and at last, being now minded to speak out more fully, puts the question to himself, If a man die, shall he live again? and answers it, All the days of my appointed time, that is of that appointed time which he mentioned before, when God should revive him out of the dust; will I wait till my change come; that is, that glorious change, when the corruption of a loathsome grave should be exchanged for immortal glory; which he amplifies, and utters more expressly, ver. 15. Thou shalt call, and I will answer; thou shalt have a desire to the work of thy hands: Thou wilt not always forget to restore and perfect thy own creature.

And surely that waiting is not the act of his inanimate sleeping dust; but though it be spoken of the person totally gone into *hades*, into the invisible state; it is to be understood of that part that should be capable of such an action; as though he had said I, in that part that shall be still alive, shall patiently await thy appointed time of reviving me in that part also, which death and the grave shall insult over (in a temporary triumph) in the mean time; and so will the words carry a facile, commodious sense, without the unnecessary help of an imagined rhetorical scheme of speech. And then, that this waiting carries in it a desirous expectation of some additional good, is evident at first sight; which therefore must needs add to the satisfaction and blessedness of the expecting soul. And wherein it may do so, is not altogether unapprehensible. Admit that a spirit, had it never been embodied, might be as well without a body, or that it might be as well provided of a body out of other materials; it is no unreasonable supposition, that a connate aptitude to a body, should render human souls more happy in a body sufficiently attempered to their most noble operations. And how much doth relation and propriety endear things, otherwise mean and inconsiderable? or why should it be thought strange, that a soul connaturalized to matter, should be more particularly inclined to a particular portion thereof? so as that it should appropriate such a part, and say it is mine? And will it not be a pleasure, to have a vitality diffused through what even more remotely appertains to me, have every thing belonging to the *suppositum* perfectly vindicated from the tyrannous dominion of death? The returning of the spirits into a benumbed or sleeping toe or finger, adds a contentment to a man which he wanted before. Nor is it hence necessary the soul should covet a re-union with every effluvious

particle of its former body : a desire implanted by God in a reasonable soul will aim at what is convenient, not what shall be cumbersome or monstrous. And how pleasant will it be to contemplate and admire the wisdom and power of the great Creator in this so glorious a change, when I shall find a clod of earth, a heap of dust, refined into a celestial purity and brightness ? when what was sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption ; what was sown in dishonor, is raised in glory ; what was sown in weakness, is raised in power ; what was sown a natural body, is raised a spiritual body ? when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death be wholly swallowed up in victory ? So that this awakening may well be understood to carry that in it, which may bespeak it the proper season of the saints' consummate satisfaction and blessedness. But besides what it carries in itself, there are other (more extrinsical) concurrents that do further signalize this season, and import a greater increase of blessedness than to God's holy ones. The body of Christ is now completed, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, and all the so nearly related parts cannot but partake in the perfection and reflected glory of the whole. There is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner though he have a troublesome scene yet to pass over afterwards, in a tempting, wicked, unquiet world ; how much more when the many sons shall be all brought to glory together ? The designs are all now accomplished, and wound up into the most glorious result and issue, whereof the divine providence had been, as in travail, for so many thousand years. It is now seen how exquisite wisdom governed the world, and how steady a tendency the most intricate and perplexed methods of providence had, to one stated and most worthy end. Especially the constitution, administration, and ends of the Mediator's kingdom, are now beheld in their exact aptitudes, order and conspicuous glory ; when so blessed an issue and success shall command and crown the whole undertaking. The divine authority is now universally acknowledged and adored ; his justice is vindicated and satisfied ; his grace demonstrated and magnified to the uttermost. The whole assembly of saints solemnly acquitted by public sentence, presented spotless and without blemish to God, and adjudged to eternal blessedness. It is the day of solemn triumph and jubilation, upon the finishing of all God's works, from the creation of the world, wherein the Lord Jesus appears to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe : (2 Thes. 1. 10.) upon which ensues the resignation of the Mediator's kingdom (all the ends of it being now attained) that the Father himself may be immediately all in all. 1 Cor. 15. 28. How aptly then are the fuller manifestations of God, the more glorious display of all his attributes, the larger and more abundant effusions of himself, reserved (as the best wine to the last) unto this joyful day ! Created

perfections could not have been before so absolute, but they might admit of improvement; their capacities not so large, but they might be extended further; and then who can doubt but that divine communications may also have a proportionable increase, and that upon the concourse of so many great occasions they shall have so?

## CHAPTER XI.

I. An introduction to the use of the doctrine hitherto proposed. II. The use divided into. *First.* Inferences of truth. *Secondly.* Rules of duty. 1. Inference, That blessedness consists not in any sensual enjoyment. 2. Inference. The spirit of man (since it is capable of so high a blessedness) is a being of high excellency.

I. And now is our greatest work yet behind; the improvement of so momentous a truth, to the affecting and transforming of hearts: that (if the Lord shall so far vouchsafe his assistance and blessing) they may taste the sweetness, feel the power, and bear the impress and image of it. This is the work, both of greatest necessity, difficulty, and excellency, and unto which, all that hath been done hitherto, is but subservient and introductive. Give me leave therefore, reader, to stop thee here, and demand of thee before thou go further; Hast thou any design in turning over these leaves, of bettering thy spirit, of getting a more refined, heavenly temper of soul? art thou weary of thy dross and earth, and longing for the first fruits, the beginnings of glory? dost thou wish for a soul meet for the blessedness hitherto described? what is here written is designed for thy help and furtherance. \*But if thou art looking on these pages with a wanton, rolling eye, hunting for novelties, or what may gratify a prurient wit, a coy and squeamish fancy; go read a romance, or some piece of drollery; know here is nothing for thy turn; and dread to meddle with matters of everlasting concernment without a serious spirit; read not another line till thou have sighed out this request, "Lord keep me from trifling with the things of eternity." Charge thy soul to consider, that what thou art now reading must be added to thy account against the great day. It is amazing to think, with what vanity of mind the most weighty things of religion are entertained amongst christians. Things

\*Dissoluti est pectoris in rebus scriis quærere voluptatem. It is a mark of a trifling mind to seek amusement in serious things. Arnob.

that should swallow up our souls, drink up our spirits, are heard as a tale that is told, disregarded by most, scorned by too many. What can be spoken so important, or of so tremendous consequence, or of so confessed truth, or with so awful solemnity and premised mention of the sacred name of the Lord, as not to find either a very slight entertainment or contemptuous rejection; and this by persons avowing themselves christians? We seem to have little or no advantage, in urging men upon their own principles, and with things they most readily and professedly assent to. Their hearts are as much untouched, and void of impression by the Christian doctrine, as if they were of another religion. How unlike is the Christian world to the Christian doctrine? The seal is fair and excellent, but the impression is languid, or not visible. Where is that serious godliness, that heavenliness, that purity, that spirituality, that righteousness, that peace, unto which the Christian religion is most aptly designed to work and form the spirits of men? We think to be saved by an empty name; and glory in the shew and appearance of that, the life and power whereof we hate and deride. It is a reproach with us not to be called a christian, and a greater reproach to be one. If such and such doctrines obtain not in our professed belief, we are heretics or infidels; if they do in our practice, we are precisians and fools. To be so serious, and circumspect, and strict, and holy, to make the practice of godliness so much our business, as the known and avowed principles of our religion do plainly exact from us (yea, though we come, as we cannot but do, unspeakably short of that required measure) is to make one's self a common derision and scorn. Not to be professedly religious is barbarous, to be so in good earnest ridiculous. In other things men are wont to act and practice according to the known rules of their several callings and professions, and he would be reckoned the common fool of the neighborhood that should not do so: the husbandman that should sow when others reap, or contrive his harvest into the depth of winter, or sow fitches, and expect to reap wheat; the merchant that should venture abroad his most precious commodities in a leaky bottom, without pilot or compass, or to places not likely to afford him any valuable return. In religion only it must be accounted absurd, to be and do according to its known agreed principles, and he a fool that shall but practice as all about him profess to believe. Lord! whence is this apprehended inconsistency between the profession and practice of religion? what hath thus stupified and unmanned the world, that seriousness in religion should be thought the character of a fool? that men must visibly make a mockery of the most fundamental articles of faith only to save their reputation, and be afraid to be serious, lest they should be thought mad! Were the doctrine here opened, believed in earnest, were the due proper impress of it upon our spirits, or (as the pagan moralist's

\*expression is) were our minds transfigured into it ; what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness ? But it is thought enough to have it in our creed, though never in our hearts : and such as will not deride the holiness it should produce, yet endeavor it not, nor go about to apply and urge truths upon their own souls to any such purpose. What should turn into grace and spirit and life, turns all into notion and talk ; and men think all is well, if their heads be filled, and their tongues tipt, with what should transform their souls, and govern their lives. How are the most awful truths, and that should have greatest power upon men's spirits, trifled with as matters only of speculation and discourse ! They are heard but as empty, airy words and presently evaporate, pass away into words again ; like food, as Seneca speaks, *Non prodest cibus, nec corpori accedit, qui statim sumptus emittitur* : that comes up presently, the same that it was taken in ; which (as he saith) *profits not, nor makes any accession to the body at all.* Sen. Epist. A like case (as another ingeniously speaks,) Ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ πρόβατα, ἐ χόρτον φέροντα τοῖς ποιμέσιν ἐπιδεικνύει πόσον ἔφαγεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν νόμην ἔσω πέφαντα, ἔριον ἔξω φέρει καὶ γάλα· καὶ σὺ τοῖσιν, μὴ ταχέως ἔχηματα τοῖς ἰδιωταῖς ἐπιδείκνυε, ἀλλὰ ἀπ' αὐτῶν πεφθέντων τὰ ἔργα : *as if sheep when they had been feeding, should present their shepherds with the very grass itself which they have cropt, and shew how much they had eaten.* No, saith he, *they concoct it, and so yield them wool and milk.* Epictet. And so, saith he, do not you (namely when you have been instructed) presently go and utter words among the more ignorant (meaning they should not do so in a way of ostentation, to shew how much they knew more than others) “but works that follow upon the concoction of what hath been by words made known to them.” Let christians be ashamed that they need this instruction from heathen teachers.

Thy words were found, and I did eat them (saith the prophet,) and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Divine truth is only so far at present grateful or useful for future, as it is received by faith and consideration, and in the love thereof into the very heart, and there turned in *succum et sanguinem* : into real nutriment to the soul : so shall man live by the word of God. Hence is the application of it (both personal and ministerial) of so great necessity. If the truths of the gospel were of the same alloy with some parts of philosophy whose end is attained as soon as they are known ; if the Scripture-doctrine (the whole entire system of it) were not a doctrine after godliness ; if it were not designed to sanctify and make men holy ; or if the hearts of men did not-reluctate, were easily

\*Scientiam qui didicit, et facienda et vitanda præcepit, nondum sapiens est, nisi in ea quæ didicit transfiguratus est animus. Though a man have learned moral science and may teach what is to be done, and what is to be avoided, yet he is not a wise man unless his mind is transfigured into his doctrine.

receptive of its impressions; our work were as soon done, as such a doctrine were nakedly proposed: but the state of the case in these respects is known and evident. The tenor and aspect of gospel truth speaks its end; and experience too plainly speaks the oppositeness of men's spirits. All therefore we read and hear is lost if it be not urgently applied: the Lord grant it be not then too. Therefore, reader, let thy mind and heart concur in the following improvement of this doctrine, which will be wholly comprehended under these two heads. Inferences of truth, and rules of duty that are consequent and connatural thereto.

*First.* Inferences of truth deducible from it.

1. True blessedness consists not in any sensual enjoyment. The blessedness of a man can be but one; most only one. He can have but one highest and best good. And its proper character is, that it finally satisfies and gives rest to his spirit. This the face and likeness of God doth; his glory beheld and participated. Here then alone his full blessedness must be understood to lie. Therefore as this might many other ways be evinced to be true; so it evidently appears to be the proper issue of the present truth, and is plainly proved by it. But alas! it needs a great deal more to be pressed than proved. O that it were but as much considered as it is known! The experience of almost six thousand years, hath (one would think sufficiently) testified the incompetency of every worldly thing to make men happy; that the present pleasing of our senses, and the gratification of our animal part is not blessedness; that men are still left unsatisfied notwithstanding. But the practice and course of the world are such, as if this were some late and rare experiment; which (for curiosity) every one must be trying overagain. Every age renews the enquiry after an earthly felicity; the design is entailed (as the Spanish designs are said to be,) and re-inforced with as great confidence and vigor from age to age, as if none had been baffled or defeated in it before; or that it were likely to take at last. Had this been the alone folly of the first age, it had admitted some excuse; but that the world should still be cheated by the same so often repeated impostures, presents us with a sad prospect of the deplorable state of mankind. This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve, &c. Psal. 49. 13. The wearied wits and wasted estates, laid out upon the philosopher's stone, afford but a faint, defective representation of this case. What chemistry can extract heaven out of a clod of clay? What art can make blessedness spring and grow out of this cold earth? If all created nature be vexed and tortured never so long, who can expect this elixir? Yet after so many frustrated attempts, so much time and strength, and labor lost, men are still as eagerly and vainly busy as ever; are perpetually tossed by unsatisfied desires, laboring in the fire, wearying them-



selves for very vanity, distracted by the uncertain, and often contrary motions of a ravenous appetite, and a blind mind, that would be happy, and knows not how. With what sounding bowels, with what compassionate tears should the state of mankind be lamented, by all that understand the worth of a soul? What serious heart doth not melt and bleed for miserable men, that are (through a just nemesis\*) so perpetually mocked with shadows, cheated with false, delusive appearances, infatuated and betrayed by their own senses. They walk but in a vain shew, disquieting themselves in vain; their days flee away as a shadow, their strength is only labor and sorrow; while they rise up early and lie down late, to seek rest in trouble and life in death. They run away from blessedness while they pretend to pursue it, and suffer themselves to be led down without regret to perdition, "as an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through their liver:" descend patiently to the chambers of death, not so much as once thinking, whither are we going? dream of nothing but an earthly paradise, till they find themselves amidst the infernal regions.

2. The spirit of man, inasmuch as it is capable of such a †blessedness, appears an excellent creature. Its natural capacity is supposed; for the psalmist speaks of his own numerical person, the same that then writ; I shall behold; shall be satisfied; take away this *suppositum*, and it could not be so said; or as in Job's words; I shall behold him, and not another for me; it would certainly be another, not the same. Judge hence the excellency of a human soul (the principal subject of this blessedness) without addition of any new natural powers, it is capable of the vision of God; of partaking unto satisfaction the divine likeness. And is not that an excellent creature, that is capable not only of surveying the creation of God, passing through the several ranks and orders of created beings; but of ascending to the Being of beings, of contemplating the divine excellencies, of beholding the bright and glorious face of the blessed God himself; till it have looked itself into his very likeness, and have his en-

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\* *Ira Dei est ista vita mortalis, ubi homo vanitati factus est, et dies ejus velut umbra prætereunt, &c.* The wrath of God is shewn in this mortal life, wherein man is made like to vanity and his days pass away as a shadow. Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 22. c. 24.

† Not that this blessedness can be attained by mere human endeavors, (more whereof see under the next inference) but there is an inclination, a certain *pondus naturæ*; a *weight of nature* (as some schoolmen speak) by which it propends towards it; or there is the *radix*, root or *fundamentum*, *foundation*, or *capacitas*, *capacity*, (as some others) that is that it not only may receive it; but that it may be elevated by grace, actively to concur, by its natural powers, as vital principles towards the attainment of it, according to that known saying of saint Augustine, *Posse credere naturæ est hominis, the power of believing is natural to man, &c.*

tire image inwrought into it. The dignity then of the spirit of man is not to be estimated by the circumstances of its present state, as it is here clad with a sordid flesh, inwrapped in darkness, and grovelling in the dust of the earth: but consider the improveableness of its natural powers and faculties; the high perfections it may attain, and the foundations of how glorious a state are laid in its very nature. And then who can tell, whether its possible advancement is more to be admired, or its present calamity deplored. Might this consideration be permitted to settle and fix itself in the hearts of men could any thing be so grievous to them, as their so vast distance from such an attainable blessedness; or any thing be so industriously avoided, so earnestly abhorred, as that viler dejection and abasement of themselves, when they are so low already by divine disposition, to descend lower by their own wickedness; when they are already fallen as low as earth, to precipitate themselves as low as hell. How generous a disdain should that thought raise in men's spirits, of that vile servitude to which they have subjected themselves, a servitude to brutal lusts, to sensual inclinations and desires; as if the highest happiness they did project to themselves were the satisfaction of these! Would they not with a heroic scorn turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, did they consider their own capacity of beholding the divine glory? could they satisfy themselves to become \*like the beasts that perish, did they think of being satisfied with the likeness of God? And who can conceive unto what degree this aggravates the sin of man, that he so little minds (as it will their misery, that shall fall short of) this blessedness! They had spirits capable of it. Consider thou sensual man whose happiness lies in colors, and tastes, and sounds, (as the moralist ingeniously speaks) that herdest thyself with brute creatures, and aimest no higher than they: as little lookest up, and art as much a stranger to the thoughts and desires of heaven; thy creation did not see thee so low; they are where they were; but thou art fallen from thy excellency. God did not make thee a brute creature, but thou thyself. Thou hast yet a spirit about thee, that might understand its own original, and alliance to the Father of spirits; that hath a designation in its nature to higher converses and employments. Many myriads of such spirits, of no higher original excellency than thy own, are now in the presence of the highest Majesty; are prying into the eternal glory, contemplating the perfections of the divine na-

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\* *Voluptas bonum pecoris est—Hunc tu (non dico inter viros sed) inter homines numeras? cujus summum bonum saporibus, ac coloribus, ac sonis constat? excedat ex hoc animalium numero pulcherrimo, ac diis secundo; mutis aggregetur animal pabulo natum. Pleasure is the good of beasts—Do you number such a creature (I will not say among men but) among human beings whose chief good consists in tastes and colors and sounds! Let him quit this class of the animate creation which is the fairest and next to God himself. Let an animal made only for foddering herd with the brutes, &c. Sen. Ep. 92.*

ture, beholding the unvailed face of God, which transfuses upon them its own satisfying likeness. Thou art not so low-born, but thou mightest attain this state also. That sovereign Lord and Author of all things, calls thee to it; his goodness invites thee, his authority enjoins thee to turn thy thoughts and designs this way. Fear not to be thought immodest or presumptuous; \*it is but a dutiful ambition; and obedient aspiring. Thou art under a law to be thus happy; nor doth it bind thee to any natural impossibility; it designs instructions to thee, not delusion; guidance, not mockery. When thou art required to apply and turn thy soul to this blessedness; it is not the same thing, as if thou wert bidden to remove a mountain, to pluck down a star, or create a world. Thou art here put upon nothing but what is agreeable to the primeval nature of man; and though it be to a vast height, thou must ascend; it is by so easy and familiar methods, by so apt gradations, that thou wilt be sensible of no violence done to thy nature in all thy way. Do but make some trials with thyself; thou wilt soon find nothing is the hindrance but an unwilling heart. Try however (which will suffice to let thee discern thy own capacity, and will be a likely means to make thee willing) how far thou canst understand and trace the way (complying with it at least as reasonable) that leads to this blessedness. Retire a little into thyself; forget awhile thy relation to this sensible world; summon in thy self-reflecting and considering powers: thou wilt presently perceive thou art not already happy, thou art in some part unsatisfied: and thence wilt easily understand, inasmuch as thou art not happy in thyself, that it must be something, as yet without thee, must make thee so: and nothing can make thee happy, but what is in that respect better than thyself; or hath some perfection in it, which thou findest wanting in thyself. A little further discourse or reasoning with thyself, will easily persuade thee, thou hast something better about thee than that luggage of flesh thou goest with to and fro; for thou well knowest, that †is not capable of reason and discourse; and that the power of doing so is a higher perfection than any thou canst entitle it to; and that therefore, besides thy bulky, materi-

\* Hic Deos æquat, illo tendit, originis suæ memor. Nemo, improbe, eo conatur ascendere unde descenderat—socii eis sumus et membra, &c. This man emulates the gods—mindful of his origin, he tends towards it. No one is wicked in attempting to ascend thither from whence he had descended—we are their companions and their fellow members. Sen. Ep. 92.

† Λογισμὸς δὲ καὶ νῆξ, ὅκετι ταῦτα σῶματι δίδωσιν' αὐτὰ, καὶ γὰρ τοῦ ἔργον ἀντῶν εἰ δι' ὀργάνων τελεῖται τῷ σῶματος ἐμπόδιον τῷ εἶτις ἀντῶ ἐν ταῖς σκέψεσι προχωρῶτω; Reason and intellect are not the natural powers or endowments of the body, for indeed their exercise is not performed in perfection by means of its organs; it is rather found an impediment than otherwise, if any one endeavor to employ it in intellectual contemplation. Plotin. Enead 4. lib. 3.

al part, thou must have such a thing as a spirit or soul belonging to thee to which, that and thy other perfections, not compatible to gross matter, may agree. Thou wilt readily assent, that thou canst never be happy, while thy better and more noble part is unsatisfied; and that it can only be satisfied with something suitable and connatural to it. That therefore thy happiness must lie in something more excellent than this material or sensible world, otherwise it cannot be grateful and suitable to thy soul, yea, in something that may be better, and more excellent than thy soul itself, otherwise how can it better and perfect that.\* As thou canst not but acknowledge thy soul to be the spiritual and immaterial, so if thou attend thou wilt soon see cause to acknowledge a spiritual or immaterial being, better and more perfect than thy own soul. For its perfections were not self-originate, they were therefore derived from something, for that reason confessedly more excellent; whence at last also thou wilt find it unavoidably imposed upon thee, to apprehend and adore a Being absolutely perfect, and than which there cannot be a more perfect; the first subject and common fountain of all perfections, which hath then underived in himself, and can derive them unto inferior created beings.† Upon this eternal and self-essential Being, the infinitely blessed God, thou necessarily dependest, and owest therefore constant subjection and obedience to him. Thou hast indeed offended him, and art thereby cut off from all interest in him, and intercourse with him; but he hath proclaimed in his gospel, his willingness to be reconciled and that through the sufferings, righteousness, and intercession of his only begotten Son, thy merciful Redeemer, the way is open for thy restitution and recovery; that thou mayst partake from him whatever perfection is wanting to thy blessedness. Nothing is required from thee in order hereunto, but that relying on and submitting to thy Redeemer's gracious conduct, thou turn thy mind and heart towards thy God, to know him, and conform to him; to view and imitate the divine perfections; the

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\* Sicut non est a carne, sed super carnem, quod carnem facit vivere: sic non est ab homine, sed super hominem, quod hominem facit beate vivere: as that which gives life to the flesh is not any thing proceeding from the flesh, but above it, so that is not from man, but above him which endows him with a life of happiness. D. Aug. de Divit. Dei. lib. 19. c. 25.

† Ut in ordine causarum efficientium, ita et in gradibus virtutis et perfectionis, non datur progressus in infinitum: sed oportet sit aliqua prima et summa perfectio: as in the order of efficient causes so likewise in the degrees of virtue and perfection there cannot be an infinite progression; but there must be some primary and supreme perfection. Pet. Molin de cognitione Dei. Not to insist upon what hath been much urged by learned men of former and latter, yea, and of the present time—that whosoever denies the existence of an absolutely perfect being, contradicts himself in the denial, inasmuch as necessity of existence is included in the very subject of the negation some accounting it a sophism, and it being unseasonable here to discuss it.

faithful endeavor and inchoation whereof, will have this issue and reward, the clear vision and full participation of them. So that thy way and work differ not, in nature and kind, from thy end and reward; thy duty from thy blessedness. Nor are either repugnant to the natural constitution of thy own soul. What violence is there done to reasonable nature in all this? or what can hinder thee herein, but a most culpably averse and wicked heart? Did thy reason ever turn off thy soul from God? was it not thy corruption only? What vile images dost thou receive from earthly objects, which deform thy soul, while thou industriously avertest thy Maker's likeness that would perfect it? How full is thy mind and heart of vanity! how empty of God! Were this through natural incapacity, thou wert an innocent creature; it were thy infelicity (negative I mean) not thy crime; and must be resolved into the sovereign will of thy Creator, not thy own disobedient will. But when this shall appear the true state of thy case, and thou shalt hear it from the mouth of thy Judge, "Thou didst not like to retain me in thy knowledge or love; thou had reason and will to use about meaner objects, but none for me; thou couldst sometimes have spared me a glance, a cast of thine eye at least, when thou didst rather choose it should be in the ends of the earth: a thought of me had cost thee as little, might as soon have been thought, as of this or that vanity; but thy heart was not with me. I banish thee, therefore, that presence which thou never lovedst. I deny thee the vision thou didst always shun, and the impression of my likeness which thou didst ever hate. I eternally abandon thee to the darkness and deformities which were ever grateful to thee. Thine is a self-created hell; the fruit of thy own choice; no invitations or persuasions of mind could keep thee from it." How wilt thou excuse thy fault, or avert thy doom! what arguments or apologies shall defend thy cause against these pleadings? Nay, what armor shall defend thy soul against its own wounding self-reflections hereupon? when every thought shall be a dart; and a convicted conscience, an ever-gnawing worm, a fiery serpent with endless involutions ever winding about thy heart?

It will now be sadly thought on, how often thou sawest thy way and declinedst it, knewest thy duty and didst wave it; understoodst thy interest and didst slight it; approvedst the things that were more excellent and didst reject them; How often thou didst prevaricate with thy light, and run counter to thine own eyes; while things, confessedly, most worthy of thy thoughts and pursuits were overlooked; and empty shadows eagerly pursued. Thy own heart will now feelingly tell thee, it was not want of capacity, but inclination, that cut thee off from blessedness. Thou wilt now bethink thyself, that when life and immortality were brought to light before thy eyes in the gospel, and thou wast told of this future blessedness of the saints, and

pressed to follow holiness, as without which thou couldst not see God; it was a reasonable man was spoken to, that had a power to understand, and judge and choose; not a stone or a brute. Thy capacity of this blessedness makes thee capable also of the most exquisite torment; and reflected on, actually infers it. How passionately, but vainly, wilt thou then cry out, "O that I had filled up the place of any, the meanest creature throughout the whole creation of God, that I had been a gnat, or a fly, or had never been, rather than to have so noble, abused powers eternally to reckon for? Yea, and thou must reckon for not only the actual light, and good impressions thou hadst, but even all thou wast capable of and mightest have attained. Thou shalt now recount with anguish and horror (and rend thy own soul with the thoughts) what thou mightest now have been; how excellent and glorious a creature! hadst thou not contrived thy own misery, and conspired with the devil against thyself, how to deform and destroy thy own soul. While this remembrance shall always afresh return, that nothing was enjoined thee as a duty, or propounded as thy blessedness, but what thou wast made capable of; and that it was not fatal necessity, but a wilful choice made thee miserable.

## CHAPTER XII.

Inference 3. That a change of heart is necessary to this blessedness. The pretences of ungodly men, whereby they would avoid the necessity of this change. Five considerations proposed in order to the detecting the vanity of such pretences. A particular discussion and refutation of those pretences.

3. It is a mighty change must pass upon the souls of men in order to their enjoyment of this blessedness. This equally follows from the consideration of the nature and substantial parts of it, as of the qualifying righteousness pre-required to it. A little reflection upon the common state and temper of men's spirits, will soon enforce an acknowledgement that the vision of God, and conformity to him, are things above their reach, and which they are never likely to take satisfaction in, or at all to savour, till they become otherwise disposed than before the renovating change they are. The text expresses no more in stating the qualified subject of this blessedness *in righteousness* than it evidently implies in the account it gives of this blessedness itself, that it lies in seeing God, and being satisfied with his

likeness. As soon as it is considered, that the blessedness of souls is stated here, what can be a more obvious reflection than this; Lord, then how great a change must they undergo! what such souls be blessed in seeing and partaking the divine likeness, that never loved it! were so much his enemies! It is true they are naturally capable of it, which speaks their original excellency; but they are morally incapable, that is, indisposed and averse, which as truly, and most sadly speaks their present vile-ness; and the sordid, abject temper they now are of. They are destitute of no natural powers necessary to the attainment of this blessedness; but in the mean time have them so depraved by impure and vicious tinctures that they cannot relish it, or the means to it. They have reasonable souls furnished with intellectual and elective faculties, but laboring under a manifold distemper and disaffection; that they cannot receive, they cannot savour the things of God, or what is spiritual. *Capax est noster animus, perfertur illo, si vitia non deprimant: our mind is capable of any attainment were it not depraved by vice.* Sen. epist. 29. 1. Cor. 2. 14. Rom. 8. 5. They want the εὐθεσία (as we may express it,) the well-disposedness for the kingdom of God, intimated Luke. 9. 62. the ικανότης, the meetness, the aptitude, or idoneity for the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. 1. 12.

A settled aversion from God hath fastened its roots in the very spirit of their minds (for that is stated as the prime subject of the change to be made Eph. 4. 23.) and how can they take pleasure then in the vision and participation of his glory? Whereas by beholding the glory of the Lord, they should be changed into the same image: a veil is upon the heart till it turn to the Lord, as was said concerning the Jews, 2. Cor. 3. 14. The God of this world hath blinded their minds, lest (that transforming light) the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them, chap. 4. 4. They are alienated from the life of God, through their ignorance and blindness of heart. The life they choose is to be ἄθεοι ἐν κόσμῳ, atheists, or without God in the world. Ephe. 2. 12. They like not to retain God in their knowledge. (Rom. 1. 28.) are willingly ignorant of him, (2. Pet. 3. 5.) say to him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job 21. 14.) The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any will understand, if any will seek after God; and the result of the inquiry is, there is none that doth good, no not one. Psal. 53. 3. They are haters of God as our Saviour accused the Jews, (John. 15. 23.) and saint Paul the Gentiles, are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. (Rom. 1. 21.) their understandings are dark, their minds vain, their wills obstinate, their consciences seared, their hearts hard and dead, their lives one continued rebellion against God and a defiance to heaven. At how vast a distance are such souls from such blessedness! The

notion and nature of blessedness must sure be changed, or the temper of their spirits. Either they must have new hearts created, or a new heaven, if ever they be happy. And such is the stupid dotage of vain man, he can more easily persuade himself to believe, that the sun itself should be transformed into a dung-hill, that the holy God should lay aside his nature, and turn heaven into a place of impure darkness; than that he himself should need to undergo a change. O the powerful infatuation of self-love, that men in the gall of bitterness should think it is well with their spirits, and fancy themselves in a case good enough to enjoy divine pleasure; that (as the toad's venom offends not itself) their loathsome wickedness, which all good men detest, is a pleasure to them; and while it is as the poison of asps under their lips, they roll it as a dainty bit, revolve it in their thoughts with delight! Their wickedness speaks itself out to the very hearts of others, (Psal. 36. 1. 2.) while it never affects their own, and is found out to be hateful, while they still continue flattering themselves. And because they are without spot in their own eyes; they adventure so high, as to presume themselves so in the pure eyes of God too; and instead of designing to be like God, they already imagine him such a one as themselves. Psal. 50. Hence their allotment of time (in the whole of it, the Lord knows little enough) for the working out of their salvation spends apace; while they do not so much as understand their business. Their measured hour is almost out; an immense eternity is coming on upon them; and lo! they stand as men that cannot find their hands. Urge them to the speedy, serious endeavor of a heart-change, earnestly to intend the business of regeneration, of becoming new creatures; they seem to understand it as little, as if they were spoken to in an unknown tongue; and are in the like posture with the confounded builders of babel, they know not what we mean, or would put them upon. They wonder what we would have them do. "They are (say they) orthodox christians: they believe all the articles of the Christian creed: they detest all heresy and false doctrine: they are no strangers to the house of God; but diligently attend the enjoined solemnities of public worship: some possibly can say, they are sober, just, charitable, peaceable; and others that can boast less of their virtues, yet say, they are sorry for their sins, and pray God to forgive them." And if we urge them concerning their translation from the state of nature to that of grace, their becoming new creatures, their implantation into Christ: they say they have been baptized, and therein regenerate, and what would we have more?

But to how little purpose is it to equivocate with God? to go about to put a fallacy upon the Judge of spirits? or escape the animadversion of his fiery, flaming eye? or elude his determinations, and pervert the true intent and meaning of his most es-



established constitutions and laws? Darest thou venture thy soul upon it? that this is all God means, by having a new heart created, a right spirit renewed in us: by being made God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works: by becoming new creatures, old things being done away, all things made new: by so learning the truth as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and putting on the new; which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; by being begotten of God's own will by the word of truth; to be (the ἀπαρχή) the chief excellency, the prime glory (as certainly his new creature is his best creature,) the first fruits, or the devoted part of all his creatures; by having Christ formed in us; by partaking the divine nature, the incorruptible seed, the seed of God, by being born of God, spirit of Spirit; as of earthly parents we are born flesh of flesh.\* When my eternal blessedness lies upon it, had I not need to be sure that I hit the true meaning of these scriptures? especially, that at least I fall not below it, and rest not in any thing short of what Scripture makes indispensably necessary to my entering in to the kingdom of God? I professedly wave controversies; and it is pity so practical a business as this I am now upon, and upon which salvation so much depends, should ever have been encumbered with any controversy. And therefore, though I shall not digress so far, as to undertake a particular and distinct handling here of this work of God upon the soul, yet, I shall propound something in general, touching the change necessarily previous to this blessedness, (wherein that necessity is evidenceable from the nature of this blessedness which is the business I have in hand) that I hope will pass among christians for acknowledged truth, not liable to dispute, though the Lord knows it be little considered. My design being rather to awaken souls to the consideration of known and agreed things, than to perplex them about unknown. Consider therefore:

(1.) That the holy Scriptures, in the forementioned and other like passages, do plainly hold forth the necessity of a real change, to be made in the inward temper and dispositions of the soul; and not a relative only, respecting its state. This cannot be doubted by any that acknowledge a real inherent depravation, propagated in the nature of man. No, nor denied by them that grant such a corruption to be general and continued among men; whether by imitation only, or what way soever. And willing I am to meet men upon their own principles and concessions, however erroneous or short of the truth they may be, while they are yet improvable to their own advantage. Admit that regeneration, or the new birth includes a change of our relation and state God-ward; doth it therefore exclude an intrinsic, subject-

\*Psal. 51. Eph. 2. 10. 2 Cor. 5. 17. Eph. 4. 23. 24. Jam. 1. 18. Gal. 4. 19. 2 Pet. 1. 4. Pet. 1. Joh. 3. 6.

ive change of the inclinations and tendencies of the soul? And if it did, yet other terms are more peculiarly appropriate to, and most expressly point out this very change alone; as that of conversion, or of turning to God; of being renewed in the spirit of the mind; of putting off the old man that is corruptible &c. and putting on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness, &c. of partaking the divine nature; it matters not if this or that expression be understood by some, more principally in another sense, the thing itself, of which we speak, is as clearly expressed, and as urgently pressed (as there was cause) as any other matter whatsoever throughout the whole book of God. But men are slower of belief, as to this great article of the Christian doctrine, than to most (I might say any) other. This truth more directly assaults the strong holds of the devil in the hearts of men, and is of more immediate tendency to subvert his kingdom; therefore they are most unwilling to have it true, and most hardly believe it. Here they are so madly bold, as to give the lie to all divine revelations; and though they are never so plainly told without holiness none shall see God, they will yet maintain the contrary belief and hope till, "Go ye cursed" vindicate the truth of God, and the flame of hell be their eternal confutation. Lord! that so plain a thing will not enter into the hearts of men; that so urgent inculcations will not yet make them apprehend that their souls must be renewed or perish! that they will still go dreaming on with that mad conceit, that (whatever the word of God says to the contrary) they may yet with unsanctified hearts get to heaven! How deplorable is the case, when men have no other hope left them, but that the God of truth will prove false, and belie his word; yea, and overturn the nature of things to save them in their sins! Thou that livest under the gospel, hast thou any pretence for thy seeming ignorance in this matter? couldst thou ever look one quarter of an hour into the Bible, and not meet with some intimation of this truth? What was the ground of thy mistake? What hath beguiled thee into so mischievous a delusion? How could such an imagination have place in thy soul: that a child of wrath by nature could become a child of God without receiving a new nature; that so vast a change could be made in thy state, without any at all in the temper of thy spirit.

(2.) Consider, that this change is in its own nature, and the design of God who works, it dispositive of the soul for blessedness. It is sufficiently evident from the consideration of the state itself of the unrenewed soul, that a change is necessary for this end; such a soul in which it is not wrought, when once its drowsy, stupifying slumber is shaken off, and its reflecting power awakened, must needs be a perpetual torment to itself. So far it is removed from blessedness, it is its own hell and can fly from misery and death no faster than from itself. Blessedness composes

the soul, reduces it to a consistency ; it infers or rather is a self-satisfaction, a well-pleasèdness and contentment with ones self, enriched and filled with ἀναγκεία the divine fulness. Hence it is at rest, not as being pent in, but contentedly dwelling with itself and keeping within his own bounds of its own accord. The un-renewed soul can no more contain itself within its own terms or limits, is as little self-consistent, as a raging flame, or an impetuous tempest. Indeed its own lusts perpetually, as so many vultures, rend and tear it ; and the more when they want external objects ; then, as hunger, their fury is all turned inward ; and they prey upon intestines, upon their own subject ; but unto endless torment, not satisfaction. In what posture is this soul for rest and blessedness ? The nature of this change sufficiently speaks its own design. It is an introduction of, the *primordia*, the *very principles* of blessedness. And scripture as plainly speaks the design of God : He regenerates to the undefiled inheritance : makes meet for it : ( 1 Pet. 1. 3. 4. ) works, forms, or fashions the soul unto that self-same thing, ( Col. 1. 12. ) namely to desire and groan after that blessed state ; ( 2 Cor. 5. 5. ) and consequently to acquiesce and rest therein. Therefore, vain man, that drest of being happy without undergoing such a change ; how art thou trying thy skill to abstract a thing from itself ? for the pre-required righteousness whereupon thou must be changed, and this blessedness are in kind and nature the same thing, as much as a child and a man. Thou pretendest thou wouldst have that perfected which thou canst not endure should ever be begun ; thou settest thyself to prevent and suppress what in its own nature, and by divine ordination tend to the accomplishment of thy own pretended desires. Thou wouldst have the tree without ever admitting the seed or plant : thou wouldst have heat, and canst not endure the least warmth ; so besotted a thing is a carnal heart !

( 3. ) That inasmuch as this blessedness consists in the satisfactory sight and participation of God's own likeness, unto whom the soul is habitually averse, this change must chiefly stand in its becoming holy or godly, or in the alteration of its dispositions and inclinations as to God. Otherwise the design and end of it is not attained. We are required to follow peace with all men, but here the accent is put, and *holiness*, without which no man shall see God, Heb. 12. 14. It is therefore a vain thing, in reference to what we have now under consideration, namely the possibility of attaining this blessedness, to speak of any other changes that fall short of, or are of another kind from the right disposition of heart God-ward. This change we are now considering, is no other than the proper adequate impress of the gospel discovery upon men's spirits, as we have largely shewn the righteousness is, in which it terminates. The sum of that discovery is, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto

himself, (2 Cor. 5. 18. 19.) the proper impress of it, therefore is the actual reconciliation of the soul to God through Christ; a friendly, well-affected posture of spirit towards God, our last end and highest good; and towards Christ our only way, since the apostacy, of attaining and enjoying it. To rest therefore in any other good dispositions or endowments of mind, is as much besides the business, as impertinent to the present purpose, as if one designed to the government of a city, should satisfy himself that he hath the skill to play well on a lute, or he that intends physic, that he is well seen in architecture. The general scope and tenor of the gospel tells thee, O man, plainly enough, what the business is thou must intend (if thou wilfully overlook it not) in order to thy blessedness. It is written to draw thee into fellowship with the Father and the Son, that thy joy may be full. 1 John. 1. 1. 4. It aims at the bringing of thee into a state of blessedness in God through Christ; and is therefore the instrument by which God would form thy heart thereto; the seal by which to make the first impression of his image upon thee, which will then as steadily incline and determine thy soul towards him: sa the magnetic touch ascertains the posture of the needle. Wherefore doth he there discover his own heart, but to melt and win, and transform thine? The word of grace is the seed of the new creature. Through the exceeding great and precious promises, he makes souls partake of the divine nature. Grace is, firstly revealed to teach the denial of ungodliness, &c. Turn thy thoughts hither then, and consider what is there done upon thy soul by the gospel, to attemper and conform it to God? Wherein has thy heart answered this its visible design and intendment? Thou art but in a delirious dream till thou seriously bethinkest thyself of this. For otherwise how can the aversion of thy heart from him escape thy daily observation; thou canst not be without evidences of it; what pleasure dost thou take in retiring thyself with God; what care to redeem time only for converse with him? hadst thou not rather be any where else? In a time of vacancy from business and company, when thou hast so great a variety of things before thee, among which to choose an object for thy thoughts, do they not naturally fall upon any thing rather than God? Nor do you think to shift off this by assigning the mere natural cause; for if there were not somewhat more in the matter, why is it not so with all? He upon whom this change had passed could say; My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord. How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them? If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake; I am still with thee. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O God, have

we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early, &c.\* Therefore plain it is, there is a sinful distemper to be wrought out, an ungodly disposition of heart, which it concerns thee not to rest till thou see removed.

(4.) Consider, that to become godly, or this change of inclinations and dispositions towards God, is that which of all others the soul doth most strongly reluctate and strive against; and which therefore it undergoes with greatest difficulty and regret. It is a horrid and amazing thing it should be so, but Scripture and experience leave it undoubted that so it is. What! that the highest excellency, the most perfect beauty, loveliness, and love itself should so little attract a reasonable, spiritual being that issued thence? His own offspring so unkind! what more than monstrous unnaturalness is this, so to disaffect one's own original! It were easy to accumulate and heap up considerations that would render this astonishingly strange. So things are reckoned upon several accounts, either as they are more rare and unfrequent (which is the vulgar way of estimating wonders) or as their causes are of more difficult investigation; or (if they are moral wonders) as they are more unreasonable or causeless; upon this last account, Christ marvelled at the Jews' unbelief: (Mark 6. 6.) and so is this hatred justly marvellous; as being altogether without a cause? But thence to infer there is no such thing, were to dispute against the sun. No truth hath more of light and evidence in it, though none more of terror and prodigy. To how many thousand objects is the mind of man indifferent? can turn itself to this or that; run with facility all points of the compass, among the whole universe of beings: but assay only to draw it to God, and it recoils: thoughts and affections revolt, and decline all converse with that blessed object! Toward other objects, it freely opens and dilates itself, as under the benign beams of a warm sun; there are placid, complacential emotions; amicable, sprightly converses and embraces. Towards God only it is presently contracted and shut up; life retires, and it becomes as a stone, cold, rigid and impenetrable: the quite contrary to what is required (which also those very precepts do plainly imply;) it is alive to sin, to the world, to vanity; but crucified, mortified, dead to God and Jesus Christ. Rom. 6. 11.

The natures of many men that are harsh, fierce and savage, admit of many cultivations and refinings; and by moral precept, the exercise and improvement of reason, with a severe animadversion and observance of themselves, they become mild, tractable, gentle, meek. The story of the physiognomist's guess at the temper of Socrates is known. But of all other, the disaf-

\*Psal. 63. 5. 6.—104, 34.—139. 17. 18. Isa. 26. 8.

fectured soul is least inclinable ever to become good-natured towards God, wherein grace or holiness doth consist. Here it is most unpersuadable, never facile to this change. One would have thought no affection should have been so natural, so deeply inwrought into the spirit of man, as an affection towards the Father of spirits; but here he most of all discovers himself to be without natural affection: surely here is a sad proof, that such affection doth not ascend. The whole duty of man, as to the principle of it, resolves into love. That is the fulfilling of the law. As to its object; the two tables divide it between God and our neighbor; and accordingly divide that love. Upon those two branches whereof; love to God, and love to our neighbor, hang all the law and the prophets. The wickedness of the world hath killed this love at the very root, and indisposed the nature of man to all exercises of it, either way, whether towards God or his neighbor. It hath not only rendered man unmeet for holy communion with God, but in a great measure for civil society with one another. It hath destroyed good nature; made men false, envious, barbarous; turned the world; especially the dark places of the earth, where the light of the gospel shines not, into habitations of cruelty. But who sees not the enmity and disaffection of men's hearts towards God is the more deeply rooted, and less superable evil?

The beloved apostle gives us a plain and sad intimation how the case is, as to this, when he reasons thus; He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? He argues from the less to the greater; and this is the ground upon which his argument is built: that the loving of God is a matter of greater difficulty, and from which the spirit of man is more remote, than loving of his neighbor. And he withall insinuates an account why it is so; God's remoteness from our sense, which is indeed a cause, but no excuse: it is a peccant, faulty cause. For is our so gross sensuality no sin? that nothing should affect our hearts, but what we can see with our eyes? as if our sense were the only measure or judge of excellencies. We are not all flesh, what have we done with our souls? if we cannot see God with our eyes, why do we not with our minds? at least so much of him we might, as to discern his excellency above all things else. How come our souls to lose their dominion, and to be so slavishly subject to a ruling sense? but the reason less concerns our present purpose; that whereof it is the reason; that implied assertion, that men are in a less disposition to the love of God than their neighbors, is the sad truth we are now considering. There are certain homiletical virtues, that much adorn and polish the nature of man, urbanity, fidelity, justice, patience of injuries, compassion towards the miserable, &c. and indeed without these, the world would break up, and all civil societies disband, if at least they did not in some degree ob-

tain. But in the mean time men are at the greatest distance imaginable from any disposition to society with God. They have some love for one another, but none for him. And yet it must be remembered, that love to our neighbor, and all the consequent exertions of it, becoming duty by the divine law, ought to be performed as acts of obedience to God, and therefore ought to grow from the stock and root of a divine love; I mean, love to God. They are otherwise but spurious virtues, bastard fruits (men gather not grapes of thorns, &c.) they grow from a tree of another kind; and whatever semblance they may have of the true, they want their constituent form, their life and soul. Though love to the brethren is made a character of the regenerate state, of having passed from death to life; 1 John. 3. 14. it is yet but a more remote, and is itself brought to trial by this higher and more immediate one, and which is more intimately connatural to the new creature, even the love of God; By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. chap. 5. 2. A respect to God\* specifies every virtue and duty. Whatever is loved and served, and not in him and for him (*servato ordine finis, keeping the chosen end in view*, as the school phrase is,) becomes an idol; and that love and service is idolatry. And what a discovery is here of disaffection to God; that in the exercise of such (the above-mentioned) virtues one single act shall be torn from itself, from its specifying moral form, only to leave out him. A promise shall be kept, but without any respect to God, for even the promises made to him are broken without any scruple. That which is another's shall be rendered to him; but God shall not be regarded in the business. An alms given, for the Lord's sake left out. That which concerns my neighbor often done, but what concerns God therein, as it were studiously omitted. This is what he that runs may read, that though the hearts of men are not to one another as they should, they are much more averse towards God.

Men are easier of acquaintance towards one another, they slide insensibly into each others bosom; even the most churlish, morose natures are wrought upon by assiduous repeated kindnesses, *gutta cavat lapidem, &c.* as often-falling drops at length wear and work into very stones: towards God their hearts are more impenetrable than rocks, harder than adamants. He is seeking with some an acquaintance all their days: they live their whole age under the gospel, and yet are never won. They hearken to one another, but are utterly unpersuadable towards God; as the deaf adder that hears not the voice of the charmer though charming never so wisely. The clearest reason, the most powerful

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\*Proinde virtutes quas sibi videtur habere, nisi ad Deum retulerit, etiam ipsa vitia sunt potius quam virtutes. Whatever virtues a man may seem to himself to possess, if he do not refer them all to God, they are vices, rather than virtues.

arguments move them not : no nor the most insinuating allurements, the sweetest breathings of love : "How often would I have gathered thee, as the hen her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." God draws with the cords of a man, with the bands of love ; but they still perversely keep at an unkind distance.\* Men use to believe one another (were there no credit given to each others words, and some mutual confidence in one another, there could be no human converse, all must affect solitude, and dwell in dens and deserts as wild beasts,) but how incredulous are they of all divine revelations ? though testified with never so convincing evidence ! who hath believed our report ! The word of the eternal God is regarded (O amazing wickedness) as we would the word of a child or a fool ; no sober, rational man, but his narrations, promises or threatenings, are more reckoned of. Men are more reconcilable to one another when enemies, more constant when friends. How often doth the power of a conquering enemy, and the distress of the conquered, work a submission on this part, and a remission on that. How often are haughty spirits stooped by a series of calamities, and made ductile : proud arrogants formed, by necessity and misery, into humble supplicants, so as to lie prostrate at the feet of a man that may help or hurt them ; while still the same persons retain indomitable unyielding spirits towards God, under their most afflictive pressures. Though his gracious nature and infinite fulness promise the most certain and liberal relief, it is the remotest thing from their thoughts to make any address to him. They cry because of the oppression of the mighty but none says Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night ? (Job. 35. 10.) rather perish under their burdens than look towards God, when his own visible hand is against them, or upon them, and their lives at his mercy ; they stand it out to the last breath ; and are more hardly humbled than consumed ; sooner burn than weep ; shrivelled up into ashes sooner than melted into tears ; scorched with great heat yet repent not to give glory to God : Rev. 16. 9. gnaw their tongues for pain, and yet still more disposed to blaspheme than pray or sue for mercy. Dreadful thought ! as to one anothers reconciliations among men are not impossible or unfrequent, even of mortal enemies ; but they are utterly implacable towards God ! yet they often wrong one another ; but they cannot pretend, God ever did them the least wrong, yea, they have lived by his bounty all their days. They say to God, "Depart from us," yet he filleth their houses with good things. So true is the historian's† observation, "Hatred is sharpest where most unjust."

\*Mat. 23. 37. See Psal. 81. 8. to 13. Prov. 1. 20. to 24. &c. Hos. 11. 4.

†Tacitus speaking of the hatred of Tiberius and Augusta against Germanicus, the causers whereof, saith he, were aciores, quia iniquæ.



Yea, when there seems at least to have been a reconciliation wrought, are treacheries, covenant-breakings, revolts, strangeness, so frequent among men towards one another, as from them towards God? How inconsistent with friendship is it, according to common estimate, to be always promising, never performing; upon any or no occasion to break off intercourses, by unkind alienations, or mutual hostilities; to be morose, reserved each to other; to decline or disaffect each others converse; to shut out one another from their hearts and thoughts. But how common and unregretted are these carriages towards the blessed God? It were easy to expatiate on this argument, and multiply instances of this greater disaffection. But in a word, what observing person may not see, what serious person would not grieve to see the barbarous, sooner putting on civility; the riotous, sobriety; the treacherous, fidelity; the morose, urbanity; the injurious, equity; the churlish and covetous, benignity and charity; than the ungodly man, piety and sincere devotedness unto God? Here is the principal wound and distemper sin hath infected the nature of man with: Though he have suffered a universal impairment, he is chiefly prejudiced in regard of his tendency towards God; and what concerns the duties of the first table. Here the breach is greatest, and here is its greatest need of repair. True it is; an inoffensive, winning deportment towards men, is not without its excellency, and necessity too. And it doth indeed unsufferably reproach Christianity, and unbecome a disciple of Christ; yea it discovers a man not to be led by his Spirit, and so to be none of his; to indulge himself in immoral deportment towards men; to be undutiful towards superiors; unconvertible towards equals; oppressive towards inferiors; unjust towards any. Yet is a holy disposition of heart towards God, most earnestly, and in the first place to be endeavored (which will then draw on the rest) as having in it the highest equity and excellency, and being of the most immediate necessity to our blessedness.

(5.) Consider, that there may be some gradual tendencies, or fainter essays towards godliness, that fall short of real godliness, or come not up to that thorough change and determination of heart God-ward, that is necessary to blessedness. There may be a returning, but not to the most high, wherein man may be (as the prophet immediately subjoins Hos. 7. 16.) like a deceitful bow, not fully bent, that will not reach the mark; they come not home to God. Many may be almost persuaded; and even within reach of heaven, not far from the kingdom of God; may seek to enter, and not be able; their hearts being somewhat inclinable, but more averse; for they can only be unable as they are unwilling. The soul is in no possibility of taking up a complacential rest in God, till it be brought to this, to move toward him spontaneously and with, as it were, a self-motion. And

then is it self-moved towards God, when its preponderating bent is towards him. As a massy stone that one attempts to displace, if it be heaved at till it preponderate, it then moves out by its own weight; otherwise it reverts, and lies where as it did before. So it is with many men's hearts, all our lifting at them, is but the rolling of the returning stone; they are moved, but not removed: sometimes they are lifted at in the public ministry of the word; sometimes by a private, seasonable admonition; sometimes God makes an affliction his minister; a danger startles them; a sickness shakes them; and they think to change their course: but how soon do they change those thoughts, and are where they were? what enlightenings and convictions, what awakenings and terror, what remorse, what purposes, what tastes and relishes do some find in their own hearts, that yet are blasted and come to nothing? How many miserable abortions after travailing pangs and throes, and fair hopes of a happy birth of the new creature? Often somewhat is produced that much resembles it, but is not it. No gracious principle but may have its counterfeit in an ungracious heart; whence they deceive not others only, but themselves, and think verily they are true converts while they are yet in their sins. How many wretched souls, that lie dubiously struggling a long time under the contrary alternate impressions of the gospel on the one hand, and the present evil world on the other; and give the day to their own sensual inclinations at last, in some degree, escape the corruptions of the world, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but are again entangled and overcome, so as their latter end is worse than their beginning! 2. Pet. 2. 20. Such a man is so far from being advantaged by his former faint inclinations towards God, that he would be found at last under this aggravated wickedness beyond all other men; that when others wandered from God through inadvertency and inconsideration, this man will be found to have been his enemy upon deliberation, and against the various strivings of his convinced heart to the contrary. This is more eminently victorious and reigning enmity; such a one takes great pains to perish. Alas! it is not a slight touch, and overly superficial tincture, some evanid sentiments of piety, a few good thoughts or wishes, that bespeak a new man, a new creature. It is a thorough prevailing change, that quite alters the habitual posture of a man's soul, and determines it towards God, so as that the after-course of his life may be capable of that denomination, a living to God, a living after the Spirit; that exalts the love of God unto that supremacy in him, that it becomes the governing principle of his life, and the reason and measure of his actions; that as he loves him above all things else, better than his own life, so he can truly (though possibly sometimes with a doubtful, trembling heart) resolved the ordinary course of his daily walking and practice

into that love, as the directive principle of it. I pray, I read, I hear, because I love God. I desire to be just, sober, charitable, meek, patient because I love God. This is the perfection and end of the love of God, (therefore that must needs be the principle hereof) obedience to his will. 1 John. 2. 5. *Τετρελειώται.* Herein appears that power of godliness, denied (God knows) by too many that have the form: the spirit of love, power, and of a sound mind. 2. Tim. 3. 5. chap. 1. 7. That only is a sound mind, in which such love rules in such power. Is not love to God often pretended by such that, whenever it comes to an actual competition, discover they love their own flesh a great deal more; that seldom ever cross their own wills to do his? or hazard their own fleshly interest to promote his interest? we may justly say (as the apostle, in a case fitly enough reducible hither,) how dwells the love of God in that man? Notwithstanding such a subdued ineffectual love to God, such a one shall be denominated and dealt with as an enemy. It is not likely any man on earth hates God so perfectly as those in hell. And is it not every quality, not yet perfect in its kind, and that is yet growing more and more intense, in the mean time allayed by some degree of its contrary? Yet that over-mastered degree denominates not its subject, nor ought a man from such a supposed love to God to have the name of a lover of him. That principle is not only capable of denominating the man, that is prevalent and practical, that hath a governing influence on his heart and life. He in whom the love of God hath not such power and rule, whatever his fainter inclinations, may be, is an ungodly man.

And now methinks these several considerations compared and weighed together, should contribute something to the settling of right thoughts in the minds of secure sinners, touching the nature and necessity of this heart-change; and do surely leave no place for the forementioned vain pretences that occasioned them. For (to give you a summary view of what hath been propounded in those foregoing considerations,) it now plainly appears,—That the holy Scripture requires in him that shall enjoy this blessedness, a mighty change of the very temper of his soul, as that which must dispose him thereto; and which must therefore chiefly consist, in the right framing of his heart towards God; towards whom it is mostly, fixedly averse, and therefore not easily susceptible of such a change. And that any slighter or more feeble inclination towards God, will not serve the turn; but such only whereby the soul is prevalently and habitually turned to him. And then what can be more absurd or unsavoury? what more contrary to christian doctrine, or common reason, than instead of this necessary heart-change, to insist upon so poor a plea, as that mentioned above, as the only ground of so great a hope? How empty and frivolous will it appear in comparison of

this great soul-transforming change, if we severally consider the particulars of it. As for orthodoxy in doctrinals, it is in itself a highly laudable thing; and in respect of the fundamentals (for therefore are they so called) indispensably necessary to blessedness. As that cannot be without holiness, so nor holiness without truth. John. 17. 17. But, (besides that this is that which every one pretends to) is every thing which is necessary, sufficient? As to natural necessity (which is that we now speak to) reason, and intellectual nature are also necessary; shall therefore all men, yea, and devils too, be saved? Besides, are you sure you believe the grand articles of the Christian religion? Consider a little,—the grounds and effects of that pretended faith.

(1.) Its grounds; every assent is as the grounds of it are. Deal truly here with thy soul. Can you tell wherefore you are a christian? what are thy inducements to be of this religion? are they not such as are common to thee with them that are of a false religion? (I am here happily prevented by a worthy author,\* to which I recommend thee, but at the present a little bethink thyself,) Is it not possible thou mayst be a christian for the same reasons for which one may be a Jew, or a Mahometan, or a mere Pagan? as namely, education, custom, law, example, outward advantage, &c. Now consider, if thou find this upon inquiry to be thy case, the motives of thy being a christian admit of being cast together into this form of reasoning. That religion which a man's forefathers were of, which is established by law, or generally obtains in the country where he lives, the profession whereof, most conduces to, or best consists with his credit, and other outward advantages, that religion he is to embrace as the true religion. But such I find the christian religion to be to me; therefore, &c. The proposition here is manifestly false; for it contains grounds common to all religions, publicly owned, and professed throughout the world; and sure all cannot be true: and hence the conclusion (though materially considered it be true, yet) formally considered, as a conclusion issuing from such premises, must needs be false; and what then is become of thy orthodoxy; when, as to the formal object of thy faith, thou believest but as Mahometans and Pagans do? when thou art of this faith, by fate or chance only, not choice or rational inducement?

(2.) As to the effects of thy faith: let them be inquired into also, and they will certainly bear proportion to the grounds of it. The gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes; (Rom. 1. 16. 1 Thes. 2. 13.) to them that believe it not, it signifies nothing. The word of God received with a divine faith, as the word of God, works effectually upon

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\* Mr. Pink's trial of sincere love to Christ.

all that so receive it, that is, all that believe. What such efficacious workings of it hast thou felt upon thy soul? Certainly, its most connatural effect is that very change of heart, and inclination God-ward, of wick we have been speaking. What is so suitable to the gospel-revelation, as a good temper of heart God-ward? And how absurd is it to introduce the cause on purpose to exclude its genuine inseparable effect? But evident it is, (though true faith cannot,) that superficial, irrational assent, in which alone many glory, may too well consist with a disaffected heart towards God: and can it then signify any thing towards thy blessedness? sure to be so a solifidian is to be a nullifidian. Faith not working by love is not faith; at least profits nothing. For thy outward conformity in the solemnities of worship, it is imputable to so corrupt motives and principles, that the thing itself, abstractively considered, can never be thought characteristic and distinguishing of the heirs of blessedness. The worst of men, may perform the best of outward duties. Thy most glorious boasted virtues, if they grow not from the proper root, love to God, they are but splendid sins, as above appears, and hath been truly said of old. Thy repentance is either true or false; if true, it is that very change of mind and heart I speak of, and is therefore eminently signalized by that note, it is repentance towards God; if false, God will not be mocked. For thy regeneration in baptism; what can it avail thee, as to this blessedness, if the present temper of thy heart be unsuitable, thereto? Didst thou ever know any that held, that all the baptized should be saved? Will thy infant sanctity excuse the enmity and disaffection to God of thy riper age?

In short, if we seclude this work of God upon the soul, how inconsiderable is the difference between the Christian and the heathen world? wherein can it then be understood to lie, but in some ineffectual notions, and external observances? And can it be thought that the righteous, holy God will make so vast a difference in the states of men hereafter, who differ so little here? or that it shall so highly recommend a man to God, that it was his lot to be born, and to have lived upon such a turf or soil, or in such a clime or part of the world? His gracious providence is thankfully to be acknowledged and adored, that hath assigned us our stations under the gospel; but then it must be remembered, the gospel hath the goodness, not of the end, but of the means; which, as by our improvement or non-improvement, it becomes effectual or ineffectual, doth acquit from, or aggravate condemnation: and that it works not as a charm or spell, we know not how, or why, or when we think not of it; but by recommending itself in the demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost, to our reason and consciences, to our wills and affections, till we be delivered up into the mould or form of it. Rom. 6. 17. Surely were it so slight a matter, as too many

fondly dream, that must distinguish between them that shall be saved and shall perish, there would need no striving to enter in at the strait gate; and the disciples question would never have been, who then shall be saved? but rather, who shall not be saved? nor would it have been resolved by our Saviour into the immediate power of him alone, to whom all things are possible (Matt. 19. 26.) that any are saved at all; nor have been so earnestly asserted by him, that none could come to him, but whom his Father draws. John. 6. 44. The obvious import of which passages is such, that if careless sinners could once obtain of themselves seriously to consider them, methinks they would find little rest in their spirits, till they might discern a work wrought there, in some degree worthy of God, an impression some way proportionable to the power of an almighty arm; and that might speak God its author. For notwithstanding the soul's natural capacities before asserted and inferred, its \*moral incapacity, I mean its wicked aversation from God, is such as none but God himself can overcome. Now is that aversation the less culpable, for that it is so hardly overcome, but the more. It is an aversation of will; and who sees not, that every man is more wicked, according as his will is more wickedly bent? Hence his impotency or inability to turn to God, is not such as that he cannot turn if he would; but it consists in this, that he is not willing. He affects a distance from God. Which shews therefore the necessity still of this change. For the possibility of it, and the encouragement (according to the methods wherein God is wont to dispense his grace) the sinner hath to hope and endeavor it, will more fitly fall into consideration elsewhere.

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\*That moral incapacity is also in some sense truly natural, that is, in the same sense wherein we are said to be by nature the children of wrath, Eph. 2. 3. Therefore human nature must be considered as created by God, and as propagated by man. In the former sense, as God is the author of it, it is taken in this distinction, of moral and natural impotency, which needs not further explication; yet you may take this account of it from Dr. Twisse, *Impotentia faciendi quod Deo gratum est et acceptum, non est impotentia naturæ, sed morum. Nulla etenim nobis deest facultas naturæ per peccatum originale, juxta illud Augustini; Nulli agnoscendi veritatis abstulit facultatem. Adhuc remanet potentia, qua facere possumus quæcunque volumus: the inability to do what is pleasing and acceptable to God, is not a natural but moral inability. For no faculty of our nature is taken away from us by original sin (as saith Augustine,) it has taken from no man the faculty of discerning truth. The power still remains by which we can do whatsoever we choose. Vind. I. 3. errat. 9. sect. 6. Naturalem potentiam, quilibet agendi pro arbitrio ipsorum, dicimus ad omnes transmitti, non autem potentiam moralem: we say that the natural power of doing any thing according to our will is preserved to all, but not moral power. Vindic. Criminat. 3. S. 1. digr. 2. chap. 3.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

4 Inference. That the soul in which such a change is wrought, restlessly pursues this blessedness till it be attained. 5 Inference. That the knowing of God, and conformity to him, are satisfying things, and do now in a degree satisfy, according to the measure wherein they are attained. 6 Inference. That the love of God towards his people is great, that hath designed for them so great, and even a satisfying good.

4. It is further to be inferred, that a soul wherein such a change is wrought, pursues this blessedness with restless, supreme desire, till it attain to the fulness thereof. We have here a plainly implied description of the posture and tendency of such a soul (even of a sanctified holy soul, which had therefore undergone this blessed change) towards this state of blessedness. I shall (saith he) be satisfied with thy likeness, as though he had said, I cannot be satisfied otherwise. We have seen how great a change is necessary to dispose the soul to this blessedness, which being once wrought, nothing else can now satisfy it. Such a thing is this blessedness, (I speak now of so much of it as is previous and conducing to satisfaction, or of blessedness materially considered, the divine glory to be beheld and participated:) it is of that nature, it makes the soul restless, it lets it not be quiet, after it hath got some apprehension of it, till it attain the full enjoyment. The whole life of such a one, is a continual seeking God's face. So attractive is this glory of a subject rightly disposed to it: while others crave corn and wine, this is the sum of the holy soul's desires, Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance, &c. Psal. 4. 6. The same thing is the object of its present desires that shall be of its eternal satisfaction and enjoyment. This is now its one thing, the request insisted on, to behold the beauty of the Lord, &c. (Psal. 27. 4.) and while in any measure it doth so, yet it is still looking for this blessed hope, still hoping to be like him, see him as he is. The expectation of satisfaction in this state, implies the restless working of desire till then; for what is this satisfaction, but the fulfilling of our desires, the perfecting of the soul's motions in a complacential rest? Motion and rest do exactly correspond each to other. Nothing can naturally rest in any place, to which it was not before naturally inclined to move. And the rest is proportionably more composed and steady, according as the motion was stronger and more vigorous. By how much the hea-

vier any body is, so much the stronger and less resistible is its motion downward; and then accordingly it is less moveable when it hath attained its resting place. It is therefore a vanity and contradiction, to speak of the soul's being satisfied in that which it was not before desirous of.\* And that state which it shall ultimately and eternally acquiesce in (with a rest that must therefore be understood to be most composed and sedate,) towards it, it must needs move with the strongest and most unsatisfied desire, a desire that is supreme, prevalent, and triumphant over all other desires, and over all other obstructions to itself; least capable of diversion, or of pitching upon any thing short of the term aimed at. Ask therefore the holy soul, What is thy supreme desire? and so far as it understands itself, it must answer, "To see and partake the divine glory; to behold the blessed face of God, till his likeness be transfused through all my powers, and his entire image be perfectly formed in me: present to my view what else you will, I can be satisfied in nothing else but this." Therefore this leaves a black note upon those wretched souls that are wholly strangers to such desires; that would be better satisfied to dwell always in dust; that shun the blessed face of God as hell itself; and to whom the most despicable vanity is a more desirable sight than that of divine glory. Miserable souls! Consider your state, can that be your blessedness which you desire not? or do you think God will receive any into his blessed presence, to whom it shall be a burden! Methinks, upon the reading of this you should presently doom yourselves, and see your sentence written in your breast. Compare your hearts with this holy man's; see if there be any thing like this in the temper of your spirits; and never think well of yourselves till you find it so.

5. The knowledge of God, and conformity to him, are in their own nature apt to satisfy the desires of the soul, and even now actually do so, in the measure wherein they are attained. Some things are not of a satisfying nature; there is nothing tending to satisfaction in them. And then the continual heaping together of such things, doth no more towards satisfaction, than the accumulating of mathematical points would towards the compacting of a solid body; or the multiplication of cyphers only, to the making of a sum. But what shall one day satisfy, hath in itself a power and aptitude thereto. The act, whenever it is, supposes the power. Therefore the hungry craving soul, that would fain be happy, but knows not how, needs not spend its days in making uncertain guesses, and fruitless attempts and

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\*Aptitudinally, I mean, and ex hypothesi, that is supposing the knowledge of the object: otherwise as to actual explicit desires, God doth give us beyond what we can ask or think. But it is impossible the soul should rest satisfied in that, which upon knowledge it is undesirous of, and doth or would reject.



trials: it may fix its hovering thoughts; and upon assurance here given, say, I have now found at last where satisfaction may be had; and have only this to do, to bend all my powers hither, and intend this one thing, the possessing myself of this blessed rest; earnestly to endeavor, and patiently to wait for it. Happy discovery! welcome tidings! I now know which way to turn my eye, and direct my pursuit. I shall no longer spend myself in dubious, toilsome wanderings, in anxious, vain inquiry. I have found! I have found! blessedness is here. If I can but get a lively efficacious sight of God, I have enough—Shew me the Father, and it sufficeth. Let the weary, wandering soul bethink itself, and retire to God; He will not mock thee with shadows, as the world hath done. This is eternal life, to know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Apart from Christ thou canst not know nor see him with fruit and comfort; but the gospel revelation (which is the revelation of God in Christ) gives thee a lovely prospect of Him. His glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and when by beholding it thou art changed into the same likeness, and findest thyself gradually changing more and more from glory to glory, thou wilt find thyself accordingly in a gradual tendency towards satisfaction and blessedness: that is, do but seriously set thyself to study and contemplate the being and attributes of God; and then look upon him as through the Mediator, He is willing to be reconciled to thee, and become thy God; and so long let thine eye fix and dwell here, till it affect thy heart, and the proper impress of the gospel be by the Spirit of the Lord instamped upon it; till thou find thyself wrought to a compliance with his holy will, and his image formed in thee; and thou shalt soon experience thou art entering into his rest; and wilt relish a more satisfying pleasure in this blessed change, than all thy worldly sensual enjoyments did ever afford thee before.

Surely, if the perfect vision and perception of his glorious likeness will yield a complete satisfaction at last, the initial and progressive tendencies towards the former, will proportionably infer the latter. It is obvious hence to collect, who are in this world (ordinarily and, *cæteris paribus*, where more unusual violent temptations hinder not) the most satisfied and contented persons; even those that have most of the clarifying sights of God, and that thence partake most of his image, (indeed Scripture only vouchsafes the name to such sights of God; He that doth evil hath not seen God, 1 John. 3. 6. 3. John. 11.) such as have most of a godly frame wrought into their spirits, and that have hearts most attempered and conformed to God; these are the most contented persons in the world. Content is part of the gain that attends godliness; it concurring, renders the other a great gain; godliness with contentment; (1 Tim. 6. 6.) the form of expression discovers how connatural contentment is to godli-

ness; as if they were not to be mentioned apart. Godliness, as if he had said, is a very gainful thing, but if you would comprehend the gainfulness of it fully, do not abstract too curiously, take in with it that which is of so near an alliance, that you will hardly know how to consider them apart; let its inseparable adjunct, contentment, go along with it, and you will find it a gainful thing indeed. The true knowledge of God so directly tends to holiness, and that to contentment, that it may be too evidently concluded, that a discontented person hath little of the one or the other, not much knowledge and less grace; he is so far from being like God, that in the apostle's language above we may say, he hath not seen him. Doth that person know God, or hath ever seen him, that falls not into the dust, admiring so glorious a Majesty? that subjects not himself to him, with loyal affections, accounting it his only grand concernment to please and serve him? But the discontented person takes upon him, as if he were God alone, and as if he expected every creature to do him homage, and thought the creation were made for the pleasure and service of none but him. Hath that person ever seen God, that acknowledges him not a sufficient portion, a full, all-comprehending good? Hath he seen him, that sees not reason to trust him, to commit all his concernments to him? Hath he seen him that loves him not, and delights not in his love? Hath he seen him that quits not all for him, and abandons not every private interest to espouse his; and how evidently do these things tend to quiet and compose the soul! Discontent proceeds from idolizing thoughts of ourselves; it is rooted in self-conceit, in self-dependance, self-love, self-seeking, all which despicable idols (or that one great idol, *self*, thus variously served and idolized) one sight of the divine glory would confound and bring to nothing. The sights of God melt the heart, break it under a sense of sin, and hence compose it to a meek, peaceful humility; but the discontented spirit is an unbroken, proud, imperious spirit. The sights of God purify the soul, refine it from the dross of this vile world, make it daily aspire to a conformity unto the pure and spiritual nature of God. But a discontented spirit, is a sensual, terrene spirit (for what, but such objects are the usual matter of most men's discontents?) taking sensuality in its just latitude, it is a low dunghill spirit, fit for nothing but to rake and scabble in the dirt.

I insist upon this, apprehending (what deserves more lamentation than it hath observations,) that too many annex a profession of eminent godliness and spirituality, to an indulged, querulous, impatient temper of spirit; join a splendid appearance of piety, to an unreformed perverse frowardness (which agree as well as a jewel of gold to a swine's snout) nothing pleases them; their mercies are not worth the acknowledgement; their afflictions intolerable, not to be borne. They fall out and quarrel with

all occurrences, actions, events; neither man, nor God doth any thing good in their sight. The world is not well governed; nothing falls out well as to themselves. What can possibly be thought on more repugnant to the knowledge of God, the grand design of all religion, and the very spirit of the gospel, than this temper? Which way do these tend and aim, but to lead souls to blessedness; to bring them into a peaceful, happy, satisfied state and frame? and must we, because that end cannot be attained here, therefore go the quite contrary way? or pretend we are going to heaven with our backs turned upon it? Sure the discoveries God now makes of himself to us, and by which he impresses his likeness upon his own (though they ultimately design our satisfaction and blessedness in heaven, as intermediate thereunto; they aim at the bringing us into a heaven upon earth; to form us unto a life agreeable, and that hath analogy with that of heaven; unto which nothing is more analogous in our present state, than that peace and serenity which result from divine knowledge and holiness; nothing more inconsistent, than a peevish, fretful, turbulent spirit. The one is a participation of a bright and mild light from heaven, the other, of a dark and raging fire from hell. It is only God's face, his glorious likeness reflected on our souls, that shall satisfy hereafter, and make heaven, heaven. He doth not now wholly conceal himself from us, not altogether hide his face. The shining of the same face (in what degree he now vouchsafes it) will make this earth a heaven too. One glance towards him may transmit a lively pleasant lustre upon our spirits: they looked on him, and were lightened, Psal. 34. 5. And we live in the expectation of clearer and more impressive eternal visions. It will become us to express a present satisfiedness, proportionable to our present sights and expectations; and to endeavor daily to see more, and to be more like God: that we may be daily more and more satisfied; while we cannot yet attain, to be making gradual approaches towards that blessed state. By how much any have more of the vision and likeness of God in their present state, so much they approach nearer unto satisfaction.

6. We infer; The love of God to his people is great, which hath designed for them so great, and even a satisfying good. We cannot overlook the occasion this doctrine gives us, to consider and contemplate awhile the love of God. If this shall be the blessedness of his saints, it is a great love that shall be the spring and source of it. Two things here before our eyes, discover the greatness of his love:—that it designs satisfaction to the persons meant: and—that they shall be satisfied with the divine vision and likeness.

(1.) It designs their satisfaction. This is as far as love can go. It is love to the uttermost: it doth not satisfy itself, till it satisfy them. It is love to spare an enemy, to relieve a stranger;

but to satisfy for ever them that were both ; this sure exceeds all the wonted measures of love. Much love is shewn in the forgiveness of sin in the supply of necessities ; but herein ( as the apostle speaks in another case ) is the love of God perfected, as to its exercise : it hath now perfectly attained its end, when it hath not left so much as a craving desire, not a wish unsatisfied ; the soul cannot say, " I wish it were better ; O that I had but this one thing more to complete my happiness." It hath neither pretence nor inclination to think such a thought. Divine love is now at rest. It was travailing big with gracious designs before ; it hath now delivered itself. It would rather create new heaven every moment, than not satisfy : but it hath now done it to the full ; the utmost capacity of the soul is filled up ; it can be no happier than it is. This is love's triumph over all the miseries, wants, and desires of a languishing soul : the appropriate, peculiar glory of divine love. If all the excellencies of the whole creation besides, were contracted into one glorious creature, it would never be capable of this boast, I have satisfied one soul. The love of God leaves none unsatisfied, but the proud despisers of it. Now is the eternal sabbath of love. Now it enters into rest, having finished all its works ; it views them over now with delight, for lo ! they are all good ; its works of pardon, of justification and adoption ; its works of regeneration, of conversion, and sanctification ; its establishing, quickening, comforting works ; they are all good, good in themselves, and in this their end, the satisfaction and repose of blessed souls. Now divine love puts on the crown, ascends the throne, and the many myriads of glorified spirits fall down about it, and adore : all profess to owe to it the satisfying pleasures they all enjoy. Who can consider the unspeakable satisfaction of those blessed spirits, and not also reflect upon this exalted greatness of divine love !

(2.) It is again great love, if we consider wherewith they shall be satisfied. The sight and participation of the divine glory, his face, his likeness, his represented and impressed glory. There may be great love that never undertakes, nor studies to satisfy all the desires of the persons we cast our love upon, especially where nothing will satisfy but high and great matters. The love of God knows no difficulties ; nor can be overset. The greater the performance or vouchsafement, the more suitable to divine love. It hath resolved to give the soul a plenary satisfaction, perfectly to content all its desires ; and since nothing else can do it, but an eternal beholding of the glorious face of the divine majesty, and a transformation into his own likeness, that shall not be withheld. Yea, it hath created, refined, enlarged its capacity on purpose, that it might be satisfied with nothing less. Great love may sometimes be signified by a glance ; the offered view of a willing face. Thus our Lord Jesus invites his church to discover her own love, and answer his, Let me see thy

face, &c. Cant. 2. 14. Love is not more becomingly expressed or gratified, than by *mutual looks, ubi amor, ibi oculus*. How great is that love that purposely lays aside the veil, that never turns away its own, nor permits the aversion of the beholder's eye throughout eternity. Now we see in a glass; then face to face as if never weary of beholding on either part; but on that part the condescension lies, is the transcendent admirable love. That a generous beneficent, the other (till it be satisfied here) a craving, indigent love. And how inexpressible a condescension is this? Poor wretches! many of whom, possibly, were once so low, that a strutting grandee would have thought himself affronted by their look, and have met with threatening rebukes by their over-daring venturous eye; lo now they are permitted (to stand before princes; that is a mean thing) to feed their eyes with divine glory, to view the face of God. He sets them before his face for ever. And that eternal vision begets in them an eternal likeness; they behold not a glorious God with deformed souls; that would render them a perpetual abomination and torment to themselves. Love cannot permit that heaven should be their affliction; that they should have cause to loath and be weary of themselves in that presence. It satisfies them, by clothing and filling them with glory; by making them partake of the divine likeness, as well as behold it. It is reckoned a great expression of a complying love, but to give a picture; when the parties loved only permit themselves to view in a mute representation a vicarious face. This is much more a vital image (as before) God's own living-likeness propagated in the soul; the inchoation of it is called the divine love, the seed of God. What amazing love is this, of the great God to a worm! not to give over till he have assimilated it to his own glory; till it appear as a ray of light begotten of the Father of lights! Every one, saith the apostle, that doth righteousness is born of him; 1 John. 2. 29. and then it follows, behold, what manner of love—3. 1. to be the sons of God; to be like him, to see him as he is, &c. How great a word is that (spoken in reference to our present state)—to make us partakers of *his* holiness. Heb. 12. 10. And (as well it might) it is instanced as an effect and argument of love, (for sure chastening itself, abstracted from that end of it, doth not import love) whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth—and then by and by, in the same series and line of discourse is added—to make us partakers of his holiness. Love always either supposes similitude, or intends it; and is sufficiently argued by it either way. And sure, the love of God cannot be more directly expressed, than in his first intending to make a poor soul like him, while he loves it with compassion; and then imprinting and perfecting that likeness, that he may love it with eternal delight. Love is here the first and the last, the beginning and end in all this business.

## CHAPTER XIV.

7. Inference. That since this blessedness is limited to a qualified subject "I in righteousness," the unrighteous are necessarily left excluded. 8. Inference. That righteousness is no vain thing, in as much as it hath so happy an issue, and ends so well.

7. Considering this blessedness is not common but limited to a qualified subject "I in righteousness," a person clothed in righteousness: it evidently follows, the unrighteous are necessarily excluded and shut out, can have no part nor portion in this blessedness. The same thing that the apostle tells us, without an inference; Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, &c. (1 Cor. 6. 9.) intimating that to be a most confessed known thing: know ye not? is it possible ye can be ignorant of this! The natural necessity of what hath been here inferred, hath been argued already from the consideration of the nature of this blessedness. The legal necessity of it, arising from the divine will and law, is that I mainly intend at present. By such a necessity also, they are excluded, who by God's rule (according to which the supreme judgment must be managed) shall be found unrighteous: those that come not up to the terms of the gospel-covenant; never accepted the offers, nor submitted to the commands of it; and that hence consequently are unrelated to Christ, and ununited to him; no way capable of advantage by his most perfect and all-sufficient righteousness, that alone fully answers all the exactions and demands of the covenant of works: and so, who are at last found unrighteous by the old law and the new, the law both of the Creator and Redeemer too. There is the same necessity these should be excluded, as that God should be just and true. The word is gone forth of his mouth in righteousness, and cannot return. He did not dally with sinners, when he settled those constitutions, whence this necessity results. He is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent. A heathen understood so much of the nature of God.

I have thought sometimes, with much wonder, of the stupid folly of unsanctified hearts; they are even confounded in their own wishes; and would have (in order to their security) they know not what. Were the question faithfully put to the very heart of such a one, what wouldst thou have done in order to thy eternal safety from divine wrath and vengeance? would not the

answer be, O that God would recall those severe constitutions he hath made; and not insist so strictly on what he hath required in the gospel, in order to the salvation of sinners. But foolish wretch! dost thou know what thou sayest! wouldst thou have God repeal the gospel, that thou mayest be the more secure? in what a case art thou then? Hast thou no hope if the gospel stand in force? what hope wilt thou have if it do not? Must the hopes of all the world be ruined to establish thine? and yet leave them involved in the common ruin too? What, but the gospel gives the least hope to apostate sinners? There is now hope for thee in the gospel-promise, if thou return to God. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. Isa. 55. 7. But take away the gospel, and where art thou? Were it possible for thee to repent, and become a new man; what settles the connexion between repentance and salvation, but the gospel promise? Will the violated law of works accept thy repentance instead of obedience? Doth it not expressly preclude any such expectation? Doth it give any ground to look for any thing but death after sin? Thou must therefore fly to the gospel, or yield thyself lost. And know, it contains none but faithful and true sayings, that have more stability in them than the foundations of heaven and earth: therefore expect nothing to be altered for thy sake. The gospel constitution was settled long before thou wast born: thou comest too late with thy exceptions (if thou hadst any) against it. Remember therefore this is one of the unalterable determinations of this gospel, without holiness thou shalt never see God, or (which amounts to the same) thou canst not behold his face but in righteousness. There is no word in all the Bible of more certain truth than this. In this also how apt are sinners foolishly to entangle themselves! The gospel is true, and to be believed, till they meet with something that crosses them, and goes against the hair, and then they hope it is not so. But vain man! if once thou shake the truth of God, what wilt thou stay thyself upon? Is God true when he promises? and is he not as true when he threatens? If that be a true saying, "Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him,"—is not that as much to be regarded, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him? The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Are not these of equal authority? If thou hadst any reason to hope thou mayest be happy though thou never be righteous; is there not as much reason to fear thou mightest be miserable though thou be; since the one is as much against the flat express word of God as the other? Let not thy love to sin betray thee out of all religion and thy wits together. Wherein wilt thou believe one upon the bare value of his word, that will

lie to thee in any thing? Yea, and as it is the same authority that is affronted in every command, whence disobedience to one is a breach of all; so is the same veracity denied in every truth, and the disbelief of one belies all; and wilt thou believe him in any thing, thou hast proclaimed a liar in every thing? Therefore, so little hast thou gained by disbelieving the divine revelation in this thing, that thou hast brought thyself to this miserable dilemma; If the word of God be false, thou hast no foundation of any faith left thee, if it be true, it dooms thee to eternal banishment from his blessed face, while thou remainest in thy unrighteousness. It will not be thy advantage then to disbelieve this gospel-record, but to consider it, and take it to heart; it will prove never the less true at last, for that thou wilt not believe it, Shall thy unbelief make the truth of God of none effect? And if thou wouldst but reasonably consider the case, methinks thou shouldst soon be convinced. Since thou acknowledgest (as I suppose thee to do) that there are two states of men in the other world, a state of blessedness, and a state of misery; and two sorts of men in this world, the righteous, and the unrighteous: let thy reason and conscience now judge who shall be allotted to the one state and who to the other. Sure, if thou acknowledge a righteous Judge of all the world, thou canst not think he will turn men promiscuously into heaven or hell at random, without distinction: much less canst thou be so absurd and mad, as to think all the unrighteous shall be saved, and the righteous perish. And then what is left thee to judge but that which I am now urging upon thee, that when the righteous shall be admitted to the vision of God's blessed face, the unrighteous shall be driven forth into outer darkness.

It may be some here will be ready to say, "But to what purpose is all this, they were of the same mind before, and cannot think that any one would ever say the contrary." Nor do I think so either; but it is one thing not to believe a conclusion to be true, and another to profess a contrary belief: and one thing to believe a conclusion, another to think we believe it. Men often know not their own minds. In practical matters, it is best seen what a man's belief is by practice: for when any profess to believe this or that practical truth, relating to their salvation, if they believe it not practically, that is, with such a belief as will command their suitable practice, it matters not what belief they are of, or whether they were of that judgment or no: yea, it will prove in the issue better for them they had been of another, when their own professed belief shall be urged against them. But let us consider a little, how in practical matters of less concernment we would estimate a man's belief. You meet a traveller upon the way, who tells you, the bridge over such an unpassable river is broken down, and that if you venture you perish; if you believe him, you return; if you hold on, he reasonably concludes you believe



him not ; and will therefore be apt to say to you, if you will not believe me you may make trial. Your physician tells you a disease is growing upon you, that in a short time will prove incurable and mortal, but if you presently use the means he shall prescribe, it is capable of an easy remedy : how would you yourself have your belief of your physician judged of in this case ? Would you expect to be believed, if you should say, you do not at all distrust your physician's integrity and judgment, but yet you resolve not to follow his direction ; unless you would have us believe too, that you are weary of your life, and would fain be rid of it ? There is no riddle or mystery in this. How ridiculous would men make themselves, if in matters of common concernment they should daily practice directly contrary to their professed belief ? How few would believe them serious, or in their wits ? But however, call this believing, or what you will ; we contend not about the name ; the belief of such a thing can no further do you good, you can be nothing the better for it, further than as it engages you to take a course suitable and consequent to such a belief. To believe that there is a hell, and run into it ; that unrighteousness persisted in will damn you, and yet will live in it ! To what purpose is it, to make your boasts of this faith ? But since you are willing to call this believing ; all the foregoing reasoning is to engage you to consider what you believe. Do you believe that unrighteousness will be the death of your soul ; will eternally separate you from God, and the presence of his glory ? and when you have reasoned the matter with yourself, you find it to be certainly so : should not such a thing be more deeply pondered ? The bare proposal of an evident truth commands present assent ; but if I further bend my mind to reason out the same thing to myself, I am occasioned to take notice of the grounds, dependencies, the habits of it, what it rests upon, and whither it tends, and thence more discern its importance, and of what moment it is, than I should have done, if upon first view I had assented only, and dismissed it my thoughts. And yet is it possible, you should think this to be true, and not think it a most important truth ? Is it a small matter in your account, whether you shall be blessed or miserable for ever ? whether you be saved or perish eternally ? Or is it considered by you, according as the weight of the matter requires, that as you are found righteous or unrighteous, so will it everlastingly fare with you ?

You may possibly say, you already conclude yourself righteous therefore no further employ your thoughts about it. But methinks, you should hardly be able however to put such a thing out of your thoughts ; while as yet the final determination is not given in the case. If a man have a question yet pending, concerning his life or estate ; though his business be never so clear, he will hardly forget it, the trial not being yet past. And

though in this matter, you have no reason to suspect error or corruption in your Judge, (through which many honest causes may miscarry in a human judicature) yet have you no reason to suspect yourself? If the Holy Spirit hath assured you, he hath not stupified you; but as you have then the less to fear, you have the more of love and joy. Therefore you will not thence mind such a concernment the less, but with the more delight; and therefore also, most probably, with the more frequency and intension. What a pleasure will it be to review evidences, and say, Lo! here are the mediums by which I make out my title to the eternal inheritance. Such and such characters give me the confidence to number myself among God's righteous ones. And do you lead that heavenly raised life? do you live in those sweet and ravishing comforts of the Holy Ghost, that may bespeak you one whom he hath sealed up to the day of redemption? If you pretend not to any such certainty, but rely upon your own judgment of your case; are you sure you are neither mistaken in the notion of the righteousness required, nor in the application of it to your own soul? Possibly, you may think yourself, because in your ordinary dealing you wrong no man (yourself being judge,) a very righteous person. But evident it is, when the Scripture uses this term as descriptive of God's own people, and to distinguish between them that shall be saved and perish, it takes it in that comprehensive sense before explained. And however, it requires at least much more of thee, under other expressions, as thou canst hardly be so ignorant but to know. And do but use thy reason here a little, and demand of thyself; is he to be accounted a righteous person, that thinks it fit to avoid wronging a man, but makes no conscience at all of wronging God? More particularly: Is it righteous, to live all thy days in a willing ignorance of the Author of thy being, never once to inquire, Where is God my Maker? Job. 35. 10. Is it righteous to forget him days without number, not to have him from day to day in all thy thoughts? Is it righteous to estrange thyself from Him, and live as without Him in the world, while thou livest, movest and hast thy being in Him; not to glorify Him in whose hands thy breath is? to be a lover of pleasure more than God? a worshipper, in thy very soul, of the creature more than the Creator! Is it righteous to harden thy heart against his fear and love? to live under his power, and never reverence it; his goodness and never acknowledge it? to affront his authority, to belie his truth, abuse his mercy, impose upon his patience, defy his justice; to exalt thy own interest against his; the trifling petite interest of a silly worm, against the great all-comprehending interest of the common Lord of all the world? to cross his will, to do thy own? to please thyself, to the displeasing of Him? whence hadst thou thy measures of justice, if this be just?

Again, is it righteous to deny the Lord that bought thee, to neglect that great salvation which He is the author of? And whereas He came to bless thee in turning thee from thine iniquities, wilfully to remain still in an accursed servitude to sin? when He was made manifest to destroy the works of the devil, still to yield thyself a captive at his will? whereas He died that thou mightest not any longer live to thyself, but to Him that died for thee, and rose again; and that He might redeem thee from thy vain conversation; and that thou art so expressly told, that such as still lead sensual lives, mind earthly things, have not their conversation in heaven, are enemies to the cross of Christ. Is it no unrighteousness, that in these respects thy whole life should be nothing else but a constant contradiction to the very design of his dying? a perpetual hostility, a very tilting at his cross? Is there no unrighteousness in thy obstinate infidelity, that wickedly denies belief to his glorious truths, acceptance of his gracious offers, subjection to his holy laws? No unrighteousness in thy obstinate, remorseless impenitency? thy heart that cannot repent? that melts not, while a crucified Jesus, amidst his agonies and dying pangs, cries to thee from the cross, O sinner, enough, thy hard heart breaks mine! yield at last, and turn to God. Is it righteous, to live as no way under law to Christ? to persist in actual rebellion against his just government, which he died, and revived, and rose again, to establish over the living and the dead? yea, and that while thou pretendest thyself a christian? In a word: Is it righteous to tread under foot the Son of God, to vilify his blood, and despise his Spirit; Is this the righteousness that thou talkest of? Are these thy qualifications for the everlasting blessedness? If thou say, thou confessest thou art in thyself, in these several respects, altogether unrighteous: but thou hopest the righteousness of Christ will be sufficient to answer for all; no doubt Christ's righteousness is abundantly available to all the ends for which it was intended by the Father and Him; but it shall never answer all the ends that a foolish wicked heart will fondly imagine to itself.

In short, it serves to excuse thy non-performance of, and stands instead of thy perfect sinless obedience to, the law of works; but it serves not instead of thy performance of what is required of thee, as the condition of the gospel-covenant. That is, It shall never supply the room of faith, repentance, regeneration, holiness, the loving of Christ above all, and God in Him; so as to render these unnecessary, or salvation possible without them. There is not one *iota*, or *tittle* in the Bible, that so much as intimates an unregenerate person, an unbeliever, an impenitent or unholy person, shall be saved by Christ's righteousness; but enough to the contrary, every one knows that hath the least acquaintance with the Scriptures. Vain man! what, is Christ divided and divided against Himself;

Christ without, against Christ within! His sufferings on the cross and foregoing obedience, against his Spirit and government in the soul? Did Christ die to take away the necessity of our being christians? And must his death serve not to destroy sin out of the world, but Christianity? Who hath taught thee so wickedly to misunderstand the design of Christ's dying? And when the Scripture so plainly tells thee, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. John. 3. 16. And that he became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him; (Heb. 5. 9.) yea, and that He will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know and obey Him not. What should induce thee to think thou mayest be saved by Him, whether thou believest and obeyest or not? No, if ever thou think to see God, and be happy in Him, thou must have a righteousness in thee resembling his; the very product, the thing wrought in the work of regeneration. If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him. Whereupon follows the description of the blessedness of such righteous ones, in the beginning of the next chapter,—They are sons—they shall be like, &c. So that in a word, without some sight of God here, there is no seeing Him hereafter; without some likeness to Him now, none hereafter. And such as are destitute of that heart-conformity to the gospel, wherein the evangelical righteousness stands, are so far from it, that we may say to them as our Saviour to the Jews, Ye have neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape, (John. 5. 37.) that is, you have never had a right notion, or any the least true glimpse of him; your hearts are wholly destitute of all divine impressions whatsoever.

8. We may further infer, from this qualification of the subject of blessedness, that righteousness is no vain thing. That is not in vain, that ends so well, and hath so happy an issue at last. Scripture tells us, that the labor of the righteous tendeth to life: (Prov. 10. 16.) and that we may understand it of their labor as they are righteous, we are more plainly told, that righteousness tendeth to life; (ch. 11. 19.) and that to them that sow righteousness shall be a sure reward. (ver. 18.) that the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Matt. 13. 43.) the righteous into eternal life. Ch. 25. 46. And we here see that righteousness ends in the blessed sight of God's glorious face, in being satisfied with the divine likeness. Foolish sinners are justly upbraided that they spend their labor for that which satisfies not; (Isa. 55. 2.) take much pains to no purpose; such are all the works, of sin, toilsome, fruitless; what fruit had ye of those things (namely, which ye wrought when you were free from righteousness) whereof ye are now ashamed; for the end of those things is death. But

(it follows) being now made free from sin, and become servants to God (which is paraphrased above by servants to righteousness) ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Rom. 6. 20—22. The fruit is a continual increase of holiness, a growing more and more like God; till at last everlasting life, satisfaction with his likeness, do crown and consummate all.

You have now what to answer to the atheist's profane query, What profit is it to serve God? to what purpose to lead so strict and precise a life? You may now see to what purpose it is; and whereunto godliness (which righteousness here includes) is profitable as having, besides what it entitles to here, the promise of that life which is to come. There needs no more to discover any thing not to be vain (inasmuch as nothing can be said to be so, but in reference to an end, as being good for nothing) than the eviction of these two things:—that it aims at a truly worthy and valuable end; and—that its tendency thereto is direct and certain. In the present case, both these are obvious enough at the first view. For as to the former of them: all the world will agree, without disputing the matter, that the last end of man (that is, which he ultimately propounds to himself) is his best good: and that he can design no further good to himself than satisfaction; nothing after or beyond that: and what can afford it, if the vision and participation of the divine glory do not? As to the latter: besides all that assurance given by Scripture-constitution to the righteous man, concerning his future reward, let the consciences be consulted of the most besotted sinners, in any lucid interval, and they will give their suffrage (Balaam, that so earnestly followed the reward of unrighteousness, not excepted,) that the way of righteousness is that only likely way to happiness; and would therefore desire to die, at least the righteous man's death, and that their latter end should be like his. So is wisdom (I might call it righteousness too; the wicked man is the Scripture fool, and the righteous the wise man) justified not by her children only, but by her enemies also. And sure, it is meet that she should be more openly justified by her children, and that they learn to silence and repress those mis-giving thoughts; Surely I have washed my hands in vain, &c. Psal. 73. 13. And be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know their labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. 15. 58.

## CHAPTER XV.

Two other inferences, from the consideration of the season of this blessedness: The former, that inasmuch as this blessedness is not attained in this life, the present happiness of saints must in a great part consist in hope. The latter, that great is the wisdom and sagacity of the righteous man, which waves a present temporary happiness and chooses, that which is distant and future.

Inasmuch as the season of this blessedness is not on this side the grave, nor expected by saints till they awake; we may further infer,

9. That their happiness in the mean time doth very much consist in hope; or that hope must needs be of very great necessity and use to them in their present state for their comfort and support. It were not otherwise possible to subsist in the absence and want of their highest good, while nothing in this lower world is, as to kind and nature, suitable to their desires, or makes any colorable overture to them of satisfaction and happiness. Others (as the psalmist observes) have their portion in this life; that good, which as to the species and kind of it, is most grateful to them, is present, under view, within sight; and (as the apostle Rom. 8. 24.) Hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But those whose more refined spirits, having received the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, prompt them to groan after something beyond time, and above this sublunary sphere; of them the apostle there tells us, that they are saved by hope. They (as if he should say) subsist by it; they were never able to hold out, were it not for their hope; and that a hope too, beyond this life, as is the hope of a christian; if in this life only we had hope in Christ, &c. 1 Cor. 15. 19. The hope of a christian, as such, is suitable to its productive cause, the resurrection of Christ from the dead; begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection, &c. 1 Pet. 1. 3. Thence is it the hope of a renewed, never-dying life, the hope of a blessed immortality; whereof Christ's resurrection was a certain argument and pledge.

Indeed the new creature is, *ab origine, originally*, and all along a hoping creature, both in its *primum* and its *porro esse*; It is conceived, and formed and nursed up in hope. In its production, and in its progress towards perfection, it is manifestly

influenced thereby. In the first return of the soul to God, hope being then planted as a part of the holy, gracious nature, now manifestly discovers itself, when the soul begins to act, (as turning after the reception of the divine influence, is its act) hope insinuates itself into (or induces rather) that very act. Returning is not the act of a despairing, but hoping soul. It is God apprehended as reconcilable, that attracts and wins it; while he is looked upon as an implacable enemy, the soul naturally shuns him, and comes not nigh, till drawn with those cords of a man, the bands of love. Hos. 11. 4. While it says, there is no hope, it says withal (desperately enough) I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. But if there be any hope in Israel, concerning this thing: if it can yet apprehend God willing to forgive, then let us make a covenant, &c. Ezr. 10. 2. 3. This presently draws the hovering soul into a closure and league with him. And thus is the union continued. Unsteadfastness in the covenant of God, is resolved into this not setting, (Psal. 78. 7—13.) or fixing of hope in him, or (which amounts to the same) setting of hope in God is directed as a means to steadfastness of spirit with him, and a keeping of his covenant. Revolting souls are encouraged to return to the Lord upon this consideration, that salvation is hoped for in vain from any other. (Jer. 3. 22. 23.) the case being indeed the same, in all after-conversions as in the first. God as multiplying to pardon, and still retaining the same name, the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, Exod. 34. 6. (which name in all the severals that compose and make it up, is in his Christ) invites back to him the backsliding sinner, and renews his thoughts of returning. And so is he afterwards under the teachings of grace led on by hope, through the whole course of religion towards the future glory. Grace appears, teaching sinners to deny ungodliness, &c. (Tit. 2. 11. 12. 13.) and in the looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, &c. So do they keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Thus is the new creature formed in hope, and nourished in hope, and if its eye were upon pardon at first, it is more upon the promised glory afterwards. And yet that last end hath in a degree its attractive influence upon it, from the first formation of it; it is even then taught to design for glory. It is begotten to the lively hope, (where though hope be taken objectively, as the apposition shews of the following words, to an inheritance, yet the act is evidently connoted; for the thing hoped for, is meant under that notion, as hoped for :) and its whole following course is an aiming at glory; a seeking glory, honor, immortality, &c. Rom. 2. 7. Thus is the work of sanctification carried on; he that hath this hope purifieth himself. 1 John. 3. 3. Thus are losses sustained; The spoiling of goods taken joyfully through the expectation of the

better and enduring substance. Heb. 10. 34. The most hazardous services undertaken, even an apostleship to a despised Christ,—In the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised. Tit. 1. 1. 2. All difficulties encountered and overcome, while the helmet is the hope of salvation. 1 Thes. 5. 3. All worldly evils are willingly endured; and all *such* good things quitted and forsaken, for Christ's sake and his elects'. And if the question be asked, (as it was once of Alexander, when so frankly distributing his treasures among his followers) what do you reserve for yourself? The resolved christian makes (with him) that short brave reply, *HOPE*. He lives upon things future and unseen. The objects any one converses with most, and in which his life is as it were bound up, are suitable to the ruling principles of life in him. They that are after the flesh, do savour the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Rom. 8. 5. The principle of the fleshy life is *sense*: The principle of the spiritual life is *faith*. Sense is a mean, low, narrow, incomprehensive principle, limited to a point, this centre of earth, and *τὸ νῦν* *this now* of time; it can reach no higher than terrene things, nor further than present things: so brutish is the life of him that is led by it; wholly confined to matter and time. But the righteous live by faith. Their faith governs and maintains their life. They steer not their course according to what they see, but according to what they believe: and their daily sustenance is by the same kind of things. Their faith influences not their actions only, but their comforts and enjoyments. They subsist by the things they believe, even invisible and eternal things; but it is by the intervening exercise of hope, whose object is the same. The apostle having told us from the prophet, that the just shall live by faith, (Heb. 10. 38.) presently subjoins a description of that faith they live by, namely, that it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; (Heb. 11. 1.) it substantiates and realizes, evidences and demonstrates those glorious objects, so far above the reach and sphere of sense. It is constantly sent out to forage in the invisible regions for the maintenance of this life; and thence fetches in the provisions upon which hope feeds, to the strengthening of the heart, the renewing of life and spirits. Our inward man (saith the apostle 2. Cor. 4. 16. 18.) is renewed day by day; while we look, or take aim (which is next in the series of the discourse, for the intervening verse is manifestly parenthetical) not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. And the word *σκοποῦντες* here rendered *look* doth plainly signify the act of hope as well as that of faith; for it doth not import a mere intuition or beholding, a taking notice or assenting only that there are such things, but a designing or scoping at them (which



is the very word) with an appropriative eye; as things that notwithstanding their distance, or whatsoever imaginable difficulty, are hoped to be attained to and enjoyed. And here are evidently the distinct parts of faith and hope in this business; faith, upon the authority and credit of the divine word and promise, persuades the heart that there is such a glorious state of things reserved for the saints in general, (faith can go no further for the word of promise goes no further) and so serves instead of eyes in the divine light, to view those glories; or it presents them (as so many substantial realities,) demonstrates them, submits them to view, whence *hope* reaches forth to them; contends against and triumphs over all attending difficulties, and possesses them; gives the soul an early anticipated fruition of them, for its present support and relief. So that it rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5. 2.—12. 12. It might well therefore be said, I had fainted, if I had not believed, (Psal. 27. 13. 14.) or who can express how sad my case had been, if I had not believed? for there is an elegant aposiopesis in the Hebrew text, the words "I had fainted" being supplied in the translation. If I had not believed; what had become of me then? As though he had said, Inasmuch as faith feeds, as it were, those hopes which more immediately the Lord makes use of, for the strengthening his people's hearts, as it was intimated in the following words, compared with Psal. 31. 24. In the present case; faith ascertains the heart, of the truth of the promises, so that thus the soul states the case to itself; Though I have not walked to and fro in those upper regions, nor taken a view of the heavenly inheritance; though I have not been in the third heavens, and seen the ineffable glory; yet the gospel-revelation, which hath brought life and immortality to light, the word of the eternal God, who hath told me this is the state of things in the other world, cannot but be true; my faith may therefore be to me instead of eyes; and the divine testimony must supply the place of light; both together give, methinks, a fair prospect of those far distant, glorious objects which I have now in view. Now this awakens hope, and makes it revive, and run to embrace what faith hath discovered in the promise: In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised. Tit. 1. 2. Psal. 119. 49. It is the word of God that causes the soul to hope, (that is believed, for disbelieved, it signifies nothing with it) and that not only as it contains a narration, but a promise concerning the future estate. I may without much emotion of heart, hear from a traveller the description of a pleasant country, where I have not been; but if the Lord of that country give me, besides the account of it, an assurance of enjoying rich and ample possessions there, this presently begets a hope, the pleasure whereof would much relieve a present distressed estate; and which nothing, but that of actual possession can exceed. That it is not more so with us

here, admits of no excuse. Is God less to be believed than a man? Will we deny him the privilege of being able to discover his mind, and the truth of things credible, which we ordinarily allow to any one that is not a convicted liar? Christ expects his disciples should very confidently assure themselves of the preparations made for them in another world, upon that very ground alone, that he had not told them the contrary: Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare, &c. (John 14. 1. 2.) intimating to them, they ought to have that opinion of his plainness and sincerity, as never to imagine he would have proselyted them to a religion that should undo them in this world, if there were not a sufficient recompense awaiting them in the other, but he would certainly have let them know the worst of their case: much more might he expect, they should be confident upon his so often and expressly telling them, that so it is. If his silence might be a ground of hope, much more his word. And surely so grounded a hope cannot but be consolatory, and relieving in this sad interval, till the awakening hour.

10. Since this blessedness of the righteous is, as to the season of it, future, not expected till they awake, we may infer, that it is great wisdom and sagacity that guides the righteous man's choice; while he waves a present and temporary, and chooses this future and expected blessedness. It is true, that philosophy hath been wont to teach us, that choice or election hath no place about the end, because that is but one, and choice always implies a competition. But that very reason evinces, that in our present state and case, choice must have place about the end. That philosophy might have suited better the state of innocent Adam; when there was nothing to blind and bribe a man's judgment, or occasion it to deliberate about the supreme end, (then it might be truly said, deliberation itself was a defection,) nor to pervert and misincline his will; and so its action, in proposing its end, would be simple intention, not choice. But so hath the apostacy and sin of man blinded and befooled him, that he is at a loss about nothing more than what is the chief good. And though saint Augustine (*De Civit. Dei. lib. 19.*) reduce Varro's two hundred and eighteen differing sects about it to twelve, that is enough to prove (but daily experience doth it more convincingly and sadly) a real, though most unjust competition. Therefore a sinner can never be blessed without choosing his blessedness, and therein it highly concerns him to choose aright, and that a spirit of wisdom and counsel guide his choice. While man had not as yet fallen, to deliberate whether he should adhere to God or no, was a gradual declension, the very inchoation of his fall; but having fallen, necessity makes that a virtue which was a wickedness before. There is no returning to God without con-

sidering our ways. The so much altered state of the case, quite alters the nature of the things. It was a consulting to do evil before; now to do good. And hence also, choosing the Lord to be our God, Josh. 24. 15. becomes a necessary duty. Which is to make choice of this very blessedness, that consists in the knowledge, likeness, and enjoyment. And now, inasmuch as the blessedness is not fully attained by the longing soul, till time expire and its eternity commence; here is a great discovery of that wisdom which guides this happy choice. This is great wisdom in prospect; in taking care of the future; and at how much the further distance one can provide, so much the greater reputation of wisdom is justly acquired to him; yea, we seem to place the sum of practical wisdom in this one thing, while we agree to call it providence, under the contracted name of prudence. The wise man makes it at least an evidence or part of wisdom, when he tells us, the prudent foreseeth, &c. Prov. 22. 3. The righteous man so far excels in this faculty, as that his eye looks through all the periods of time, and penetrates into eternity, recommends to the soul a blessedness of that same stamp and alloy, that will endure and last for ever. It will not content him to be happy for an hour, or for any space that can have an end; after which it shall be possible to him to look back and recount with himself how happy he was once: nor is he so much solicitous what his present state be, if he can but find he is upon safe terms as to his future and eternal state. As for me, saith the psalmist, (he herein sorts and severs himself from them whose portion was in this life,) *I shall behold—I shall be satisfied, when I awake; Est bene non potuit dicere, dicit erit, he could not say it was well with him, but shall be,* as though he had said, Let the purblind, shortsighted sensualist embrace this present world, who can see no further: let me have my portion in the world to come; may my soul always lie open to the impression of the powers of the coming world; and in this, so use every thing as to be under the power of nothing. What are the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season; or what the sufferings of this *now*, this moment of affliction, to the glory that shall be revealed, to the exceeding and eternal glory? He considers, patient afflicted godliness will triumph at last, when riotous, raging wickedness shall lament for ever. He may for a time weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; he may be sorrowful, but his sorrow shall be turned into joy, and his joy, none shall take from him. (John 16. 20, 22.) Surely here is wisdom; this is the wisdom that is from above, and tends thither. This is to be wise unto salvation. The righteous man is a judicious man; he hath in a measure that judgment (wherein the apostle prays the Philippians might abound, Phil. 1. 6, 10.) to approve things that are excellent, and accordingly to make his choice. This is a sense (little thought of by the author) wherein that sober speech of the voluptuous philosopher

(Epicurus) is most certainly true, A man cannot live happily, without living wisely. No man shall ever enjoy the eternal pleasures hereafter, that in this acquits not himself wisely here, even in this choosing the better part, that shall never be taken from him. In this the plain righteous man out-vies the greatest sophists, the scribe, the disputer, the politician, the prudent mammonist, the facetious wit; who in their several kinds, all think themselves highly to have merited to be accounted wise: and that this point of wisdom should escape their notice, and be the principal thing with him, can be resolved into nothing else but the divine good pleasure! In this contemplation our Lord Jesus Christ is said to have rejoiced in spirit, (it even put his great comprehensive soul into an ecstasy,) Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes; even so Father, because it pleased thee! Luke 10. 21. Here was a thing fit to be reflected on, as a piece of divine royalty; a part worthy of the Lord of heaven and earth! And what serious spirit would it not amaze, to weigh and ponder this case awhile; to see men excelling in all other kinds of knowledge, so far excelled by those they most contemn, in the highest point of wisdom; such as know how to search into the most abstruse mysteries of nature; that can unravel, or see through the most perplexed intrigues of state; that know how to save their own stake, and secure their private interest in whatsoever times; yet so little seen (often, for not many wise) in the matters that concern an eternal felicity! It puts me in mind of what I find observed by some, *dementia quoad hoc, particular madness* as it is called; when persons, in every thing else, capable of sober rational discourse, when you bring them to some one thing (that in reference to which they became distempered at first) they rave and are perfectly mad: how many that can manage a discourse with great reason and judgment about other matters, who when you come to discourse with them about the affairs of practical godliness, and which most directly tend to that future state of blessedness, they are as at their wits end, know not what to say; they savour not those things? These are things not understood, but by such to whom it is given: and surely that given wisdom is the most excellent wisdom. Sometimes God doth, as it were, so far gratify the world, as to speak their own language, and call them wise that affect to be called so, and that wisdom which they would fain have go under that name; (Moses it is said was skilled in all the wisdom of Egypt, &c. Acts. 7. 22.) but at other times he expressly calls those wise men fools, and their wisdom, folly and madness; or annexes some disgraceful adject for distinction sake; or applies those appellatives ironically, and in manifest derision. No doubt, but any such person as was represented in the parable, would have thought himself to have done the part

of a very wise man, in entertaining such deliberation and resolves, as we find he had there with himself how strange was that to his ears, Thou fool, this night shall they require thy soul. &c. Luke. 12. 20. Their wisdom is sometimes said to be foolish; or else called the wisdom of the flesh, or fleshly wisdom; said to be earthly, sensual, devilish; they are said to be wise to do evil; while to do good they have no understanding; they are brought sometimes as it were upon the stage with their wisdom, to be the matter of divine triumph; where is the wise? and that which they account foolishness is made to confound their wisdom. And indeed do they deserve to be thought wise, that are so busily intent upon momentary trifles, and trifle with eternal concerns? that prefer vanishing shadows to the everlasting glory? that follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies? Yea, will they not cease to be wise in their own eyes also, when they see the issue, and reap the fruits of their foolish choice? when they find the happiness they preferred before this eternal one is quite over; and nothing remains to them of it, but an afflictive remembrance? that the torment they were told would follow, is but now beginning, and without end? when they hear from the mouth of their impartial judge; Remember, you in your life-time had your good things, and my faithful servants their evil; now they must be comforted, and you tormented? when they are told, you have received (Luke 6. 24. 25.) the consolation; you were full, ye did laugh, now you must pine, and mourn and weep? Will they not then be as ready to befool themselves, and say as they, (Wisd. 5. 4.) See those righteous ones are they whom we sometimes had in derision, and for a proverb of reproach; we fools counted their life madness, and that their end was without honor; but now, how are they numbered among the sons of God, and their lot is among the saints? They that were too wise before, to mind so mean a thing as religion (the world through wisdom knew not God; 1 Cor. 1. 21. strange wisdom!) that could so wisely baffle conscience, and put fallacies upon their own souls; that had so ingenious shifts to elude conviction, and divert any serious thought from fastening upon their spirits; that were wont so slyly to jeer holiness, seemed as they meant to laugh religion out of countenance; \*they will now know, that a circumspect walking, a faithful redeeming of time, and improving it in order to eternity, was to do, not as fools, but as wise; and begin to think of themselves, now at last, as all wise and sober men thought of them before.

\*Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom. Prov. 15.

## CHAPTER XVI.

The other general head of the improvement or use of the doctrine propounded from the text, containing *Secondly*, Certain rules or prescriptions of duty connatural thereto. 1. That we settle to our minds the true notion of this blessedness. 2. That we compare the temper of our own spirits with it, and labor thence to discern whether we may lay claim to it or no.

Thus far we have an account of the truths to be considered and weighed that have dependence on the doctrine of the text. We proceed,

*Secondly*. To the duties to be practiced and done in reference thereto, which I shall lay down in the ensuing rules or prescriptions,

1. That we admit and settle the distinct notion of this blessedness in our minds and judgments: that we fix in our own souls, apprehensions agreeable to the account this scripture hath given us of it. This is a counsel leading and introductive to the rest; and which if it obtain with us, will have a general influence upon the whole course of that practice which the doctrine already opened calls for. As our apprehensions of this blessedness are more distinct and clear, it may be expected more powerfully to command our hearts and lives. Hence it is, in great part, the spirits and conversations of christians have so little savour and appearance of heaven in them. We rest in some general and confused notion of it, in which there is little either of efficacy or pleasure; we descend not into a particular inquiry and consideration what it is. Our thoughts of it are gloomy and obscure; and hence it is our spirit is naturally listless and indifferent towards it, and rather contents itself to sit still in a region all lightsome round about, and among objects it hath some present acquaintance with, than venture itself forth as into a new world which it knows but little of. And hence our lives are low and carnal; they look not as though we were seeking the heavenly country; and indeed who can be in good earnest in seeking after an unknown state? This is owing to our negligence and infidelity. The blessed God hath not been shy and reserved; hath not hidden or concealed from us the glory of the other world; nor locked up heaven to us; nor left us to the uncertain guesses of our own imagination, the wild fictions of an unguided fancy; which would have created as a poetical heaven only, and have mocked us with false elysiums: but though much

be yet within the veil, he hath been liberal in his discoveries to us. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. The future blessedness (though some refined heathens have had near guesses at it) is certainly apprehensible by the measure only of God's revelation of it: for who can determine, with certainty, of the effects of divine good pleasure, (it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom?) Who can tell beforehand what so free and boundless goodness will do, further than as he himself discovers it? The discovery is as free as the donation. The things that eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed to us by his Spirit: (1 Cor. 2. 6.) and it follows, ver. 12, We have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things freely given us of God. The Spirit is both the principle of the external revelation, as having inspired the scriptures which foreshew this glory, and of the internal revelation also, to enlighten blind minds that would otherwise (*μωπάζειν*) never be able to discover things at so great a distance, see afar off: therefore called the spirit of wisdom and revelation, by which the eyes of the understanding are enlightened to know the hope of that calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance *among* the saints, as the *ἐν* there is most fitly to be rendered. Eph. 1. 17.

But this internal discovery is made by the mediation and interveniency of the external: therefore having that before our eyes we are to apply our minds to the study and consideration of it; and in that way to expect the free illumination of the Holy Spirit. In the mean time we must charge our ignorance, and the darkness of our cloudy thoughts, touching these things, upon our carelessness, that we do not attend; or our incredulity, that we will not believe what God hath revealed concerning them: it is therefore a dutiful attention, and reverential faith that must settle and fix the notion of this blessedness. If we will not regard nor give credit to what God hath discovered concerning it, we may sit still in a torpid, disconsolate darkness, which we ourselves are the authors of, or (which is no less pernicious) compass ourselves with sparks beaten out of our own forge, walk in the light of our own fire, cheat our souls with the fond dream of an imagined heaven, no where to be found, till we at length lie down in sorrow. How perverse are the imaginations of men in this (as in reference to the way, so) in respect of the end also; for as they take upon them to fancy another way to happiness quite besides and against the plain word of God; so do they imagine to themselves another kind of happiness, such as shall gratify only their sensual desires; a Mahometan, indeed a fool's paradise; or at best it is but a negative heaven; they many times entertain in their thoughts (of which their sense too is the only measure) a state wherein nothing shall offend or incommode

the flesh ; in which they shall not hunger, nor thirst, nor feel want : and when they have thus stated the matter in their own thoughts, we cannot beat them out of it, but that they desire to go to heaven (namely, the heaven of their own making ; ) when, did they conceive it truly and fully, they would find their hearts to abhor it, even as hell itself. Therefore here we should exercise an authority over ourselves, and awaken conscience to its proper work and business ; and demand of it, is it not reasonable these divine discoveries should take place with me ; hath not God spoken plainly enough ? why should my heart any longer hang in doubt with me, or look wishfully towards future glory, as if it were an uncouth thing ? or is it reasonable to confront my own imaginations to his discoveries ? Charge conscience with the duty it owes to God in such a case ; and let his revelations be received with the reverence and resignation which they challenge ; and in them study and contemplate the blessedness of awakened souls, till you have agreed with yourself fully how to conceive it. Run over every part of it in your thoughts ; view the several divine excellencies which you are hereafter to see and imitate : and think what every thing will contribute to the satisfaction and contentment of your spirits. This is a matter of unspeakable consequence. Therefore, to be as clear as is possible, you may digest what is recommended to you in these more particular directions.

(1.) Resolve with yourselves, to make the divine revelation of this blessedness the prime measure and reason of all your apprehensions concerning it. Fix that purpose in your own hearts, so to order all your conceptions about it, that when you demand of yourselves, what do I conceive of the future blessedness ? and why do I conceive so ? the divine revelation may answer both the questions. I apprehend what God hath revealed, and because he hath so revealed. The Lord of heaven sure best understands it, and can best help us to the understanding of it. If it be said of the origin of this world, *πῆρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, it may much more be said of the state of the other, we understand it by faith : (Heb. 11. 5.) that must inform and perfect our intellectuals in this matter.

(2.) Therefore reject and sever from the notion of this blessedness, whatsoever is alien to the account Scripture gives us of it, Think not that sensual pleasure, that a liberty of sinning, that an exemption from the divine dominion, distance and estrangedness from God ( which by nature you wickedly affect ) can have any ingrediency into, or consistency with, this state of blessedness.

(3.) Gather up into it whatsoever you can find by the scripture-discovery to appertain or belong thereto. Let your notion of it be to your uttermost, not only true, but comprehensive and full, and as particular and positive, as God's revelation will war-



rant: especially remember it is a spiritual blessedness, that consists in the refining and perfecting of your spirits by the vision and likeness of the holy God, and the satisfying of them thereby for ever.

(4.) Get the notion of this blessedness deeply imprinted in your minds; so as to abide with you, that you may not be always at a loss, and change your apprehensions every time you come to think of it. Let a once well-formed idea, a clear, full state of it be preserved entire, and be (as a lively image) always before your eyes, which you may readily view upon all occasions.

2. That having well fixed the notion of this blessedness in your minds, you seriously reflect upon yourself, and compare the temper of your spirit with it; that you may find out how it is affected thereto; and thence judge in what likelihood you are of enjoying it. The general aversion of men's spirits to this so necessary work of self-reflection, is one of the most deplorable symptoms of lapsed degenerated humanity. The wickedness that hath over-spread the nature of man; and a secret consciousness and misgiving hath made men afraid of themselves, and studiously to decline all acquaintance with their own souls; to shun themselves as ghosts and spectres; they cannot endure to appear to themselves. You can hardly impose a severer task upon a wicked man, than to go retire an hour or two, and commune with himself; he knows not how to face his own thoughts: his own soul is a devil to him, as indeed it will be in hell, the most frightful, tormenting devil. Yet, what power is there in man, more excellent, more appropriate to reasonable nature, than that of reflecting, of turning his thoughts upon himself? Sense must here confess itself outdone. The eye that sees other objects cannot see itself: but the mind, a rational sun, cannot only project its beams, but revert them; make its thoughts turn inward. It can see its own face, contemplate itself. And how useful an endowment is this to the nature of man? If he err, he might perpetuate his error, and wander infinitely, if he had not this self-reflecting power; and if he do well, never know without it the comfort of a rational self-approbation: which comfort paganish morality hath valued so highly, as to account it did associate a man with the inhabitants of heaven, and make him lead his life as among the gods (as their pagan language is;) though the name of the reflecting power *conscience*, they were less acquainted with; the thing itself they reckoned as a kind of indwelling deity, as may be seen at large in those discourses of Maximus Tyrius, and Apuleius, both upon the same subject, concerning the god of Socrates. And another giving this precept. Familiarize thyself with the gods, adds, Συζῆν θεοῖς· Συζῆ δὲ θεοῖς ὁ συνεχῶς δεικνύς ἑαυτοῖς τῆν ἑαυτῶ ψυχὴν, ἀρεσκομένην μὲντε τοῖς ἀπώνεμοις, ποῖσαν δὲ ὅσα βέλεται ὁ δαίμων, ὃν ἐκάστω παραάστην &c.—ἔτος δὲ ἔστιν ἐκάστω νῆς καὶ λόγος. Marc. Anton. lib. "and this shalt thou do if thou bear

*thy mind becomingly towards them, being well pleased with the things they give, and doing the things that may please thy demon or genius, whom (saith he) the most high God (which they mean by Jupiter) hath put into every man, as a derivation or extraction from himself (ἀπόσπασμα) to be his president and guide; namely, every one's own mind and reason.* And this mind or reason in that notion of it, as we approve ourselves to it, and study to please it, is the same thing we intend by the name of conscience. And how high account they had of this work of self-reflection, may appear in that they entitled the oracle to that document, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν *know thyself, Ecce!o descendit*, came down from heaven esteeming it above human discovery, and that it could have no lower than a divine original; and therefore consecrating and writing it up in golden characters in their delphic temple (as Pliny informs\* us) for a heavenly inspired dictate.

Among christians that enjoy the benefit of the gospel-revelation, in which men may behold themselves, as one may his natural face in a glass, how highly should this self-knowledge be prized, and how fully attained? The gospel discovers, at the same time, the ugly deformities of a man's soul, and the means of attaining a true spiritual comeliness; yea, it is itself the instrument of impressing the divine image and glory upon men's spirits: which when it is in any measure done, they became sociable and conversable with themselves, and when it is but in doing it so convincingly, and with so piercing energy, lays open the very thoughts of men's hearts, (Heb. 4. 12.) so thoroughly rips up and dissects the soul, so directly turns, and strictly holds a man's eye intent upon himself; so powerfully urges and obliges the sinner to mind and study his own soul; that where it hath effected any thing, been any way operative upon men's spirits, they are certainly supposed to be in a good measure acquainted with themselves, whatever others are. Therefore the apostle bids the Corinthians, if they desire a proof of the power and truth of his ministry, to consult themselves, examine yourselves, and presently subjoins, know ye not your own selves? (2 Cor. 13. 5.) intimating, it was an insupposable thing they should be ignorant. What! christians and not know yourselves? Can you have been under the gospel so long, and be strangers to yourselves? none can think it. Sure it is a most reproachful thing, a thing full of ignominy and scandal, that a man should name himself a christian, and yet be under gross ignorance, touching the temper and bent of his soul. It signifies, that such a one understands little of the design and tendency of the very religion he pretends to be of, that he was a christian by mere chance that he took up and continues his profession in a dream. Chris-

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\* Hist. Mundi. The wisdom and significancy of which dedication Plato also (in Alcibiad. 1.) takes notice of.

tianity aims at nothing; it gets a man nothing, if it do not procure him a better spirit, it is an empty insignificant thing, it hath no design in it at all, if it do not design this. It pretends to nothing else. It doth not offer men secular advantages, emoluments, honors; it hath no such aim to make men in that sense rich, or great, or honorable, but to make them holy, and fit them for God. He therefore loses all his labor and reward, and shows himself a vain trifler in the matters of religion, that makes not this the scope and mark of his christian profession and practice; and herein he can do nothing without a constant self-inspection. As it therefore highly concerns, it well becomes a christian under the gospel, to be in a continual observation and study of himself, that he may know to what purpose he is a christian; and take notice, what (or whether any) good impressions be yet made upon his spirit; whether he can gain any thing by his religion. And if a man enter upon an inquiry into himself, what more important question can he put than this, In what posture am I as to my last and chief end? how is my spirit framed towards it? This is the intendment and business of the gospel, to fit souls for blessedness: and therefore, if I would inquire, what am I the better for the gospel? this is the sense and meaning of that very question, Is my soul wrought by it to any better disposition for blessedness? Upon which the resolution of this depends, Am I ever likely to enjoy it, yea or no? That which may make any heart not deplorably stupid, shake and tremble, that such a thing should be drawn into question: but the case with the most requires it, and it must be so. It is that therefore I would fain here awaken souls to, and assist them in; that is, propound something (in pursuance of the present direction) which might both awaken them to move this great question, and help them in discussing it. Both which will be done in shewing the importance of this latter ultimate question in itself, and then the subserviency of the former subordinate one, towards the deciding it. These two things therefore I shall a little stay upon:—to shew and urge the requisiteness of debating with ourselves, the likelihood or hopefulness of our enjoying this blessedness, and—to discover that the present habitude, or disposedness of our spirits to it, is a very proper apt medium, whereby to judge thereof.

(1.) As to the former of these. Methinks our business should do itself: and that the very mention of such a blessedness, should naturally prompt souls to bethink themselves. Doth it belong to me? have I any thing to do with it? Methinks every one that hears of it should be beforehand with me, and prevent me here. Where is that stupid soul that reckons it an indifferent thing to attain this blessed state, or fall short of it? When thou hearest this is the common expectation of saints, to behold the face of God, and be satisfied with his likeness, when they awake; canst thou forbear to say with thyself, and what shall be-

*thy mind becomingly towards them, being well pleased with the things they give, and doing the things that may please thy demon or genius, whom (saith he) the most high God (which they mean by Jupiter) hath put into every man, as a derivation or extraction from himself (ἀπόσπασμα) to be his president and guide; namely, every one's own mind and reason.* And this mind or reason in that notion of it, as we approve ourselves to it, and study to please it, is the same thing we intend by the name of conscience. And how high account they had of this work of self-reflection, may appear in that they entitled the oracle to that document, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν *know thyself, Ecce lo descendit*, came down from heaven esteeming it above human discovery, and that it could have no lower than a divine original; and therefore consecrating and writing it up in golden characters in their delphic temple (as Pliny informs\* us) for a heavenly inspired dictate.

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come of me when I awake? what kind of awaking shall I have? shall I awake amidst the beams of glory, or flames of wrath? If thou canst be persuaded to think this no matter of indifferency, then stir up thy drowsy soul to a serious inquiry, how it is likely to fare with thee for ever; and to that purpose put thy conscience to it, to give a free, sincere answer to these few queries.

[1.] Canst thou say thou art already certain of thy eternal blessedness? Art thou so sure, that thou needest not inquire? I know not who thou art that now readest these lines, and therefore cannot judge of thy confidence whether it be right or wrong; only that thou mayst not answer too hastily, consider a little, that certainty of salvation is no common thing; (Phil. 2. 12.) not among (I speak you see of subjective certainty) the heirs of salvation themselves. How many of God's holy ones, that cannot say they are certain; yea, how few that can say they are? The exhortation to a church of saints, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (they of whom he expresseth such confidence, chap. 1. 6. over whom He so glories, chap. 4. 1.) implies this to be no common thing; so doth Christ's advice to his disciples, strive to enter in at the strait gate; and St. Peter to the scattered Jews (that he saith had obtained like precious faith, &c.) give diligence to make your calling and election sure; with many more passages of like import. Yea, how full is the Scripture of the complaints of *such* crying out of broken bones, of festering wounds, of distraction by divine terrors. Now what shall we say in this case, when so eminent saints have left us records of the distresses and agonies of their spirits, under the apprehended displeasure of God? May it not occasion us to suspend awhile, and consider? have we much more reason to be confident than they? and do we know none that lead stricter and more holy lives than we, that are yet in the dark, and at a loss in judging their spiritual states? I will not say, that we must therefore think ourselves bound to doubt, because another possibly better than we doth so. Unknown accidents may much vary the cases. But who would not think, that reason and modesty had quite forsaken the world, to hear (where the odds is so vastly great) the vain boasts of the loose generality, compared with the humble, solicitous doubts of many serious knowing christians? to see such trembling about their soul-concernments, who have walked with God, and served him long in prayers and tears? when multitudes that have nothing whereon to bottom a confidence but pride and ignorance, shall pretend themselves certain! If drawing breath awhile, thou wilt suspect thou have reason not to be peremptory in thy confidence: thou wilt sure think thyself concerned to inquire further. Urge thy soul then with this question again and again, Art thou yet certain, yea or no?

[2.] Is it a comfortable state to be uncertain, or to have before

thee apparent grounds of a rational and just doubt? For causeless doubts may sooner vanish, when their causelessness is once discovered; and so they are less likely to keep a person that is capable of understanding his own case, under a stated discomfort. But I suppose thee, in order to the answering the foregoing query, to have in some measure considered the case; and that with a preponderating apprehension of danger in it, thou returnest it uncertain. Uncertain, man! And what, wilt thou remain uncertain! wilt thou sit still so, till thou perish? shall thy life hang in doubt, and thy soul be in jeopardy every hour, till the everlasting flames resolve the doubt, and put the matter out of question with thee? What course canst thou apply thyself to, but to inquire and search further into thy own state, to avoid the torture of thy own fears, and pangs and dreadful expectation of a palpitating, mis-giving heart? It is true, that inquisitive diligent doubtfulness hath hope and comfort in it, but doubtfulness joined with a resolution of casting off all further care, is utterly desperate and disconsolate. What remains to thee in that case, but a fearful looking for of fiery indignation? how canst thou pass an hour in peace, while thou apprehendest it unlikely, thou shalt see the face and be satisfied with the image of God? do not thy own thoughts represent to thee, the amazing sights, the horrid images which shall for ever entertain and possess thy soul? Art thou not daily haunted with divine horrors? when thou sayest at night, thy bed shall refresh thee, art thou not terrified with dreams and affrighted with visions? Dost thou not say in the morning, would to God it were evening; and in the evening say, would to God it were morning? And while thou knowest not what else to do, meditate only changes instead of remedies? or if thou find no such trouble invading thy mind, let me further ask:

[3.] Is it reasonable to be secure in such a state of uncertainty? Debate this matter a little while with thyself. Is it thy reason; or thy sloth that makes thee sit still and forbear to look into thy spiritual affairs? Is it any rational consideration, or not rather the mere indisposition of a soul, afraid to know its own state, that suspends thee from inquiring? What hast thou to say, that looks like a reason? Is it that it will disturb thy thoughts, interrupt thy pleasures, fill thee with anxious cares and fears, which thou art as loth to admit, as burning coals into thy bosom? Is it that thou canst not endure to look upon so dreadful an object, as the appearing danger, or possibility of thy being miserable to eternity? And art thou therefore resolved to shut thine eyes, and cry peace, peace? This is to avoid a present inconvenience, by an eternal mischief, (a gross overstraining the paradox!) for avoiding the present fear of hell to run into it; as if because a man cannot bear the thoughts of dying, he should presently cut his own throat. Vain man? canst

thou not bear the thoughts of eternal misery; how wilt thou bear the thing? And how long-lived dost thou think that peace shall be, that thou purchasest upon so dear and hard terms? canst thou promise thyself an hour? mayst thou not lose thy purchase and price together the next moment? canst thou defer thy misery by forgetting it; or will thy judgment linger, and thy damnation slumber, while thou securely lingerest and slumberest? canst thou wink hell into nothing; and put it out of being, by putting it out of thy thoughts? Alas man! open thy eyes when thou wilt, thou shalt find thou hast not bettered thy case by having them fast closed. The bitterness of death is not yet past. The horrid image is still before thee. This is not a fancied evil, which a man may dream himself into, and *eadem opera, with as little difficulty*, dream himself out of it again: no, thy case is miserable and dangerous when thou composest thyself to sleep; if thou awakest thou wilt find it still the same; only thou didst not apprehend it before, for then thou wouldst not have slept: as the drunkard that kills a man, and after falls asleep in his drunken fit, he awakes and understands his wretched case. Would his sleeping on, till the officer's arrest had awaked him, have mended the matter with him? But thou wilt possibly say, Is it not better here to have a little quiet now, than to be miserable by sad thoughts here, and miserable by actual suffering hereafter too? Is not one death enough? why should one kill himself so often over; and hasten misery, as if it came on too slowly? Better, man! A hard choice. Supposing thou art to be eternally miserable (if thou understandest that word eternity,) the good or evil of this little inch of time, will signify so little with thee, as hardly to weigh any thing in the scale of a rational judgment. But what, art thou now dreaming while thou thus reasonest? Dost thou yet no better understand thy case? art thou not under the gospel? Is it not the day of thy hope, and of the Lord's grace and patience towards thee? It was said, that sleeping would not better thy case; but it was not said, that awaking would not; but all that is here said, is designed to the awakening of thee, that thou mayst know thy case, and endeavor a redress. Dost thou think any man in his sober wits would take all this pains thus to reason with thee, if that were the acknowledged and agreed state of thy case, that it were already taken for granted thou must perish? We might as well go preach to devils, and carry down the gospel into hell. But dost thou think the holy merciful God sent his Son and his ministers to mock men; and to treat with them about their eternal concerns, when there is no hope? Were that thy case, thou hadst as good a pretence as the devil had, to complain of being tormented before thy time. But if thou be not wilfully perverse, in mistaking the matter we are reasoning about, thou mayst understand, thy reason is here appealed to in this; whether having so fair



hopes. before thee; as the gospel gives, of this blessedness we are discoursing of, it be reasonable from the apprehension of a mere possibility of miscarrying, (which can only be through thy wilful security and neglect,) to give up thyself to a supine negligence, and indulge that security which is so sure to ruin thee, and exchange a possible hoped heaven for a certain hell; or whether rather it be not reasonable to stir up thy soul to consider in what posture thou art, towards the attainment of this blessedness, that thou mayst accordingly steer thy course in order to it? If an accusation, or a disease do threaten thy life; or a suspected flaw thy title to thy estate, wouldst thou not think it reasonable to inquire into thy case? And is it not much more desirable, in a matter of this consequence, to be at some certainty? and prudent to endeavor it, if it may possibly be attained? Whence let me further ask:

[4.] Canst thou pretend it to be impossible? Hath God left thee under a necessitated ignorance, in this matter? or denied thee sufficient means of knowing how it is with thee in respect of thy spiritual estate? Though he hath not given thee a list, or told thee the number or names of his sanctified ones, yet hath he not sufficiently described the person, and given the characters by which they may be known? And hath he not furnished thee with a self-reflecting power, by which thou art enabled to look into thyself, and discern whether thou be of them or no? Doth he not offer and afford to serious, diligent souls, the assisting light of his blessed Spirit to guide and succeed the inquiry? And if thou find it difficult to come to a speedy, clear issue, to make a present certain judgment of thy case; ought not that to engage thee to a patient continued diligence, rather than in a rash despairing madness to desist and cast off all? inasmuch as the difficulty, though great, is not insuperable; and the necessity and advantage incomparably greater. And (though divers other things do confessedly fall in) the principal difficulty lies in thy aversation and unwillingness. Thou art not put to traverse the creation, to climb heaven or dig through the earth; but thy work lies nigh thee, in thy own heart and spirit; and what is so nigh, or should be so familiar to thee, as thyself? it is but casting thy eye upon thy own soul, to discern which way it is inclined and bent, thou art urged to. Which is that we propounded next to discover: namely,

(2.) That we are to judge of the hopefulness of our enjoying this blessedness, by the present habitude or disposedness of our spirits thereto. For what is that righteousness which qualifies for it, but the impress of the gospel upon the minds and hearts of men? The gospel-revelation is the only rule and measure of that righteousness: it must therefore consist in conformity thereto. And look to the frame and design of the gospel-revelation, and what doth so directly correspond to it, as that very habitude

and disposedness of spirit for this blessedness whereof we speak? Nothing so answers the gospel, as a propension of heart towards God gratified in part now, and increasing till it find a full satisfaction; a desire of knowing him and of being like him. It is the whole design of the gospel, which reveals his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, to work and form the spirits of men to this. They therefore whose spirits are thus wrought and framed, are righteous by the gospel-measure, and by that righteousness are evidently entitled and fitted for this blessedness. Yea, that righteousness hath in it (or rather) is the elements, the first principles, the seed of this blessedness. There can therefore be no surer rule or mark whereby to judge our states, whether we have to do with this blessedness, may expect it yea or no, than this. How stand we affected towards it; in what disposition are our hearts thereto? Those fruits of righteousness, by which the soul is qualified to appear without offence in the day of Christ, the several graces of the sanctifying Spirit, are nothing else but so many holy principles, all disposing the soul towards this blessedness, and the way to it; mortification, self-denial, and godly sorrow, take it off from other objects, the world, self and sin; repentance (that part of it which respects God) turns the course of its motion towards God the end; faith directs it through Christ the way; love makes it move freely; desire, earnestly; joy, pleasantly; hope, confidently; humility, evenly; fear, circumspectly; patience, constantly and pre severingly. All conspire to give the soul a right disposition towards this blessedness. The result of them all is heavenliness, a heavenly temper of spirit. For they all (one way or other,) as so many lines and rays have respect to a blessedness in God (which is heaven) as the point at which they aim; and the *cuspis*, the *point* in which they meet, in order to the touching of that objective point, is heavenliness. This is the ultimate and immediate disposition of heart for this blessedness; the *result* the *terminus productus* of the whole work of righteousness in the soul; by which it is said to be as it were, *nata ad gloriam, begotten to the eternal inheritance*. Concerning this therefore chiefly institute thy inquiry. Demand of thyself, Is my soul yet made heavenly, bent upon eternal blessedness, or no? And here thou mayst easily apprehend, of how great concernment it is, to have the right notion of heaven, or future blessedness, as was urged under the foregoing rule. For if thou take for it another thing, thou missest thy mark, and art quite beside thy business: but if thou retain a right and scriptural notion of it, the rule thou art to judge by is sure, they shall have heaven whose hearts are intent upon it, and framed to it. Scripture is every where pregnant and full of this.

The apostle plainly intimates, this will be the rule of God's final judgment. Certainly it cannot be unsafe for us to judge

ourselves by the same rule. He tells us, when God shall judge every one according to his works (the great business of the judgment day,) eternal life shall be the portion of them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, sought glory, and honor, and immortality : (Rom. 2. 6. 7.) which are but other expressions of the same thing. What can be more plain? They shall have eternal life and glory that seek it; whose hearts are towards it. Again, speaking of true christians, διακριτικῶς, (that is in a way of contradistinction from Pseudo-christians, such as he saith were enemies of the cross,) he gives us among other, this brand of these latter, that they did mind earthly things, and tells us, their end should be destruction; but gives us this opposite character of the other, our conversation is in heaven; (Phil. 3. 18.—20.) our trade and business, our daily negotiations, as well as the privileges of our citizenship lie there, as his expression imports, and thence intimates the opposite end of such, whence we look for a Saviour; not destruction, but salvation. And in the same context of Scripture, where they that are risen with Christ, and who shall appear with him in glory, are required to set their mind on things above, and not on things on the earth : (Col. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4.) that we may understand this, not to be their duty only, but their character, we are immediately told, they who follow not this counsel, and mortify not their earthly members (those lusts that dispose men towards the earth, and to grovel in the dust, as the graces of the Spirit dispose them heavenward, and to converse with glory) are the children of disobedience, upon whom the wrath of God cometh. The faith, the just live by, is the substance of things hoped for, &c. Heb. 1, 13, 16. Such believers are confessed, avowed strangers on earth; and seekers of the better, the heavenly country, whence it is said, God will not be ashamed to be called their God; plainly implying, that as for low, terrene spirits, that love to creep on the earth, and embrace dunghills, God will be ashamed of them; he will for ever disdain a relation to them, *while* and *as* such. And if we will be determined by the express word of our great Redeemer, to whom we owe all the hopes of this blessedness; when he had been advising not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven, he presently adds, Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also. Mat. 6. 19, 20, 21. If thy treasure, thy great interest, thy precious and most valuable good be above, that will attract thy heart, it will certainly be disposed thitherward.

Yet here it must carefully be considered, that inasmuch as this blessedness is thy end, that is, thy supreme good (as the notion of treasure also imports,) thy heart must be set upon it above any other enjoyment; else all is to no purpose. It is not a faint, slight, over-mastered inclination that will serve the turn, but (as all the forementioned scriptures import) such as will bespeak a man's business to seek heaven, his main work; and give

ground to say of him, his heart is there. If two lovers solicit the same person, and speaking of them in comparisons she say, this hath my heart; is it tolerable to understand her, as meaning him she loves less? so absurd would it be to understand scriptures, that speak of such an intention of heart heaven-ward, as if the faintest desire, coldest wish, or most lazy inconstant endeavor were all they meant. No, it is a steady, prevalent, victorious direction of heart towards the future glory, in comparison whereof, thou despisest all things else (all temporal, terrene things,) that must be the *evidential* ground of thy hope to enjoy it. And therefore in this, deal faithfully with thy own soul, and demand of it; Dost thou esteem this blessedness above all things else? Do the thoughts of it continually return upon thee, and thy mind and heart, as it were naturally run out to it? Are thy chiefest sollicitudes and cares taken about it, lest thou shouldst fall short and suffer a disappointment? Dost thou savour it with pleasure; hath it a sweet and grateful relish to thy soul? Dost thou bend all thy powers to pursue and press on towards it? Urge thyself to give answer truly to such inquiries; and to consider them seriously, that thou mayst do so. Such whose spirits are either most highly raised and lifted up to heaven, or most deeply depressed and sunk into the earth, may make the clearest judgment of themselves. With them that are of a middle temper, the trial will be more difficult, yet not fruitless, if it be managed with serious diligence, though no certain conclusion or judgment be made thereupon. For the true design and use of all such inquiries and reflections upon ourselves (which let it be duly considered) is, not to bring us into a state of cessation from further endeavors; as if we had nothing more to do (suppose we judge the best of our state that can be thought,) but to keep us in a wakeful temper of spirit; that we may not forget ourselves in the great business we have yet before us, but go on with renewed vigor through the whole course of renewed endeavors, wherein we are to be still conversant, till we have attained our utmost mark and end. Therefore is this present inquiry directed, as introductive to the further duty, that in the following rules is yet to be recommended.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Rule 3. Directing such as upon inquiry find, or see cause to suspect, a total aversion in themselves to this blessedness, to be speedy and restless in their endeavors to have the temper of their spirits altered and suitable to it. Doubts and objections concerning the use of such endeavors, in such a case, answered. Some considerations to enforce this direction propounded and pressed.

3. That if upon such reflection we find or suspect ourselves wholly disaffected and unsuitable to this blessedness, we apply ourselves to speedy, incessant endeavors to get the temper of our spirits changed and fitted thereto. The state of the case speaks itself, that there is no sitting still here. This is no condition, *soul*, to be rested in; unless thou art provided to encounter the terrors of eternal darkness, and endure the torture of everlasting burnings. Yet am I not unapprehensive how great a difficulty a carnal heart will make of it to bestir itself in order to any redress of so deplorable a case. And how real a difficulty it is, to say any thing that will be thought regardable to such a one. Our sad experience tells us, that our most efficacious words are commonly wont to be entertained as neglected puffs of wind; our most convictive reasonings and persuasive exhortations lost (yea, and though they are managed too in the name of the great God) as upon the deaf and dead: which is too often apt to tempt into that resolution, of "speaking no more in that name." And were it not that the dread of that great majesty restrains us, how hard were it to forbear such expostulations; "Lord, why are we commonly sent upon so vain an errand? why are we required to speak to them that will not hear, and expose thy sacred truths and counsels to the contempt of sinful worms; to labor day by day in vain, and spend our strength for nought?" Yea, we cannot forbear to complain, "None so labor in vain as we: of all men none so generally improsperous and unsuccessful. Others are wont to see the fruit of their labors, in proportion to the expense of strength in them: but our strength is labor and sorrow (for the most part) without the return of a joyful fruit. The husbandman plows in hope, and sows in hope, and is commonly partaker of his hope: we are sent to plow and sow among rocks and thorns, and in the highway; how seldom fall we upon good ground? Where have we any increase? Yea, Lord, how often are men the harder for all

our labors with them, the deader for all endeavors to quicken them? Our breath kills them whom thou sendest us to speak life to; and we often become to them a deadly savour. Sometimes, when we think somewhat is done to purpose, our labor all returns, and we are to begin again; and when the duties we persuade to, come directly to cross men's interests and carnal inclinations, they revolt and start back, as if we were urging them upon flames, or the sword's point; and their own souls and the eternal glory are regarded as a thing of nought: then heaven and hell become with them fancies and dreams; and all that we have said to them false and fabulous. We are to the most as men that mock, in our most serious warnings and counsels; and the word of the Lord is a reproach. We sometimes fill our mouths with arguments, and our hearts with hope, and think, sure they will now yield; but they esteem our strongest reasonings (as Leviathan doth iron and brass) but as straw and rotten wood; and laugh at divine threatenings as he doth at the shaking of the spear. Yea, and when we have convinced them, yet we have done nothing; though we have got their judgments and conscience on our side and their own, their lusts only reluctate and carry all. They will now have their way though they perish. We see them perishing under our very eye, and we cry to them (in thy name, O Lord) to return and live, but they regard us not. For these things, sometimes we weep in secret, and our eyes trickle down with tears; yea, we cry to thee, O Lord, and thou hearest us not; thy hand seems shortened, that it cannot save; it puts not on strength as in the days of old; it hath snatched souls by thousands, as firebrands out of the fire; but now thou hidest and drawest it back. Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Meanwhile even the devil's instruments prosper more than we: and he that makes it his business to tempt and entice down souls to hell, succeeds more than we that would allure them to heaven.

But we must speak, whether men will hear or forbear; though it concerns us to do it with fear and trembling. Oh, how solemn a business is it to treat with souls! and how much to be dreaded, lest they miscarry through our imprudence or neglect! I write with solicitude what shall become of these lines; with what effect they will be read (if they fall into such hands) by them whom they most concern: yea, and with some doubt, whether it were best to write on or forbear. Sometimes one would incline to think it a merciful omission, lest we add to the account and torment of many at last; but sense of duty towards all, and hope of doing good to some must oversway. Considering therefore the state of such souls I am now dealing with, I apprehend there may be obstructions to the entertainment of the counsel here recommended, of two sorts; partly in their minds, partly in their hearts; something of appearing reason, but more of

real perverse will. That which I shall do in pursuance of it, will fall under two answerable heads:—A reply to certain doubts and objections, wherein to meet with the former: and—the proposal of some considerations, wherein to contend against the latter.

(1.) It appears men are grown ingeniously wicked, and have learned how to dispute themselves into hell; and to neglect what concerns their eternal blessedness with some color and pretence of reason. It will therefore be worth the while to discuss a little their more specious pretences, and consider, their more obvious (supposable) scruples, which will be found to concern either the possibility, lawfulness, advantage or necessity of the endeavors we persuade to.

[1.] Is it a possible undertaking you put us upon; or, is there any thing we can do in order to the change of our own hearts? We find ourselves altogether undesirous of those things wherein you state blessedness, and they are without savour to us. If therefore the notion you give us of blessedness be right, all the work necessary to qualify us for it is yet to be done; we yet remain wholly destitute of any principle of life, that may dispose us to such relishes and enjoyments. If the new creature (as you say) consist in a suitable temper of spirit unto such a state as this, it is as yet wholly unformed in us: And is there any thing to be done by a dead man in order to life? Can a child contribute any thing to its first formation? or a creature to its coming into being? In answer to this, consider:

If you were serious in what you say, methinks you should have little mind to play the sophisters, and put fallacies upon yourselves, in the matter that concerns the life of your soul. And what else are you now doing? For sure, otherwise one would think it were no such difficulty to understand the difference between the *esse simpliciter*, the mere being of any thing, and the *esse tale*, its being such or such; by the addition of somewhat afterward to that being. Though nothing could contribute to its own being simply; yet sure when it is in being, it may contribute to the bettering or perfecting of itself, (even as the unreasonable creatures themselves do:) and if it be a creature naturally capable of acting with design, it may act designedly in order to its becoming so or so qualified, or the attaining of somewhat yet wanting to its perfection. You cannot be thought so ignorant, but that you know the new creature is only an addition to your former being: and though it be true, that it can do no more to its own production than the unconceived child (as nothing can act before it is) doth it therefore follow, that your reasonable soul, in which it is to be formed, cannot use God's prescribed means in order to that blessed change? You cannot act holily as a saint; but therefore can you not act rationally as a man! I appeal to your reason and conscience in some

particulars. Is it impossible to you to attend upon the dispensation of the gospel, which is God's power unto salvation, the seal by which he impresses his image, the glass through which his glory shines to the changing of souls into the same likeness? Are you not as able to go to church as the tavern; and to sit in the assembly of saints as of mockers? Is it impossible to you, to consult the written word of God, and thence learn what you must be, and do in order to blessedness? Will not your eyes serve you to read the Bible as well as a gazette or play-book? Is it impossible to inquire of your minister, or an understanding christian neighbor concerning the way and terms of blessedness! Cannot your tongue pronounce these words, what shall I do to be saved, as well as those, pray what do you think of the weather; or what news is there going? Yet further: Is it impossible to apply your thoughts to what you meet with suitable to your case in attendance upon preaching, reading, or discourse? Have all such words a barbarous sound in your ear? Can you not consider what sense is carried under them; what they import and signify? Can you not bethink yourself, Do the doctrines of God and Christ and the life to come, signify something or nothing? or do they signify any thing worth the considering, or that it is fit for me to take notice of?

And yet to proceed a little further with you: I pray you once more demand of yourselves, and put your consciences closely to it, whether, when they have told you (as no doubt they will,) that such things deserve your consideration, it be impossible to you, to use your considering power thus, and employ it even about these things? Do but make this easy trial, and then say, whether it be impossible. See if you cannot select one hour on purpose, wherein to sit down by yourselves alone, with this resolution; Well, I will now spend this hour in considering my eternal concernments. When you have obtained so much of yourself; set your thoughts on work, (you will find them voluble and unfixed, very apt to revolt and fly off from things you have no mind to, but) use your authority with yourself, tell your soul (or let it tell itself) these things concern thy life. At least, taking this prepared matter along with thee (that thou mayst not have this pretence, thou knowest not what to think of,) try if thou canst not think of these things, now actually suggested and offered to thy thoughts: as namely, Consider, that thou hast a reasonable, immortal soul, which as it is liable to eternal misery, so it is capable of eternal blessedness: that this blessedness thou dost understand to consist only in the vision of the blessed God, in being made like to him, and in the satisfaction that is thence to result and accrue to thee. Consider (what thy very objection supposeth,) that thou findest the temper of thy spirit to be altogether indisposed and averse to such a blessedness. Is it not so? is not this thy very case? feel now again thy heart: try, is it not at least coldly affected towards this blessed state?



Is it not then obvious to thee to consider, that the temper of thy spirit must be changed, or thou art undone? that inasmuch as thy blessedness lies in God, this change must lie in the alteration of thy dispositions, and the posture of thy spirit towards him. Further, Canst thou not consider the power and fixedness of thy aversation from God; and with how mighty a weight thy heart is carried and held down from Him? Try, lift at thy heart, see if it will be raised God-ward and heaven-ward? Dost thou not find, it is as if thou wert lifting at a mountain, that it lies as a dead weight and stirs not? Ponder thy case in this respect. And then, Is it not to be considered, that thy time is passing away apace? that if thou let thyself alone, it is likely to be as bad with thee to-morrow as this day, and as bad next day as to-morrow? And if thy time expire and thou be snatched away in this state, what will become of thee? And dost thou not therefore see a necessity of considering whatever may be most moving, and most likely to incline thy heart God-ward, of pleading it more loudly and importunately with thyself? And canst thou not consider and reason the matter thus? "O my soul, what is the reason that thou so drawest back and hangest off from thy God? that thou art so unwilling to be blessed in him? that thou shouldst venture to run thyself upon eternal perdition rather? What cause hath he ever given thee to dis-affect Him? What is the ground of thy so mighty prejudice? Hath he ever done thee hurt? Dost thou think He will not accept a returning soul? That is to give the lie to his gospel; and it becomes not a perishing wretch so to provoke Him in whom is all its hope. Is the eternal glory an undesirable thing? or the everlasting burnings tolerable? Canst thou find a way of being forever blessed without God; or whether he will or no? or is there a sufficient present pleasure in thy sinful distance from God, to outweigh heaven and hell? Darest thou venture upon a resolution of giving God and Christ their last refusal; or say, thou wilt never hearken to, or have to do with them more, or darest thou venture to do what thou darest not resolve? and act the wickedness thou canst not think of? scorn eternal majesty and love? spurn and trample a bleeding Saviour?" Commune thus awhile with thyself; but if yet thou find thy heart relent nothing, thou canst yet further consider, that it lies not in thy power to turn thy own heart, (or else how comest thou thus to object?) And hence, canst thou avoid considering this is a distressed case? that thou art in great straits; liable to perish (yea, sure to do so, if thou continue in that ill temper of spirit,) and wholly unable to help thyself? Surely thou canst not but see this to be a most distressed case.

I put it now to thy conscience, whether being thus led on, thou canst not go thus far? See whether upon trial thy conscience give thee leave to say, I am not able thus to do or think :

and be not here so foolish, as to separate the action of the first cause and the second, in judging thy ability. Thou mayst say no, I cannot think a good thought without God; true, so I know thou canst not move a finger without God; but my meaning in this appeal to thy conscience is, whether upon trial thou findest not an assistance sufficient to carry thee thus far? Possibly thou wilt say, yea, but what am I the better? I am only brought to see myself in a distressed, perishing condition, and can get no further. I answer, it is well thou art got so far, if thou indeed see thyself perishing, and thy drowsy soul awake into any sense of the sadness of thy case. But I intend not thus to leave thee here; therefore let me furthermore demand of thee: What course wouldst thou take in any other distress, wherein thou knowest not what to do to help thyself? would not such an exigency, when thou findest thyself pinched and urged on every side, and every way is shut up to thee, that thou art beset with calamities, and canst no way turn thyself to avoid them; would not such an exigency force thee down on thy knees, and set thee a crying to the God of mercy for relief and help? Would not nature itself prompt to this? Is it not natural to lift up hands and eyes to heaven when we know not what to do?\* Therefore having thus far reasoned with thee about thy considering power; let me demand of thee, if thou canst not yet go somewhat further than considering? that is, in short: Is it impossible to thee to obey this dictate of nature? I mean, represent the deplorable case of thy soul before Him that made it; and crave his merciful relief? Do not dispute the matter; thou canst not but see this is a possible and a rational course, as thy case is. Should not a people seek unto their God? Fall down therefore low before Him; prostrate thyself at the foot-stool of his mercy-seat. Tell Him, thou understandest Him to be the Father of spirits and the Father of mercies; that thou hast heard of his great mercy and pity towards the spirits of men in their forlorn, lapsed state: what a blessedness He hath designed for them; what means he hath designed to bring them to it. Tell Him, thou only needest a temper of spirit suitable to the blessedness He invites thee to; that thou canst not master and change thy sensual, earthly heart; thou knowest He easily can; thou art come to implore his help, that his blessed and Holy Spirit may descend and breathe upon thy stupid, dead soul; and may sweetly incline and move it towards Him; that it may eternally rest in Him; and that thou mayst not perish, after so much done in order to thy blessedness, only for want of a heart to entertain it. Tell Him, thou comest upon his gracious encouragement, having heard He is as ready to give his Spirit to

\**Audio vulgus cum ad cœlum manus tendunt nihil aliud quam Deum dicunt, vulgi iste naturalis est sermo; where the vulgar lift up their hands to heaven, I seem to hear them addressing God himself, this is their natural language.*

them that ask Him, as parents, bread to their craving children rather than a stone : that it is for life thou beggest : that it is not so easy to thee, to think of perishing for ever : that thou canst not desist and give up all thy hopes : that thou shalt be in hell shortly, if He hear and help thee not. Lastly, If thus thou obtain any communication of that holy, blessed Spirit, and thou find it gently moving thy dead heart, let me once more demand of thee : Is it impossible to forbear this or that external act of sin at this time, when thou art tempted to it? sure thou canst not say, it is impossible. What necessitates thee to it? And then certainly thou mayst as well ordinarily withhold thyself from running into such customary sensualities, as tend to grieve the Spirit, debauch conscience, stupify thy soul, and hide God from thee. And if thou canst do all this, do not fool thy slothful soul with as idle a conceit, that thou hast nothing to do, but to sit still, expecting till thou drop into hell.

(2.) But have I not reason to fear, I shall but add sin to sin in all this? and so increase the burden of guilt upon my own soul; and by endeavoring to better my case, make it far worse. Two things I consider, that suggest to me this fear,—the manner and end, of the duties you put me upon, as they will be done by me in the case wherein I apprehend myself, yet to lie.—The manner : (as to the positive action you advise to,) I have heard, the best actions of an unregenerate person are sins, through the sinfulness of his manner of doing them; though as to the matter of the thing done, they be enjoined and good : and though it be true, that the regenerate cannot perform a sinless duty neither; yet their persons and works being covered over with the righteousness of Christ, are looked upon as having no sin in them, which I apprehend to be none of my case.—And as to the end. You put me upon these things in order to the attaining of blessedness; and to do such things with intuition to a reward, is to be (as may be doubted) unwarrantable, mercenary, and servile.

[1.] As to this former reason of your doubt; methinks the proposal of it answers it. Forasmuch as you acknowledge the matter of these actions to be good and duty (and plain it is, they are moral duties, of common perpetual concernment to all persons and times,) dare you decline or dispute against your duty? Sure, if we compare the evil of what is so substantially in itself, and what is so circumstantially, only by the adherence of some undue *modus*, or *manner*; it cannot be hard to determine which is the greater and more dreadful evil. As to the present case; shouldst thou, when the great God sends abroad his proclamation of pardon and peace, refuse to attend it: to consider the contents of it, and thy own case in reference thereto, and thereupon to sue to him for the life of thy own soul? Dost thou not plainly see thy refusal must needs be more provoking than thy defective performance? This, speaks disability, but that, rebellion and

contempt.\* Besides, dost thou not see, that thy objection lies as much against every other action of thy life? The wise man tells us, (Prov. 21. 4.) the plowing of the wicked is sin, (if that be literally to be understood;) and what wouldst thou therefore sit still and do nothing? Then how soon would that idleness draw on gross wickedness? And would not that be a dreadful confutation of thyself, if thou who didst pretend a scruple, that thou mightst not pray, read, hear, meditate, shalt not scruple to play the glutton, the drunkard, the wanton, and indulge thyself in all riot and excess? Yea, if thou do not break out into such exorbitancies, would any one think him serious that should say, it were against his conscience to be working out his salvation, and striving to enter in at the strait gate; seeking first the kingdom of God, &c. Would not this sound strangely? And especially, that in the mean time it should never be against his conscience, to trifle away his time, and live in perpetual neglects of God, in persevering atheism, infidelity, hardness of heart, never regretted or striven against: as if these were more innocent? And what thou sayst of the different case of the regenerate, is impertinent; for as to this matter, the case is not different, they that take themselves to be such, must not think that by their supposed interest in the righteousness of Christ, their real sins cease to be such, they only become pardoned sins; and shall they therefore sin more boldly than other men, because they are surer of pardon?

[2.] As to the other ground of this doubt, there can only be a fear of sinning, upon this account, to them that make more sins and duties than God hath made. The doubt supposes religion inconsistent with humanity: and that God were about to rase out of the nature of man one of the most radical and fundamental laws written there,—a desire of blessedness:—and supposes it against the express scope and tenor of his whole gospel revelation. For what doth that design, but to bring men to blessedness? And how is it a means to compass that design, but as it tends to engage men's spirits to design it too? unless we would imagine they should go to heaven blindfold, or be rolled thither as stones that know not whither they are moved; in which case the gospel, that reveals the eternal glory, and the way to it, were a useless thing. If so express words had not been in the Bible, as that Moses had respect to the recompense of reward; yea, that our Lord Jesus himself, for the joy set before him endured the cross, &c. this had been a little more colorable, or more modest. And what, do not all men, in all the or-

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\* Therefore as to that form of expression—that such acts of unregenerate men are sins,—that is a catachrestical piece of rhetoric, which being so understood, is harmless; but to use it in propriety of speech, and thence to go to make men believe, that it is a sin to do their duty, is void both of truth and sense, and full of danger unto the souls of men.

dinary actions of their lives, act allowably enough, with intuition to much lower ends? even those particular ends which the works of their several callings tend to, else they should act as brutes in every thing they do. And would such a one scruple, if he were pining for want of bread, to beg or labor for it for this end, to be relieved? It is the mistaking of the notion of heaven that hath also an ingrediency into this doubt, if it be really a doubt. What! is it a low thing to be filled with the divine fulness? to have his glory replenishing our souls? to be perfectly freed from sin? in every thing conformed unto his holy nature and will? That our minding our interest in this, or any affairs, should be the principal thing with us, is not to be thought: our supreme end must be the same with his, who made all things for himself, of whom, through whom, and to whom all things are, that he alone might have the glory. But subordinates need not quarrel. A lower end doth not exclude the higher, but serves it: and is, as to it, a means. God is our end as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us: our glorifying him is but the agnition of his glory; which we do most in beholding and partaking it; which is therefore in direct subordination thereto.

(3.) But it may further be doubted, What if it be acknowledged, that these are both things possible and lawful; yet to what purpose will it be to attempt any thing in this kind? O what assurance have I of success! Is there any word of promise for the encouragement of one in my case? Or is God under any obligation to reward the endeavors of nature with special grace? Wherefore, when I have done all I can, he may withhold his influence, and then I am but where I was, and may perish notwithstanding. And suppose thou perish notwithstanding? Do but yet consult a little with thy own thoughts: which is more tolerable and easy to thee to perish, as not attaining what thy fainter strugglings could not reach; or for the most direct, wilful rebellion, doing wickedly as thou couldst? Or who shall have, thinkest thou, the more fearful condemnation? He that shall truly say when his master comes to judgment, "I never had indeed, Lord, a heart so fully changed and turned to thee, as should denote me to be the subject of thy saving, pardoning mercy; but thou knowest (who knowest all things) I longed (and with some earnestness) did endeavor it. Thou hast been privy to my secret desires and moans, to the weak strivings of a listless distempered spirit, not pleased with itself, aiming at a better temper towards thee. I neglected not thy prescribed means; only that grace which I could not challenge, thou wast pleased not to give: thou didst require what I must confess myself to have owed thee; thou didst withhold only what thou owedst me not; therefore must I yield myself a convicted, guilty wretch, and have nothing to say why thy sentence should not pass." Or he that shall as truly hear from the mouth of his Judge, "Sinner, thou

wast often fore-warned of this approaching day, and called upon to provide for it ; thou hadst precept upon precept, and line upon line. The counsels of life and peace were with frequent importunity pressed upon thee, but thou rejectedst all with proud contempt, didst despise with the same profane scorn the offers, commands, and threats of him that made thee ; hardenest thy heart to the most obstinate rebellion against his known laws ; didst all the wickedness to which thy heart prompted thee, without restraint ; declinedst every thing of duty which his authority, and the exigency of thy own case did oblige thee to ; didst avoid as much as thou couldst to hear or know any thing of my will ; couldst not find one serious, considering hour in a whole life-time, to bethink thyself, what was likely to become of thee when thy place on earth should know thee no more. Thou mightst know, thou wast at my mercy, thy breath in my hand, and that I could easily have cut thee off any moment of that large space of time, my patience allowed thee in the world ; yet thou never thoughtest it worth the while to sue to me for thy life. Destruction from the Lord was never a terror to thee. Thou wouldst never be brought upon thy knees ; I had none of thy addresses ; never didst thou sigh out a serious request for mercy ; thy soul was not worth so much in thy account. Thy blood, wretch, be upon thy guilty head : Depart accursed into everlasting flames, &c."

Come now, use thy reason awhile, employ a few sober thoughts about this matter ; remember, thou wilt have a long eternity wherein to recognize the passages of thy life, and the state of thy case in the last judgment. Were it supposable that one who had done as the former, should be left finally destitute of divine grace and perish : yet in which of these cases wouldst thou choose to be found at last ? But why yet shouldst thou imagine so sad an issue, as that after thine utmost endeavors, grace should be withheld, and leave thee to perish ; because God hath not bound himself by promise to thee ? What promise have the ravens to be heard when they cry ? But thou art a sinner : true, otherwise thou wert not without promise ; the promises of the first covenant would at least belong to thee. Yet experience tells the world, his unpromised mercies freely flow everywhere ; The whole earth is full of his goodness ; yea, but his special grace is conveyed by promise only, and that only through Christ ; and how can it be communicated *through* him to any but those that are *in* him ? What then, is the first in-being in Christ no special grace ? or is there any being in him before the first : that should be the ground of that gracious communication ? Things are plain enough, if we make them not intricate, or entangle ourselves by foolish subtilties. God promises sinners indefinitely, pardon and eternal life, for the sake of Christ, on condition that they believe on him. He gives of his good pleasure that

grace whereby he draws any to Christ, without promise directly made to them, whether absolute or conditional; though he give it for the sake of Christ also. His discovery of His purpose to give such grace to some, indefinitely, amounts not to a promise claimable by any; for if it be said to be an absolute promise to particular persons, who are they? whose duty is it to believe it made to him? If conditional, what are the conditions upon which the first grace is certainly promised? who can be able to assign them? But poor soul! thou needest not stay to puzzle thyself about this matter. God binds himself to do what he promises; but hath he any where bound himself to do no more? Did he promise thee thy being; or that thou shouldst live to this day? did he promise thee the bread that sustains thee, the daily comforts of thy life? Yea, (what is nearer the present purpose,) did he promise thee a station under the gospel? or that thou shouldst ever hear the name of Christ? If ever his Spirit have in any degree moved upon thy heart, inclined thee at all seriously to consider thy eternal concernments, did he before-hand make thee any promise of that? A promise would give thee a full certainty of the issue, if it were absolute, out of hand; if conditional, as soon as thou findest the condition performed. But what! canst thou act upon no lower rate than a foregoing certainty, a pre-assurance of the event? My friend, consider a little, (what thou canst not but know already) that it is hope (built with those that are rational, upon rational probabilities, with many, oftentimes upon none at all) is the great engine that moves the world, that keeps all sorts of men in action. Doth the husbandman foreknow when he plows and sows, that the crop will answer his cost and pains? Doth the merchant foreknow, when he embarks his goods, he shall have a safe and gainful return? Dost thou foreknow, when thou eatest, it shall refresh thee? when thou takest physic, that it shall recover thy health, and save thy life? Yea further, can the covetous man pretend a promise, that his unjust practices shall enrich him? the malicious, that he shall prosper in his design of revenge? the ambitious, that he shall be great and honorable? the voluptuous, that his pleasure shall be always unmixed with gall and wormwood? Can any say, they ever had a promise to ascertain them that profaneness and sensuality would bring them to heaven? that an ungodly, dissolute life would end in blessedness? Here the Lord knows men can be confident and active enough without a promise, and against many an express threatening. Wilt thou not upon the hope thou hast before thee, do as much for thy soul, for eternal blessedness, as men do for uncertain riches, short pleasures, an airy, soon blasted name? yea, as much as men desperately do to damn themselves, and purchase their own swift destruction? Or canst thou pretend, thou hast no pre-assuring promise, thou hast no hope? Is it nothing to have heard so much of God's gracious na-

ture? Is it suitable to the reports, and discoveries he hath made of himself, to let a poor wretch perish at his feet, that lies prostrate there expecting his mercy? Didst thou ever hear he was so little a lover of souls? Do his giving his Són, his earnest, unwearied strivings with sinners, his long patience, the clear beams of gospel light, the amiable appearances of his grace, give ground for no better, no kinder thoughts of him? yea, hath he not expressly styled himself the God hearing prayers, taken a name on purpose to encourage all flesh to come to him. Psal. 65. 2. Wilt thou dare then to adopt those profane words, What profit is it to pray to him? (Job. 21. 15.) and say, it is better to sit still, resolving to perish, than address to him, or seek his favor, because he hath not by promise assured thee of the issue, and that, if he suspend his grace, all thou dost will be in vain? How wouldst thou judge of the like resolution, if the husbandman should say, When I have spent my pains and cost in breaking up and preparing the earth, and casting in my seed; if the sun shine not, and the rain fall not in season, if the influences of heaven be suspended, if God withhold his blessing, or if an invading enemy anticipate my harvest, all I do and expend is to no purpose; and God hath not ascertained me of the contrary, by express promise, it is as good therefore sit still? Censure and answer him and thyself both together.

(4.) But thou wilt yet, it may be, say that though all this may be possibly true, yet thou canst not all this while be convinced of any need so earnestly to busy thyself about this affair. For God is wont to surprise souls by preventing acts of grace, to be found of them that sought him not, to break in by an irresistible power, which they least thought of. And to go about to anticipate his grace, were to detract from the freeness, and so from the glory of it. But art thou not in all this afraid of charging God foolishly? When the merciful God, in compassion to the souls of men, hath given his gospel, constituted and settled a standing office to be perpetuated through all ages for the publication of it; invited the world therein to a treaty with him, touching the concernments of their eternal peace required so strictly their attendance to, and most serious consideration of his proposals and offers; encouraged, and commanded their addresses to him, set up a throne of grace on purpose, wilt thou dare to say, All this is needless for thee to hear him, or regard what he saith? or when he commands thee to pour forth thy soul to him, wilt thou say, It is a needless thing? Dost thou not plainly see, that the peculiar, appropriate aptitude of the things pressed upon thee, speaks them *necessitas medii*, *necessary*, as means to their designed end; whence they are fitly called means of grace? Is not the word of God the immortal seed? Are not souls begotten by that word to be the first fruits of his creatures? \* Is it not

\*1 Pet. 1. 23. Jam. 1. 18. Rom. 6. 17. John 17. 17.



the type, the mould, or print by which divine impressions are put upon the soul: the instrument by which he sanctifies. Are not the exceeding great and precious promises, the *vehicula*, the conveyancers of the divine nature? 2 Pet. 1. 4. And what can be the means to mollify and melt the obdurate heart of a sinner, to assuage its enmity, to overcome it into the love of God, to transform it into his image, but the gospel discovery of God's own gracious and holy nature? And can it operate to this purpose without being heard, or read, or understood, and considered, and taken to heart? Do but compare this means God works by, with the subject to be wrought upon, and the effect to be wrought, and nothing can be conceived more adequate and fitly corresponding. But inasmuch as there hath been an enmity between God and sinners, and that therefore the whole entire means of reconciliation must be a treaty; and that a treaty cannot be managed or conceived without mutual interlocution, therefore must the sinner have a way of expressing its own sense to God, as well as he speaks his mind to it; which shews the necessity of prayer too: and therefore, because the peace begins on his part, (though the war began on ours,) he calls upon sinners to open themselves to him; Come now, let us reason together: Isa. 1. 18. He invites addresses; Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is nigh, &c. chap. 55. 6. And doth not the natural relation itself between the Creator and a creature require this besides the exigency of our present case? Every creature is a supplicant; its necessary dependence is a natural prayer. The eyes of all things look up, &c. It is the proper glory of a Deity to be depended on and addressed to. Should not a people seek unto their God? Isa. 8. 19. It is an appeal to reason; is it not a congruous thing?

Further, Dost thou not know, thy Maker's will made known, infers upon thee a *necessitas præcepti*, necessity of obeying; unless thou think the breach between God and thee is better to be healed by rebellion; and that the only way to expiate wickedness, were to continue and multiply it. Is it a needless thing to comply with the will of him that gave thee breath and being? And whose power is so absolute over thee, as to all thy concerns, both of time and eternity? Again, while thou pretendest these things are needless, come now, speak out freely; what are the more necessary affairs wherein thou art so deeply engaged, that thou canst not suffer a diversion? What! Is the service and gratification of thy flesh and sense so important a business, that thou canst be at no leisure for that more needless work of saving thy soul? Where is thy reason and modesty? Dost thou mind none other, from day to day, but necessary affairs? Dost thou use, when thou art tempted to vain dalliances, empty discourses, intemperate indulgence to thy appetite, so to answer the temptation, Is it not necessary? Or art thou so destitute of

all conscience and shame, to think it unnecessary to work out thy salvation, to strive to enter in at the strait gate that leads to life? but most indispensably necessary to be very critically curious about what thou shalt eat and drink, and put on; and how to spend thy time with greatest ease and pleasure to thy flesh, that it may not have the least cause to complain it is neglected? Thy pretence, that God is wont to be found of them that sought him not, (Isa. 65. 1.) to the purpose thou intendest it, is a most ignorant or malicious abuse of scripture. The prophet is, in the text, foretelling the calling of the Gentiles, who, while they remained such, did not (it is true) inquire after God; but then he expressly tells us, (personating God,) I am sought of them that asked not for me, (that is, after the gospel came among them,) and then it is added, I am found (upon this seeking, plainly) of them that sought me not, (that is, who once in their former darkness, before I revealed myself in the gospel dispensation to them, sought me not:) as though he had said, I am now sought of a people that lately sought me not, nor asked after me, and I am found of them. But what is this to thy case; whom God hath been, in the gospel, earnestly inviting to seek after him, and thou all this while refuseth to comply with the invitation?

And suppose thou hear of some rare instance of persons, suddenly snatched by the hand of grace out of the midst of their wickedness, as fire-brands out of the fire, Is it therefore the safest course to go on in a manifest rebellion against God, till possibly he may do so by thee also? How many thousands may have dropped into hell since thou heardest of such an instance? as a worthy person speaks to that purpose.\* If thou hast heard of one Elijah fed by ravens, and of some thousands by our Saviour's miracles, canst thou thence plead a repeal of that law to the world, They that will not labor shall not eat? Or is it a safer or wiser course to wait till food drop into thy mouth from heaven, than to use a prudent care for the maintenance of thy life? If thou say, thou hearest but of few that are wrought upon in this way, of their own foregoing expectation and endeavor; remember, (and let the thought of it startle thee,) that there are but few that are saved. And therefore are so few wrought upon in this way, because so few will be persuaded to it. But canst thou say (though God hath not bound himself to the mere natural endeavors of his creature neither,) that ever any took this course, and persist with faithful diligence, but they succeeded in it? What thou talkest of the freeness of God's grace, looks like a hypocritical pretence. Is there no way to honor his grace, but by affronting his authority? but to sin, that grace may abound? sure grace will be better pleased by obedience, than by such sacrifice. For a miserable, perishing

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\*Mr. Baxter.

wretch to use God's means to help itself, doth that look like merit? Is the beggar afraid thou shouldst interpret his coming to thy door and seeking thy alms, to signify, as if he thought he had deserved them? I hope thou wilt acknowledge thyself less than the least of all God's mercies, and that thou canst not deserve from him a morsel of bread; mayst thou not therefore in thy necessity labor for thy living, lest thou shouldst intrench upon the freeness of divine bounty? With as much wisdom and reason mightest thou decline the use of all other means to preserve thy life, (which thou must owe always to free mercy,) to eat when thou art hungry, to take physic when thou art sick, lest thou shouldst intimate thyself to have merited the strength and health sought thereby. Nor can I think of any rational pretence that can more plausibly be insisted on, than these that have been thus briefly discussed. And it must needs be difficult to bring any appearance of reason for the patronage of so ill a cause, as the careless giving up of a man's soul to perish eternally, that is visibly capable of eternal blessedness. And certainly were we once apprehensive of the case, the attempt of disputing a man into such a resolution, would appear much more ridiculous, than if one should gravely urge arguments to all the neighborhood, to persuade them to burn their houses, to put out their eyes, to kill their children, and to cut their own throats. And sure, let all imaginable pretence be debated to the uttermost, and it will appear, that nothing withholds men from putting forth all their might in the endeavor of getting a spirit suitable to this blessedness, but an obstinately perverse and sluggish heart, despoiled and naked of all shew of reason and excuse. And though that be a hard task to reason against mere will, yet that being the way to make men willing, and the latter part of the work proposed in pursuance of this direction, I shall recommend only such considerations as the text itself will suggest, for the stirring up and persuading of slothful reluctant hearts, choosing those as the most proper limits, and not being willing to be infinite herein, as amidst so great a variety of considerations to that purpose, one might.

That in general which I shall propose, shall be only the misery of the unrighteous; whereof we may take a view in the opposite blessedness here described. The contradictories whereto will afford a negative, the contraries a positive description of this misery. So that each consideration will be double; which I shall now rather glance at than insist upon.

[1.] Consider then, if thou be found at last unqualified for this blessedness, how wilt thou bear it to be banished eternally from the blessed face of God? There will be those that shall behold that face in righteousness; so shalt not thou: The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, with a "Never more see my face." Again, What amazing visions wilt thou have! What

ghastly, frightful objects to converse with, amidst those horrors of eternal darkness; when the devil and his angels shall be thy everlasting associates! What direful images shall those accursed, enraged spirits, and thy own fruitful parturient imagination forever entertain thee with, and present to thy view!

[2.] Is it a small thing with thee, to be destitute of all those inherent excellencies which the perfected image of God, whereof thou wast capable, comprehends? View them over in that (too defective) account some of the former pages give thee of them. Thou art none of those bright stars, those sons of the morning, those blessed, glorified spirits, thou mightest have been. But consider, What art thou? What shalt thou forever be? What image or likeness shalt thou bear? Alas, poor wretch, thou art now a fiend! conformed to thy hellish partners: thou bearest their accursed likeness. Death is now finished in thee: and as thou sowest to the flesh, thou reapest corruption. Thou art become a loathsome carcase; the worms that never die, abound in thy putrified, filthy soul. Thou hast a hell in thee. Thy venomous lusts are now grown mature, are in their full grown state. If a world of iniquity, a fulness of deadly poison, tempered by hell-fire, is here sometimes to be found in a little member, what will there then be in all thy parts and powers!

[3.] Consider, how blessed a satisfaction dost thou lose? how pleasant and delightful a rest, arising both from the sight of so much glory, and so peaceful a temper and constitution of spirit? Here thou mightest have enjoyed an eternal undisturbed rest. But for rest and satisfaction, thou hast vexation and endless torment, both by what thou beholdest, and what thou feelst within thee. Thy dreadful vision shall not let thee rest: but the chiefest matter of thy disquiet and torment is in the very temper and constitution of thy soul. Thy horrid lusts are fuller of poisonous energy, and are destitute of their wonted objects, whence they turn all their power and fury upon thy miserable self. Thy enraged passions would fly in the face of God, but they spend themselves in tormenting the soul that bred them. Thy curses and blasphemies, the envenomed darts pointed at heaven, are reverberated and driven back into thy own heart. And therefore,

[4.] Consider, What awaking hast thou? Thou awakest not into the mild and cheerful light of that blessed day, wherein the saints of the most high hold their solemn, joyful triumph. But thou awakest into the great and terrible day of the Lord (dost thou desire it, for what end is it to thee?) a day of darkness, and not light; a gloomy and stormy day. The day of thy birth is not a more hateful, than this is a dreadful day. Thou awakest and art beset with terrors, presently apprehended and dragged before thy glorious, severe Judge, and thence into eternal tor-

ments. O happy thou, mightest thou never awake, might the grave conceal, and its more silent darkness cover thee forever. But since thou must awake then, how much more happy wert thou, if thou wouldst suffer thyself to be awakened now! What, to lose and endure so much, because thou wilt not now a little bestir thyself, and look about thee? Sure thy conscience tells thee, thou art urged but to what is possible; and lawful, and hopeful, and necessary; methinks, if thou be a man, and not a stone, if thou hast a reasonable soul about thee, thou shouldst presently fall to work, and rather spend thy days in serious thoughts, and prayers, and tears, than run the hazard of losing so transcendent a glory, and of suffering misery, which as now thou art little able to conceive, thou wilt then be less able to endure.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Rule 4. Directing to the endeavor of a gradual improvement in such a disposedness of spirit (as shall be found in any measure already attained) towards this blessedness. That it is blessedness begun which disposes to the consummate state of it. That we are therefore to endeavor the daily increase of our present knowledge of God, conformity to him, and the satisfiedness of our spirits therein.

4. That when we find ourselves in any disposition towards this blessedness, we endeavor a gradual improvement therein, to get the habitual temper of our spirits made daily more suitable to it. We must still remember we have not yet attained, and must therefore continue pressing forward to this mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3. 14. *Βραβεῖον*. That prize (not price, as we commonly mis-read it in our bibles) of which the apostle here speaks, is (as may be seen by looking back to verse 8, 9, &c.) the same with the blessedness in the text. Such a knowledge of Christ, as should infer at last his participation with him in his state of glory; or of the resurrection of the dead. This is the ultimate term, the scope or end of that high calling of God in Christ; so it is also stated elsewhere, Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus. 1 Pet. 5. 10. Now we should therefore frequently recount how far short we are of this glory, and stir up our souls to more vigorous endeavors in order to it. Our suitableness to this blessedness stands in our having the elements and first principles of it in us; it is glory only that fits for glory; some

previous sights and impressions of it, and a pleasant complacential relish thereof, that frame and attemper us by degrees to the full and consummate state of it. This is that therefore we must endeavor, A growing knowledge of God, conformity to him, and satisfiedness of spirit therein. What we expect should be one day perfect, we must labor may be, in the mean time, always growing.

(1.) Our knowledge of God. The knowledge of Him I here principally intend, is not notional and speculative, but (which is more ingredient to our blessedness, both inchoate and perfect) that of converse, that familiar knowledge which we usually express by the name of acquaintance. See that this knowledge of him be increased daily. Let us now use ourselves much with God. Our knowledge of him must aim at conformity to him: and how powerful a thing is converse in order hereto? How insensibly is it wont to transform men, and mould anew their spirits, language, garb, deportment? To be removed from the solitude or rudeness of the country to a city or university, what an alteration doth it make? How is such a person divested by degrees of his rusticity, of his more uncomely and agressed manners? Objects we converse with, beget their image upon us, They walked after vanity, and became vain, (Jer. 2. 5.) saith Jeremiah; and Solomon, He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise. Prov. 13. 20. Walking is a usual expression of converse. So to converse with the holy, is the way to be holy, with heaven, the way to be heavenly, with God, the way to be God-like. Let us therefore make this our present business, much to acquaint ourselves with God. We count upon seeing him face to face, of being always in his presence beholding his glory; that speaketh very intimate acquaintance indeed. How shall we reach that pitch? What, to live now as strangers to him? Is that the way? The path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Prov. 4. 18. The text shews us the righteous man's end, To behold the glory of God's face, &c. it is easy to apprehend then, his way must needs have in it a growing brightness, as he comes still nearer this end. Every nearer approach to a lucid thing infers (to us) an increase of light from it. We should therefore be following on to know the Lord, and we shall see his going forth will be before us as the morning. Hos. 6. 3. He will be still visiting us with renewed, increasing light, for such is morning-light, fresh and growing-light,) and ere long it will be perfect day. Labor we to improve our knowledge of God to such a degree of acquaintance as our present state can admit of: to be as inward with him as we can, to familiarize ourselves to him. His gospel aims at this, to make those that were afar off nigh. Far-distant objects we can have no distinct view of. He can give us little account of a person that hath only seen him afar off, so God beholds the proud afar off, that is, he will

have no acquaintance with them : whereas with the humble he will be familiar ; he will dwell, (as in a family) with them. Isa. 57. 15. So the ungodly behold God till he bring them in, and make them nigh ; then they are no longer strangers, but of his family and household, now thoroughly acquainted. Several notes there are of a thorough acquaintance which we should endeavor may concur in our acquaintance with God, in that analogy which the case will bear :—to know his *nature* ; or (as we would speak of a man,) what will please and displease him so as to be able in the whole course of our daily conversation to approve ourselves to him : to have the skill so to manage our conversation, as to continue a correspondence, not interrupted by any our offensive unpleasing demeanors : to walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing. It concerns us most to study and endeavor this practical knowledge of the nature of God ; what trust, and love, and fear, and purity, &c. his faithfulness, and greatness, his goodness, and holiness, &c. do challenge from us : what may in our daily walking be agreeable, what repugnant to the several attributes of his being. To know his *secrets* ; to be as it were of the cabinet-council, (the word used by the Psalmist psal. 25. 14. hath a peculiar significancy to that purpose ; to signify, not only counsel, but a council, or the consessus of persons that consult together,) this is his gracious vouchsafement, to humble, reverential souls. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him ; such acquaintance with him is to be sought, to know the (communicable) secrets both of his mind and heart. Of his mind, his truths, gospel-mysteries, that were kept secret from ages and generations. We have the mind of Christ. This is great inwardness, of his heart ; his love, his good-will, his kind bosom thoughts towards our souls. To know his *methods*, and the course of his dispensations towards the world, his church, and especially our own spirits : this is great knowledge of God, to have the skill to trace his footsteps, and observe by comparing times with times, that such a course he more usually holds ; and accordingly, with great probability, collect from what we have seen and observed, what we may expect : what order and succession there is of storms of wrath, to clouds of sin ; and again of peaceful, lucid intervals, when such storms have inferred penitential tears : in what exigencies, and distresses, humble mourners may expect God's visits and consolations : to recount in how great extremities former experience hath taught us not to despair ; and from such experience still to argue ourselves into fresh reviving hopes, when the state of things (whether public or private, outward or spiritual) seems forlorn. To know the proper seasons of address to him ; and how to behave ourselves most acceptably in his presence, in what dispositions and postures of spirit, we are fittest for his converse, so as to be able to come to him in a good hour, in a time when he may be found ;

(Psal. 32. 6.) to know his *voice*: this discovers acquaintance. The ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meats, Job. 12. 11. God's righteous ones, that are filled with the fruits of righteousness, do proportionably abound in knowledge, Phil. 1. 9. *and in all sense.* αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα, Heb. 5. 14. They have quick, naked, unvitiated senses, to discern between good and evil; yea, and can have the suffrage of several senses concerning the same objects; they have a kind of taste in their ear. They taste the good word of God, even in his previous workings on them. Heb. 6. 5. Being new-born they are intimated to have tasted in the word how gracious the Lord is. As they grow up thereby, they have still a more judicious sense, and can more certainly distinguish, when God speaks to them, and when a stranger goes about to counterfeit his voice. John 10. They can tell at first hearing, what is grateful and nutritive, what offensive and hurtful to the divine life; what is harmonious and agreeable, what dissonant to the gospel already received, so that an angel from heaven must expect no welcome, if he bring another. To know his inward *motions* and impulses; when his hand toucheth our hearts, to be able to say this is the finger of God, there is something divine in this touch. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved. Cant. 5. 4. This speaks acquaintance when the soul can say, I know this very touch; the least impression from him, I can distinguish it from thousands of objects that daily beat upon my heart. To understand his *looks*;\* to know the meaning of his aspects, and glances of the various casts, as it were of his eye. Such things intimate friends can, in a sort, talk by, with one another; I will guide thee by mine eye; that implies an intelligent teachable subject. We have now no full-eyed appearances of God; he shews himself, looks in upon us through the lattice, through a veil, or a shadow, or a glass. That measure of acquaintance with him to be able to discern and own him in his appearances, is a great participation of heaven, utter unacquaintance with God is expressed by the denial of these two, ye have neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape, John. 5. 37.

Finally, which brings us home to the text, to keep our eye intently fixed on him, not to understand his looks only as before, but to return our own. Intimate acquaintance (when such friends meet) is much expressed, and improved by the eye, by a reciprocation of glances, or (which speaks more inwardness) more fixed views; when their eyes do even feed and feast upon each other. Thus we should endeavour to be as in a continual

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\* So we apprehend God proportionably more clearly as the idea we have of a person is more distinct that we have of him, the sight of his picture or face through a glass, beyond that which we have by hearing a reported description of him, though by himself unseen. This is acquaintance with God.



interview with God. How frequent mention have we of the fixed posture of his eye towards saints. To this man will I look; I have found out, as though he had said, that which shall be ever the delight of mine eye. Do not divert me, towards him I will look. What he speaks of the material temple is ultimately to be referred to that which is typified; his church, his saints, united with his Christ, Mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually; and elsewhere, He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous; he cannot (admirable grace) allow himself to look off, to turn aside his eye: and he seems impatient of the aversion of theirs, Let me see thy countenance (saith he) for it is comely.\*

Is it not much more reasonable, it should be thus with us towards Him? that we should be more delighted to behold real comeliness than He with what is so, only by his gracious vouchsafement and estimation? How careful should we be, that our eye may at every turn meet his; that he never looks towards us, and find it in the ends of the earth, carelessly wandering from Him? How well doth it become us, to set the Lord always before us: to have our eye towards the Lord? Psal. 16. 8.—25. 15. This you see is the initial, leading thing in this blessedness of heaven. So it must have also a prime ingrediency into our heaven on earth. It is a part of celestial blessedness; but it is not peculiar to it. The present blessedness the righteous enjoy here is a participation of heaven. It hath something in it of every thing that is ingredient into that perfect blessedness. Our present knowledge of God is often expressed by vision, or sight, as we have had occasion to observe in many passages of Scripture. He hath given us such a visive power, and made it connatural to that heavenly creature, begotten of Him, in all the true subjects of his blessedness. We know that we are of God, and presently it follows, He hath given us an understanding to know Him that is true. 1 John. 5. 15. 20. This new man is not born blind. The blessed God himself is become liable to the view of his regenerate, intellectual eye, clarified, and filled with vigor and spirit from Himself. He therefore that hath made, that hath new-formed his eye, shall not he be seen by it? shall not we turn it upon Him? Why do not we more frequently bless our eye with that sight? This object (though of so high excellency and glory) will not hurt, but perfect and strengthen it. They are refreshing, vital beams that issue from it. Sure we have no excuse that we eye God so little, that is, that we mind Him no more. Why have we so few thoughts of Him in a day? What, to let so much time pass, and not spare Him a look, a thought? Do we intend to employ ourselves an eternity in the visions of God, and is our present aversion from Him, and

\*1 King 9. 3. Job. 36. 7. Psal. 33. 18. & 34. 15. Cant. 2. 14.

intention upon vanity, our best preparation thereto? This loudly calls for redress. Shall God be waiting all the day, as on purpose to catch our eye, to intercept a look, and we studiously decline Him, and still look another way, as of choice? and what is it but choice? Can we pretend a necessity to forget Him all the day? How cheap is the expense of a look? How little would it cost us? And yet how much of duty might it express? how much of comfort and joy might it bring into us?

How great is our offence and loss, that we live not in such more constant views of God? Herein we sin and suffer both at once, things both very unsuitable to heaven. Mindfulness of God is the living spring of all holy and pleasant affections and deportments towards Him; sets all the wheels a going; makes the soul as the chariots of Aminadab. These wheels have their eyes also, are guided by a mind, by an intellectual principle. Knowing, intelligent beings (as we also are by participation and according to our measure) so act mutually towards one another. We cannot move towards God but with an open eye, seeing Him and our way towards Him. If we close our eyes we stand still, or blindly run another course, we know not whither. All sin is darkness, whether it be neglect of good, or doing of evil: its way is a way of darkness; as a course of holy motion is walking in the light. Our shutting our eyes towards God creates that darkness; surrounds us with a darkness comprehensive of all sin. Now is every thing of enjoined duty waived, and any evil done, that sinful nature prompts us to. Well might it be said, He that sinneth hath not seen God. 1 John. 3. 6. When we have made ourselves this darkness, we fall of course under Satan's empire, and are presently within his dominions. He is the prince of darkness, and can rule us now at his will. Perishing lost souls are such as in whom the God of this world hath blinded their minds. To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, is, to turn them also from the power of Satan unto God. What a hell of wickedness are we brought into, in the twinkling of an eye? We are without God in the world, as if a man wink, though at noon-day, he hath as it were put out the sun, it is with him as if there were no such thing. When we have banished God out of our sight and forgotten Him, it is with us as if there were no God. If such a state grow habitual to us, (as we know every sinful aversion of our eye from God tends thereto,) what wickedness is there that will not lurk in this darkness? How often in Scripture is forgetting God used as a character, yea, as a paraphrase, a full, though summary, expression of sin in general? as if the wickedness, the malignity, the very hell itself of sin, were wholly included (and not connoted only) here. Now consider this (after so dreadful an enumeration, so black a catalogue) all that forget God. Psal. 50. And (as deep calleth to deep, one hell to another,) The wicked shall

be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. Psal. 9. That heap, that mass of wickedness, of pride, of persecution, cursing, blasphemy, deceit, and mischief, all meet in one that hath not God in all his thoughts.

But who is so hardy to look the holy God in the face, and sin against Him? What an astonishment is it, when He watches over present sin, or brings forth former sins out of secret darkness and sets them in the light of his countenance? Who that understands any thing of the nature and majesty of God, dare call Him for a witness of his sinning? The worst of men would find themselves under some restraint, could they but obtain of themselves, to sit down sometimes and solemnly think of God. Much more would it prove an advantage to (them whom I most intend) such as sin within the nearer call and reach of mercy: that sin not to the utmost latitude: even such as lead the strictest lives, and are seldomer found to transgress; are not their sins wont to begin with forgetting God? Did they eye God more, would they not sin less frequently, and with greater regret? You his saints, that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice, that profess the greatest love and devotedness to him and seem willing yourselves to become sacrifices, and lay down your lives for his sake; What, is it a harder thing to give Him a look, a thought? or is it not too common a thing, without necessity (and then not without injury) to withhold these from Him? Let us bethink ourselves, are not the principal distempers of our spirits, and disorders yet observable in our lives to be referred hither? As to enjoined services; what, should we venture on omissions, if we had God in our eye? or serve him with so declining, backward hearts? Should we dare to let pass a day, in the even whereof we might write down, nothing done for God this day? or should we serve Him as a hard master, with sluggish, despondent spirits? The apostle forbids servants to serve with eye-service, as men-pleasers; meaning they should eye men less and God more. Sure, as to Him, our service is not enough eye-service. We probably eye men more than we should; but we do not eye Him enough. Hence such hanging of hands, such feebleness of knees, such laziness and indifferency, so little of an active zeal and laborious diligence, so little fervency of spirit in serving the Lord. Hence also such an aversion to hazardous services, such fear of attempting any thing (though never so apparent important duty) that may prove costly, or hath danger in it. We look not to him that is invisible. And as to forbidden things; should we be so proud, so passionate, so earthly, so sensual, if we had God more in view? should we so much seek ourselves, and indulge our own wills and humors, drive a design with such solicitude and intention of mind for our private interests? should we walk at such a latitude, and more consult our own inclination than our rule, allow ourselves in so much vanity of conversation, did we mind God as we

ought? And do not we sensibly punish ourselves in this neglect? what a dismal chaos is this world while we see not God in it! To live destitute of a divine presence, to discern no beam of the heavenly glory; to go up and down day by day, and perceive nothing of God, no glimmering, no appearance; this is disconsolate as well as sinful darkness. What can we make of creatures, what of the daily events of providence, if we see not in them the glory of a Deity; if we do not contemplate and adore the divine wisdom, power, and goodness, diffused every where? Our practical atheism, and inobservance of God, makes the world become to us the region and shadow of death, states us as among ghosts and spectres, makes all things look with a ghastly face, imprints death upon every thing we see, encircles us with gloomy, dreadful shades, and with uncomfortable apparitions. To behold the tragical spectacles always in view, the violent lusts, the rapine and rage of some, the calamitous sufferings, the miseries and ruin of others; to hear every corner resounding with the insultations of the oppressor, and the mournful groans of the oppressed, what a painful continuing death were it to be in the world without God! At the best, all things were but a vanishing scene, an image seen in the dark. The creation, a thing, the fashion whereof were passing away, the whole contexture and system of providence were mere confusion, without the least concinnity or order: religion an acknowledged trifle, a mere mockery? What, to wink ourselves into so much darkness and desolation, and by sealing up our eyes against the divine light and glory, to confirm so formidable miseries upon our own souls! How dreadfully shall we herein revenge our own folly, in nullifying Him to ourselves, who is the all in all! Sure there is little of heaven in all this! But if now we open our eyes upon that all comprehending glory, apply them to a steady intuition of God, how heavenly a life shall we then live in the world! To have God always in view, as the director and end of all our actions: to make our eye crave leave of God, to consult Him before we adventure upon any thing, and implore his guidance and blessing: upon all occasions to direct our prayers to Him and look up: to make our eye wait his commanding look, ready to receive all intimations of his will; this is an angelic life. To be as those ministers of his that are always ready to do his pleasure: to make our eye do him homage, and express our dependence and trust: to approve ourselves in every thing to Him, and act as always in his presence, observing still how his eye observes us, and exposing ourselves willingly to its inspection and search; contented always He should see through and through us: surely there is much of heaven in this life: so we should endeavor to live here. I cannot omit to give you this instruction in the words of a heathen, *Sic certe vivendum est tanquam in conspectu vivamus, &c.*

*We ought so to live, as always within view, order our cogitations as if some one might or can look into the very inwards of our breast. For to what purpose is it, to hide any thing from man? from God nothing can be hid; he is continually present to our spirits, and comes amidst our inmost thoughts. &c. Sen. Epist. 83.*

This is to walk in the light, amidst a serene, placid, mild light, that infuses no unquiet thoughts, admits no guilty fears, nothing that can disturb or annoy us. To eye God in all our comforts, and observe the smiling aspects of his face, when he dispenses them to us: to eye Him in all our afflictions, and consider the paternal wisdom that instructs us in them; how would this increase our mercies, and mitigate our troubles? To eye Him in all his creatures, and observe the various prints of the Creator's glory stamped upon them; with how lively a lustre would it clothe the world, and make every thing look with a pleasant face! what a heaven were it to look upon God, as filling all in all: and how sweetly would it, ere-while, raise our souls into some such sweet seraphic strains, holy, holy,—the whole earth is full of his glory. Isa. 6. 2. 3. To eye Him in his providences, and consider how all events are with infinite wisdom disposed into an apt subserviency to his holy will and ends: what difficulties would hence be solved! what seeming inconsistencies reconciled! and how much would it contribute to the ease and quiet of our minds? To eye Him in his Christ, the express image of his person, the brightness of his glory, and in the Christian economy, the gospel revelation and ordinances, through which he manifests himself: to behold Him in the posture wherein He saves souls, clad with the garments of salvation, girt with power, and apparelled with love, travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save: to view Him addressing Himself to allure and win to him the hearts of sinners, when he discovers himself in Christ, upon that reconciling design, makes grace that brings salvation appear, teaching to deny ungodliness, &c. to behold Him entering into human flesh, pitching his tabernacle among men, hanging out his ensigns of peace, laying his trains, spreading his net, the cords of a man, the bands of love: to see Him in his Christ, ascending the cross, lifted up to draw all men to Him; and consider that mighty love of justice and of souls, both so eminently conspicuous in that stupendous sacrifice; here to fix our eyes looking to Jesus, and behold in Him, him whom we have pierced: to see his power and glory, as they were wont to be seen in his sanctuaries: to observe Him in the solemnities of his worship, and the graceful postures wherein He holds communion with his saints, when He seats Himself amidst them on the throne of grace, receives their addresses, dispenses the tokens and pledges of his love: into what transports might these visions put us every day.

Let us then stir up our drowsy souls, open our heavy eyes,

and turn them upon God, inure and habituate them to a constant view of his (yet veiled) face, that we may not see him only by casual glances, but as those that seek his face, and make it our business to gain a thorough knowledge of him. But let us remember, that all our present visions of God must aim at a further conformity to him : they must design imitation not the satisfying of curiosity ; our looking must not therefore be an inquisitive, busy prying into the unrevealed things of God. Carefully abstain from such over-bold presumptuous looks. But remember, we are to eye God as our pattern. Wherein he is to be so, he hath plainly enough revealed and proposed himself to us. And consider, this is the pattern, both to which we ought, and to which we shall be conformed (if we make it our business ; ) so will sense of duty, and hope of success concur to fix our eye and keep it steady. Especially, let us endeavor to manage and guide our eye aright, in beholding him, that our sight of him may most effectually subserve this design of being like him ; and herein nothing will be more conducive, than that our looks be qualified with—reverence, and—love.

[1.] Let them be reverential looks. We shall never be careful to imitate a despised pattern, or that we think meanly of. When this is the intimate sense of our soul, Who is a God like unto thee in holiness ! There is none holy as the Lord : this will set our powers on work ; such sights will command and overawe our souls into conformity to him. Subjects have sometimes affected to imitate the very imperfections and deformities of their adored prince. Let us greatness our thoughts of God. Look to him with a submissive, adoring eye. Let every look import worship and subjection. Who can stand before apprehended sovereign majesty with such a temper of soul as shall signify an affront to it ? This will make every thing as suitable to God yield and render our souls susceptible of all divine and holy impressions.

[2.] Let them be friendly and (as far may consist with that reverence) amorous looks. It is natural to affect and endeavor likeness to them we love. Let love always sit in our eye, and inspirit it ; this will represent God always amiable, will infinitely commend us to his nature and attributes, and even ravish us into his likeness. The loving spouse often glories, to wear her beloved husband's picture on her breast. The love of God will much more make us affect to bear his image in our hearts. His law is a true representation of him, and *love* in the fulfilling of that law, an exemplification of it in ourselves. Love will never enter a quarrel, nor admit of any disagreement with God. His more terrible appearances will be commendable in the eye of love. It thinks no evil. But so interprets and comments upon his severer aspects, whether through his law or providence, as to judge all amiable, and frame the soul to an answerable deportment.

(2.) In this way then let us endeavor a growing conformity unto God. It hath been much (and not unnecessarily) inculcated already, that the blessedness of the righteous hereafter, doth not consist merely in beholding an external, objective glory, but in being also glorified. They are happy by a participated glory: by being made like God, as well as seeing his glorious likeness; whereby the constitution of their spirits is changed and reduced to that excellent, harmonious, agreeable temper, that holy composure and peaceful state from which blessedness is inseparable. As far as we are capable of blessedness in this world, it must be so with us here. Glory without us will not make us happy in heaven; much less will any thing without us make us happy on earth. It is an idle dream, of sickly, crazy minds, that their blessedness consists in some external good, that is separable and distant from them; which therefore as they blindly guess, they uncertainly pursue; never aiming to become good, without which they can never know what it is to be blessed. What felicity are men wont to imagine to themselves in this or that change of their outward condition; were their state such or such, then they were happy, and should desire no more? As the child's fancy suggests to it, if it were on the top of such a hill, it could touch the heavens, but when with much toil it hath got thither, it finds itself as far off as before. We have a shorter and more compendious way to it, would we allow ourselves to understand it. A right temper of mind involves blessedness in itself: it is this only change we need to endeavor. We wear out our days in vanity and misery, while we neglect this work, and busy ourselves to catch a fugitive shadow, that hovers about us. It can never be well, till our own souls be a heaven to us, and blessedness be a domestic, a home-dwelling inhabitant there. Till we get a settled principle of holy quietude into our own breasts, and become the sons of peace, with whom the peace of God may find entrance and abode: till we have that treasure within us, that may render us insensible of any dependance on a foreign good, or fear of a foreign evil. Shall that be the boast and glory of a philosopher only, "I carry all my goods with me wherever I go?" And that a virtuous, good man is liable to no hurt? Seneca (epis. 92.) thinks they discover a low spirit, that say, externals can add any thing (though but a very little) to the felicity of an honest mind; as if (saith he) men could not be content with the light of the sun without the help of a candle or a spark?" And speaking of the constancy of the virtuous man, (saith he) "They do ill that say, such an evil is tolerable to him, such a one intolerable, and that confine the greatness of his mind within certain bounds and limits." Adversity (he tells us) overcomes us, if it be not wholly overcome. Epicurus (saith he) the very patron of your sloth acknowledges yet, that unhappy events can seldom disturb the mind of a virtuous person, (and

he adds,) how had he almost uttered the voice of a man ! I pray, (saith he,) speak out a little more boldly, and say he is above them altogether.”\* Such apprehensions the more virtuous heathens have had of the efficacy and defensative power of moral goodness, however defective their notion might be of the thing itself. Hence Socrates the pagan martyr is reported to have cried out, (when those persons were persecuting him to death,) Anytus and Meletus can kill me, but they cannot hurt me. And Anaxarchus the philosopher, having sharply reprov'd Nicocreon, and being by him ordered to be beaten to death with iron mallets, bids, strike on, strike on, thou mayst (saith he) break in pieces this vessel of Anaxarchus, but Anaxarchus himself thou canst not touch. Diogen : Laert. Anaxarchus.

Shall christianity here confess itself outvied ? shall we, to the reproach of our religion, yield the day to pagan-morality, and renew the occasion of ancient complaint, *Non præstat fides quod præstitit infidelitas*, that the faith of christians is out-done by the heathen infidelity ? It is, I remember, the challenge of Cecilius in Minucius. “There is Socrates (saith he) the prince of wisdom, whosoever of you christians is great enough to attempt it, let him imitate him if he can.” Methinks we should be ambitious to tell the world in our lives, (for christians should live great things, not speak them,†) that a greater than Socrates is here : to let them see in us our represented pattern : to show forth higher virtues than those of Socrates ; even his, who hath called us out of darkness into his glorious and marvellous light. Certain it is, that the sacred oracles of the gospel set before us a more excellent pattern, and speak things not less magnificent, but much more modest and perspicuous : with less pomp of words they give us a much clearer account of a far more excellent temper of mind, and prescribe the direct and certain way of attaining it. Do but view over the many passages of Scripture occasionally glanced at, chap. 7. But we grope as in the dark for blessedness ; we stumble at noon-day as in the night, and wander as if we had no eyes ; we mistake our business, and lay the scene of a happy state at a great distance from us, in things which we cannot reach, and which if we could it were to little purpose.

Not to speak of greater sensualists, (whom at present I have less in my eye,) Is there not a more refined sort of persons, that neglecting the great business of inspecting, and laboring to better and improve their spirits, are wholly taken up about the affairs of another sphere, that are more solicitous for better times,

\* Max. Tyr. dissert. 2. who adds, For a good man cannot receive detriment from an evil man.

† As this Author's expression is.



for a better world, than better spirits; that seem to think all the happiness they are capable of on earth, is bound up in this or that external state of things? Not that the care of all public concerns should be laid aside; least of all, a just solicitude for the church's welfare: but that should not be pretended, when our own interest is the one thing with us. And when we are really solicitous about the church's interests, we should state them aright. God designs the afflictions of his people for their spiritual good, therefore that is a much greater good than their exemption from suffering these evils; otherwise his means should eat up his end; and be more expensive than that will counter-vail; which were an imprudence no man of tolerable discretion would be guilty of. We should desire the outward prosperity of Sion, for it is a real good; but inasmuch as it hath in it the goodness, not of an *end*, but only (and that but sometimes neither) of a *means*; not a constant but a mutual goodness; not a principal, but a lesser subordinate goodness; we must not desire it absolutely, nor chiefly, but with submissive limited desires. If our hearts are grieved to hear of the sufferings of the church of God in the world, but not of their sins; If we more sensibly regret at any time, the persecutions and oppressions they undergo, than their spiritual distempers, their earthliness, pride, cold love to God, fervent animosities towards each other; it speaks an un-instructed, carnal mind. We take no right measures of the interests of religion, or the church's welfare, and do most probably mistake ourselves as much in our judging of our own; and measure theirs by our mistaken model.

And this is the mischievous cheat many put upon their own souls, and would obtrude too often upon others too; that overlooking the great design of the gospel, to transform men's spirits and change them into the divine likeness, they think it is religion enough to espouse a party, and adopt an opinion; and then vogue themselves friends to religion according to the measure of their zeal for their own party or opinion; and give a very pregnant proof of that zeal, by magnifying or inveighing against the times, according as they favor or frown upon their empty, un-spirited religion. It being indeed such (a secret consciousness whereof they herein bewray) as hath no other life in it, than what it owes to external favor and countenance. And therefore all public rebukes are justly apprehended mortal to it; whereas the substantial religion that adequately answers the design, and is animated by the spirit of the gospel, possesses the souls of them that own it, with a secure confidence, that it can live in any times, and hold their souls in life also. Hence they go on their way with a free unsolicitous cheerfulness, enjoying silently in their own bosoms, that repose and rest which naturally results from a sound and well-composed temper of spirit. They know

their happiness depends upon nothing without them.\* That they hold it by a better tenure than that of the world's courtesy. They can be quiet in the midst of storms, and abound in the want of all things. They can in patience possess their own souls, and in them a vital spring of true pleasure, when they are driven out of all other possessions. They know the living sense of these words, That the good man is satisfied from himself: that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace: that nothing can harm them that are followers of the good: that the way to see good days, is to keep their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking guile, to depart from evil and do good, to seek peace and pursue it. They cannot live in bad times; they carry that about them that will make the worst days good to them. Surely they can never be happy in the best times, that cannot be so in any. Outward prosperity is quite besides the purpose to a distempered soul; when nothing else troubles, it will torment itself. Besides, we cannot command at pleasure the benign aspects of the world, the smiles of the times; we may wait a life's-time, and still find the same adverse posture of things towards us from without. What dotage is it to place our blessedness in something to us impossible, that lies wholly out of our power; and in order whereto we have nothing to do, but sit down and wish; and either faintly hope, or ragingly despair? We cannot change times and seasons, nor alter the course of the world, create new heavens and new earth. Would we not think ourselves mocked, if God should command us these things in order to our being happy? It is not our business, these are not the affairs of our own province (blessed be God it is not so large) further than as our bettering ourselves may conduce thereto; and this is that which we may do and ought: it is our proper work, in obedience and subordination to God as his instruments, to govern and cultivate our own spirits, to intend the affairs of that his kingdom in us (where we are his authorized viceroys,) that consist in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We can be benign to ourselves, if the world be not so to us; cherish and adorn our inward man; that though the outward man be exposed daily to perish (which we cannot help, and therefore it concerns us not to take thought about it,) the inward man may be renewed day by day. We can take care that our souls may prosper, that through our ositant neglect they be not left to languish and pine away in their own iniquities. They may be daily fed with the heavenly hidden manna, and with the fruits of

\* *Ἰδιώτης εἰς αἰς καὶ χαρακτῆρ, ὅς οὐ ποτε ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ προσδοκᾷ ὠφέλειαν ἢ βλάβην, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξω. Φιλοσόφος εἰς αἰς καὶ χαρακτῆρ, πᾶσαν ὠφέλειαν καὶ βλάβην ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ προσδοκᾷ.* It is the condition and character of a common man to expect happiness or injury, not from himself, but from things external, it is that of a philosopher to expect all happiness from himself.

the paradise of God ; they may enjoy at home a continual feast, and with a holy freedom luxuriate in divine pleasures, the joys wherewith the strangers intermeddle not, if we be not unpropitious and unkind to ourselves.

And would we know wherein that sound and happy complexion of spirit lies, that hath so much of heaven in it : It is a present gradual participation of the divine likeness. It consists in being conformed to God ; it is, as the moralists tell us, *Denique ut breviter tibi formulam scribam ; talis animus sapientis viri esse debet qualis Deum deceat.* (Sen. epist.) *If one would give a short compendious model of it, such a temper of mind as becomes God ;* or to give an account of it, in his own words, who prescribes it, and who is himself the highest pattern of this blessed frame. It is to be transformed in the renewing of our minds so as to be able to prove what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God ; (Rom. 12. 2.) that is, experimentally to find it in ourselves, impressed and wrought into our own spirits, so as to have the complacential relish and savour of its goodness, excellency and pleasantness diffused through our souls. Where remember, this was written to such as were supposed saints ; whence it must be understood, of a continued progressive transformation, a renewing of the inward man day by day, (as is the apostle's expression elsewhere.) It is a more perfect reception of the impress of God, revealing himself in the gospel ; the growth and tendency of the new creature, begotten unto the eternal blessedness, towards its mature and most perfect state and stature in the fruition thereof.

And it is this I am now pressing ; inasmuch as some account hath been already given (according as we can now imperfectly guess at it, and spell it out) what the constitution of the holy soul is, in its glorified state, when it perfectly partakes the divine likeness ; that when we find in ourselves any principles, and first elements of that blessed frame, we would endeavor the gradual improvement thereof, and be making towards that perfection. This therefore being our present work, let it be remembered wherein this participated likeness of God hath been said to consist ; and labor now the nearest approach to that pitch and state. Your measures must be taken from what is most perfect, come now as near it as you can, and as that pagan's advice is ; " If yet thou art not Socrates, however live as one that would fain be Socrates." Epictet. Though yet thou art not perfect, live as one that aims at it, and would be so. Only it must be considered, that the conformity to God, of our present state, is in extent, larger and more comprehensive than that of our future ; though it be unspeakably less perfect in degree. For there is no moral excellency (that we have any present knowledge of) belonging to our glorified state, which is not in some degree, necessarily to be found in saints on earth. But there

are some things which the exigency of our present state makes necessary to us here, which will not be so in the state of glory; repentance, faith, as it respects the mediator, in order to our future happiness; patience of injuries, pity to the distressed, &c. These things, and whatsoever else, whose objects cease, must be understood to cease with them. In short, *here* is requisite all that moral good which concerns both our end and way; *there*, what concerns our end only.

Yet is the whole compass of that gracious frame of spirit, requisite in this our present state, all comprehended in conformity to God. Partly, inasmuch as some of these graces, which will cease hereafter, in their exercise, as not having objects to draw them forth into act, have their pattern in some communicable attributes of God, which will cease also, as to their denomination and exercise; their objects then ceasing too, as his patience towards sinners, his mercy to the miserable. Partly inasmuch as other of those graces now required in us, though they correspond to nothing in God that is capable of the same name, as faith in a Saviour, repentance of sin (which can have no place in God) they yet answer to something in his nature, that goes under other names; and is the reason whereof he requires such things in us. He hath in his nature that faithfulness and all sufficient fulness, that challenges our faith; and that hatred of sin, which challenges our repentance for it, having been guilty of it. His very nature obliges him to require those things from us, the state of our case being considered. So that the sum even of our present duty lies in receiving this entire impression of the divine likeness, (in some part invariably and eternally necessary to us, in some part necessary with respect to our present state.) And herein is our present blessedness also involved. If therefore we have any design to better our condition in point of blessedness, it must be our business to endeavor after a full participation of that likeness, in all the particulars it comprehends. You can pitch your thoughts upon no part of it, which hath not an evident direct tendency to the repose and rest of your spirits. I shall commend only some few instances, that you may see how little reason and inducement a soul conformed to the holy will of God, hath to seek its comforts and contents elsewhere. Faith corresponds to the truth of God, as it respects divine revelations. How pleasant is it to give up our understandings to the conduct of so safe a guide; to the view of so admirable things as he reveals! It corresponds to his goodness, as it respects its offers. How delectable is it to be filling an empty soul from the divine fulness! What pleasure attends the exercise of this faith towards the person of the Mediator, viewing him in all his glorious excellencies, receiving him in all his gracious communications by this eye and hand. How pleasant is it to exercise it in reference to another world!

living by it in a daily prospect of eternity ; in reference to this world, to live without care in a cheerful dependance on him that hath undertaken to care for us !

Repentance is that by which we become like the holy God : to whom our sin hath made us most unlike before. How sweet are kindly relentings, penitential tears, and the return of the soul to its God, and to a right mind ! And who can conceive the ravishing pleasures of love to God ! wherein we not only imitate, but intimately unite with him, who is love itself. How pleasant to let our souls dissolve here, and flow into the ocean the element of love ! Our fear corresponds to his excellent greatness, and is not (as it is a part of the new creature in us) a tormenting, servile passion, but a due respectfulness and observance of God ; and there is no mean pleasure in that holy awful seriousness unto which it composes and forms our spirits. Our humility, as it respects him, answers his high excellency ; as it respects our own inferiors, his gracious condescension. How pleasant is it to fall before him ! And how connatural and agreeable to a good spirit, to stoop low, upon any occasion to do good ! Sincerity is a most God-like excellency ; an imitation of his truth, as grounded in his all-sufficiency ; which sets him above the necessity or possibility of any advantage by collusion or deceit : and corresponds to his omniscieny and heart-searching eye. It heightens a man's spirit to a holy and generous boldness : makes him apprehend it beneath him to do an unworthy, dishonest action, that should need a palliation, or a concealment.\* And gives him the continual pleasure of self-approbation to God, whom he chiefly studies and desires to please. Patience, a prime glory of the divine majesty, continues a man's possession of his own soul, his liberty, his dominion of himself. He is (if he can suffer nothing) a slave to his vilest and most sordid passions at home, his own base fear, and brutish anger, and effeminate grief, and to any man's lusts and humors besides, that he apprehends can do him hurt. It keeps a man's soul in a peaceful calm, delivers him from (that most unnatural) self-torment, defeats the impotent malice of his most implacable enemy, who fain would vex him, but cannot. Justice, the great attribute of the Judge of all the earth, as such ; so far as the impression of it takes place among men, preserves the common peace of the world, and the private peace of each man in his own bosom, so that the former be not disturbed by doing of mutual injuries, nor the latter by the conscience of having done them. The brotherly love of fellow-christians ; the impression of that special love, which God bears to them all, admits them

\*As that noble Roman whom his architect (about to build him a house) promised to contrive it free from all his neighbors inspection ; he replies, nay, if thou have any art in thee, build my house so that all may see what I do. Vell. Pat. p. 32.

into one another's bosoms, and to all the endearments and pleasures of a mutual communion. Love to enemies, the express image of our heavenly Father; by which we appear his children, begotten of him; overcomes evil by goodness, blunts the double edge of revenge; at least the sharper edge, (which is always towards the author of it,) secures ourselves from wounding impressions and resentment; turns keen anger into gentle pity; and substitutes mild pleasant forgiveness, in the room of the much uneasier thoughts and study of retaliation. Mercifulness toward the distressed, as our Father in heaven is merciful, heaps blessing upon our souls, and evidences our title to what we are to live by, the divine mercy. A universal benignity and propension to do good to all; an imitation of the immense, diffusive goodness of God, is but kindness to ourselves, rewards itself by that greater pleasure there is in giving than in receiving; and associates us with God in the blessedness of this work, as well as in the disposition to it; who exercises loving kindness in the earth, because he delighteth therein.

Here are some of the *μυήματα τῆς Θείας ζωῆς*, or the things wherein consists that our conformity to the divine nature and will, which is proper to our present state. And now, who can estimate the blessedness of such a soul? Can (in a word) the state of that soul be unhappy that is full of the Holy Ghost, full of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, those blessed fruits of that blessed Spirit? Blessedness is connaturalized unto this soul: every thing doth its part, and all conspire to make it happy. This soul is a temple, an habitation of holiness. Here dwells a Deity in his glory. It is a paradise, a garden of God. Here he walks and converses daily, delighted with its fragrant fruitfulness. He that hath those things and aboundeth, is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus: He is the sun, and the knowledge of him, the quickening beams that cherish and ripen these fruits. But the soul that lacketh these things is a desert, a habitation of devils. Here is stupid, disconsolate infidelity, inflexible obstinacy and resolvedness for hell, hatred and contempt of the sovereign majesty; whom yet, its secret misgiving thoughts tell it, will be too hard for it at last. Here is swollen pride and giddy vain-glory, disguised hypocrisy and pining envy, raging wrath and ravenous avarice, with what you can imagine besides, leading to misery and desolation.

You have then some prospect of a happy temper of spirit. It can now be no difficulty to you, to frame an idea of it in your thoughts, to get a notional image (or this likeness in the notion of it) into your minds; but that will avail you little, if you have not the real image also; that is, your spirits really fashioned and formed according thereto: if having the knowledge of these things, (as the pagan moralist's expression, before mentioned, is of virtu-

ous rules and precepts, *Philosophia hæc dividitur in scientiam et habitum animi, unam illam qui didicit et facienda ac vitanda et præcepit nondum sapiens est nisi in ea quæ didicit animus ejus transfiguratus est.*\* Senex Agrippa epist. 94.) they become not habitual to you, and your spirits be not transfigured in them. But now, I treat with such as are supposed to have some such real impressions, that they may be stirred up to endeavor a further perfecting of them. In order whereto, I shall add but this two-fold advice :

[1.] Be very careful that this living image (such you have been formerly told it is) may grow equally in every part. See that the impression of this likeness be entire, that it be not a maimed thing ; if it be, God will never own it as his production. Integrity is the glory of a christian ; to be entire, lacking nothing. This is the soundness of heart that excludes a blushing consciousness and misgiving ; exempts it from the fear of a shameful discovery. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes ; is paraphrased, by having respect to all God's commandments ; (Psal. 119. 6. 80.) to which is opposite, that being partial in the law, spoken of by the prophet (Mal. 2. 9.) by way of complaint concerning the priests of that time. A thing hateful in the eye of God, and as uncomfortable to ourselves, as to be without a leg or an arm. And see that it be preserved entire by a proportional and uniform growth, that fresh life and motion may daily appear in every limb of this heavenly new creature. How odious a deformity is it, when a shew of moral virtues excludes godliness ? And how much more odious (inasmuch as there is more impudent falsehood in it, and more dishonorable reflection upon God) when under a high pretence of godliness, any shall allow themselves in visible immorality ? What to be oppressive, envious, contentious, deceitful, proud, turbulent, wrathful, morose, malicious, fretful, and peevish, and yet a christian ? What serious person, that shall have no fairer representation of Christianity than such do give, would not be ready to say rather, *Sit anima mea cum Philosophis, If this be Christian religion, give me honest paganism ?* A christian that hath received the proper, uniform, entire impress of the gospel of Christ, is the most meek, mild, calm, harmless thing in the world. Never mention so venerable a name, if you will not be jealous of the honor of it. Will you give God occasion to charge you, Wretch, I never had had this dishonor, if thou hadst never been called a christian ; thou art a christian to no purpose, or to very bad ; it does thee no good, and it injures me ? But (which is more directly considerable as to our present purpose) the neglect and consequent decay of any gracious principle, infers a languor, a consump-

\*This kind of philosophy is divided into the science and the habit of the mind, &c. Vide page 132.

tion and enfeeblement of all. Any such perverse disposition doth not affect that part only, is not only an impairment to the contrary gracious principle, but (as a cancer in some exterior part of the body) it gradually creeps up till it invade the vitals. Can the love of God live and grow in an unquiet, angry, uncharitable breast? Consider, Jam. 1. 26. 1 John 3. 17.

[2.] Be constantly intent upon this business of spiritual growth. Mind it as a design, make a solemn purposed business of it, your great daily business. You do not till your ground by chance, as a casual thing; but you do it industriously, and of set purpose. The apostle speaking of his own method of pursuing conformity to Christ, (Phil. 3. 8.) tells us, he did in comparison, count all things else loss and dog's meat; he threw every thing else aside. Then next he recounts with himself, how far short he was; Not as if I had already attained, &c. (ver. 12.) (where by the way he intimates, that to stand still, and give over further endeavors, implies that gross absurdity, as if we thought ourselves to have attained already, to be already perfect; are we not ashamed to seem so conceited of ourselves? and then still as he did attain in his pursuit he forgot what was behind; (ver. 12. 13.) and held on his course with fresh and constant vigor, still reaching forth and pressing onward towards his designed mark.

In this great business we alas! seem to dream. He that hath been observed ten or twenty years ago to be proud, and covetous, or passionate, still remains so, and we apprehend not the incongruity of it. What, always learning, and yet never come to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and putting on the new? Who would meddle with any profession upon such terms, to be always doing and yet to do nothing? Surely it must be imputed to this, we design not, we do not seriously intend the perfecting of holiness, to make a real progress in our way and work, and to get still nearer heaven, as we draw nearer to the end of our days on earth. We too contentedly confine ourselves within certain limits and aim not, as we should at a spiritual excellency. This is the temper of many that have long trodden the path of (at least an external) religion; they will go but their own pace, and that within a self-prescribed round or circle. They perform their stated task of religious exercises, and shun the grosser vices of the time; and resolve never to go higher: much like the character that was once given of a great man, (*Tiberius*,) *Neque enim eminentes virtutes sectabatur, et rursus vitia oderat: that he followed not the more eminent virtues, and yet that he hated vice.* Tacit. Annal. And it is a true censure that a barbarian, (*Thespesion*, Philostro. in vit. Apollon. Tyan.) is said to have given of that middle temper, that dull indifferency: Πᾶν γὰρ ὃ τιμῆς τε, καὶ τιμωρίας ἴσον ἀπέστηκεν, ἔπιω ἀπέστη: *what is equally distant from being the matter*



*either of praise or punishment, is upon no terms to be accounted a virtue.* At least, we drive not on a design of growth and self-improvement in our spiritual states with that constancy we ought; we are off and on; our spirits are not steadily intent; we are unstable as water, how can we excel? (Gen. 49. 4.) God hath not put us, sure, upon so fruitless a task, wherein our utmost labor and diligence shall profit nothing. Therefore strive more vigorously, and pray with more earnest importunity. Consider and plead it with God, that he hath set before thee the hope of such a state, wherein thou art to be perfectly like him; and shalt thou (that must hereafter be like God) be now like a clod of earth? Thou art now a child begotten of him; and though thou art yet in the minority, yet may not somewhat be spared out of so fair an estate, hereafter designed for thee, as that thou mayst now live worthy of such a Father, and suitable to thy expected inheritance.

(3.) And now, a contented, satisfied temper of spirit, as I have told you, results from the other two; and will therefore follow of course upon growing knowledge of God, and conformity to him, as the latter of these also doth upon the former. Yea, it is a part of our conformity to God; but a part consequent to the impression of the things mentioned under the former head, as knowledge also is a part previous and antecedent thereto. It is in a state of glory, we see, something superadded. The likeness impressed is pre-supposed; satisfaction follows thereupon. The case is so too in our present state; contentment is spoken of as a thing consequent and superadded; Godliness with contentment. A satisfied contented spirit, when it is the result of Godliness, (of the divine image impressed,) is indeed great gain. Yet as to this I shall only say these two things.

[1.] Be distinct and explicit in the proposal of it as an end. Religion doth not brutify men, but make them more rational. Its business is to guide them to blessedness. It must therefore pitch their eyes upon it, as the mark and end they are to aim at, and hold them intent there. It is ingenious, and honorable to God, that we should expressly avow it. We come to him for satisfaction to our spirits, not knowing whither else to apply ourselves. We turn our eyes upon him, we lay open our souls to receive impressions from him, for this very end. This is an explicit acknowledgment of him as God, our highest sovereign good.

[2.] Actually apply and accommodate divine visions and communications to this purpose. Say, "O my soul, now come solace thyself in this appearance of God; come, take thy allowed pleasure in such exertions of God, as thou dost now experience in thyself." Recount thy happiness; think how great it is, how rich thou art; on purpose that thy spirit may grow more daily into a satisfied, contented frame. Often bethink thyself,

What is the great God doing for me, that he thus reveals and imparts himself to my soul! O how great things do those present pledges pre-signify to me! that thou mayst still more and more like thy portion, and account it fallen in pleasant places, so as never to seek satisfaction in things of another kind; though thou must still continue expecting and desiring more of the same kind. And remember to this purpose, there cannot be a greater participation of the misery of hell before-hand, than a discontented spirit perpetually restless and weary of itself; nor of the blessedness of heaven, than in a well-pleased, satisfied, contented frame of spirit.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Rule 5. Directing to raise our desires above the actual or possible attainments of this our present, and terminate them upon the future consummate state of blessedness. The rule explained and expressed by sundry considerations. Rule 6. That we add to a desirous pursuit, a joyful expectation of this blessedness: which is pursued by certain subordinate directions.

5. That notwithstanding all our present or possible attainments in this imperfect state on earth, we direct fervent vigorous desires towards the perfect and consummate state of glory itself; not designing to ourselves a plenary satisfaction and rest in any thing on this side of it. That is, that forgetting what is behind, we reach forth not only to what is immediately before us, the next step to be taken; but that our eye and desire aim forward at the ultimate period of our race, terminate upon the eternal glory itself; and that not only as a measure, according to which we would some way proportion our present attainments, but as the very mark, which (itself) we would fain hit and reach home to. And that this be not only the habitual bent and tendency of our spirits; but that we keep up such desires, in frequent (and as much as is possible) continual exercise. Yea, and that such actual desires be not only faint and sluggish wishes, but full of lively efficacy and vigor; in some measure proportionable to our last end and highest good; beyond and above which we neither esteem nor expect any other enjoyment. Whatsoever we may possibly attain to here, we should still be far from projecting to ourselves a state of rest on this side consummate glory, but still urge ourselves to a continual ascent; so as to mount above, not only all enjoyment of any other

kind, but all degrees of enjoyment in this kind, that are beneath perfection.

Still it must be remembered, this is not the state of our final rest. The mass of glory is yet in reserve, we are not yet so high as the highest heavens. If we gain but the top of mount Tabor, we are apt to say, It is good to be here, and forget the longer journey yet before us, loth to think of a further advance; when, were our spirits right, how far soever we may suppose ourselves to have attained, it would be matter of continual joy to us to think, high perfections are still attainable; that we are yet capable of greater things, than what we have hitherto compassed; our souls can yet comprehend more. Nature intends what is most perfect in every creature; methinks the divine nature in the new creature, should not design lower, or cease aspiring, till it have attained its ultimate perfection, its culminating point; till grace turn into glory. Let us therefore, christians, bestir ourselves, let us open and turn our eyes upon the eternal glory. Let us view it well, and then demand of our own souls, why are our desires so faint and slothful? why do they so seldom pierce through the intervening distance, and reach home to what they professedly level at; so rarely touch this blessed mark? How can we forbear to be angry with ourselves, that so glorious an end should not more powerfully attract; that our hearts should not more sensibly find themselves drawn; and all the powers of the soul be set on work by the attractive power of that glory? It certainly concerns us, not to sit still under so manifest a distemper. But if the proposal of the object, the discourse (all this while) of this blessed state, do not move us to make some further trials with ourselves, see what urging and reasoning with our souls, what rubbing and chafing our hearts will do. And there is a two-fold trial we may in this kind make upon our spirits:—what the sense of *shame* will work with us; whether our hearts cannot be made sensible to suppose how vile and wretched a temper it is to be undesirous of glory. And then what sense of *praise* can effect; or what impression it may make upon us to consider the excellency and worth, the high reasonableness of that temper and posture of soul which I am now persuading to, a continual desirousness of that blessed, glorious state.

(1.) As to the former. Let us bethink ourselves, Can we answer it to God or to our own souls, that we should indulge ourselves in a continual negligence of our eternal blessedness? a blessedness consisting in the vision and participation of the divine glory? Have we been dreaming all this while, that God, hath been revealing to us this glorious state, and setting this lovely prospect before our eyes? Did it become us, not to open our eyes while he was opening heaven to us, and representing the state which he designed to bring us to? or will we say, We

have seen it and yet desire it not? Have we been deaf and dead while he hath been calling us into eternal glory; have all our senses been bound up all this while? Hath he been speaking all along to senseless statues, to stocks and stones, while he expected reasonable, living souls should have received the voice, and have returned an obedient, complying answer? And what answer could be expected to such a call (a call to his glory) below this, We desire it Lord, we could fain be there. And if we say we have not been all this while asleep, we saw the light that shone upon us, we heard the voice that called to us; wherewith shall we then excuse ourselves, that our desires were not moved, that our souls were not presently in a flame? Was it then, that we thought all a mere fiction; that we durst not give credit to his word, when it brought us the report of the everlasting glory? Will we avow this? Is this, that we will stand by? Or what else have we left to say? Have we a more plausible reason to allege, that the discovery of such a glory moved us not to desire it, than that we believed it not? Sure this is the truth of our case. We should feel this heavenly fire always burning in our breasts, if our infidelity did not quench the coal. If we did believe, we could not but desire. But do not the thoughts of this shake our very souls, and fill us with horror and trembling? We that should be turned into indignation, and ready to burn ourselves with our own flame, and all about us, if one should give us the lie; that we should dare to put the lie upon the *eternal truth*: upon him whose word gave stability and being to the world, who made and sustains all things by it! That awful word! That word that shivers rocks, and melts down mountains, that makes the animate creation tremble, that can in a moment blast all things, and dissolve the frame of heaven and earth, (which in the mean time it upholds :) is that become with us fabulous, lying breath! Those God-breathed oracles, those heavenly records, which discover and describe this blessed state, are they false and foolish legends? Must that be pretended at last (if men durst) that is so totally void of all pretences? What should be the gain or advantage accruing to that eternal, all-sufficient Being? What accession should be made to that infinite self-fulness by deluding a worm? Were it consistent with his nature; what could be his design to put a cheat upon poor mortal dust? If thou dare not impute it to him; such a deception had a beginning, but what author canst thou imagine of it, or what end? Did it proceed from a good man or bad? Could a good and honest man form so horribly wicked a design, to impose a universal delusion, and lie upon a world, in the name of the true and holy God? Or could a wicked mind frame a design so directly levelled against wickedness! Or is there any thing so aptly and naturally tending to form the world to sobriety, holiness, purity of conversation, as the discovery of this future state of glory? And since the belief

of future felicity is known to obtain universally among men, who could be the author of so common a deception? If thou hadst the mind to impose a lie upon all the world, what course wouldst thou take? How wouldst thou lay the design? Or why dost thou in this case imagine what thou knowest not how to imagine? And dost thou not without scruple believe many things of which thou never hadst so unquestionable evidence? Or must that faith, which is the foundation of thy religion and eternal hopes, be the most suspected, shaking thing with thee; and have, of all other, the least stability and rootedness in thy soul? If thou canst not excuse thy infidelity, be ashamed of thy so cold and sluggish desires of this glorious state.

And doth it not argue a low, sordid spirit, not to desire and aim at the perfection thou art capable of; not to desire that blessedness which alone is suitable and satisfying to a reasonable and spiritual being? Bethink thyself a little; How low art thou sunk into the dirt of the earth? how art thou plunged into the miry ditch, that even thine own clothes might abhor thee? Is the Father of spirits thy father? is the world of spirits thy country? hast thou any relation to that heavenly progeny? art thou allied to that blessed family; and yet undesirous of the same blessedness? Canst thou savour nothing but what smells of the earth? Is nothing grateful to thy soul, but what is corrupted by so vicious and impure a tincture? Are all thy delights centred in a dunghill; and the polluted pleasures of a filthy world better to thee than the eternal visions and enjoyments of heaven? What art thou all made of earth? Is thy soul stupified into a clod? Hast thou no sense with thee of any thing better and more excellent? Canst thou look upon no glorious thing with a pleased eye? Are things only desirable and lovely to thee, as they are deformed? O consider the corrupted, distempered state of thy spirit, and how vile a disposition it hath contracted to itself! Thine, looks too like the *mundane* spirit; the spirit of the world. The apostle speaks of it *διαισθητικῶς*, *by way of distinction*; εἰδωμέν. I Cor. 2 12. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is from God, that we might know, or see (and no doubt it is desire that animates that eye; it is not bare speculative intuition and no more) the things freely given us of God. Surely he whose desire doth not guide his eye to the beholding of those things, hath received the spirit of the world only. A spirit that conforms him to this world, makes him think only thoughts of this world, and drive the designs of this world, and speak the language of this world. A spirit that connaturalizes him to the world, makes him of a temper suitable to it: he breathes only worldly breath, carries a worldly aspect, is of a worldly conversation. O poor low spirit, that such a world should withhold thee from the desire and pursuit of such glory! Art thou not ashamed to think what thy desires are wont to pitch

upon, while they decline and waive this blessedness? Methinks thy very shame should compel thee to quit the name of a saint or a man: to forbear numbering thyself with any that pretend to immortality, and go seek pasture among the beasts of the field, with them that live that low, animal life that thou dost, and expect no other.

And when thou so fallest in with the world, how highly dost thou gratify the pretending and usurping god of it? The great fomentor of the sensual, worldly genius: the spirit itself that works in the children of disobedience, (Eph. 2. 2. 3.) and makes them follow the course of the world, holds them fast bound in worldly lusts, and leads them captive at his will; causes them (after his own serpentine manner) to creep and crawl in the dust of the earth. He is most intimate to this apostate world; informs it (as it were) and actuates it in every part; is even one great soul to it. The whole world lies in that wicked one, (1 John. 5. 19.) as the body, by the best philosophers, is said to be in the soul. The world is said to be convicted when he is judged. John 16. 8—12. He having fallen from a state of blessedness in God, hath involved the world with himself in the same apostacy and condemnation; and labors to keep them fast in the bands of death. The great Redeemer of souls makes this his business, to loose and dissolve the work of the devil. 1 John 3. 8. With that wicked one thou compliest against thy own soul and the Redeemer of it, while thou neglectest to desire and pursue this blessedness. This is thy debasement, and his triumph; thy vile succumbency gives him the day and his will upon thee. He desires no more than that he may suppress in thee all heavenly desires, and keep thee thus a slave and a prisoner (confined in thy spirit to this low, dark dungeon) by thy own consent. While thou remainest without desire after heaven, he is secure of thee, as knowing then thou wilt take no other way, but what will bring thee unto the same eternal state with himself in the end. He is jealous over thee, that thou direct not a desire, nor glance an eye heaven-ward. While thou dost not so, thou art entirely subject, and givest as full obedience to him, as thy God requires to himself in order to thy blessedness. But is it a thing tolerable to thy thoughts, that thou shouldst yield that heart-obedience to the devil against God? And this being the state of thy case, what more significant expression canst thou make of the contempt of divine goodness? O the love that thou neglectest, while the most glorious issue and product of it is with thee an undesired thing! Yea, this the thing itself speaks, were there no such competition. What, that when eternal love hath conceived, and is travailing to bring forth such a birth; that when it invites thee to an expectation of such glory shortly to be revealed, the result of so deep counsels and wonderful works, this should be the return

from thee, I desire it not! Is this thy gratitude to the Father of glory, the requital of the kindness, yea, and of the blood of thy Redeemer? If this blessedness were not desirable for itself, methinks the offerer's hand should be a sufficient endearment. But thou canst not so divide or abstract, it consists in beholding and bearing his glorious likeness who invites thee to it; and therefore in the neglect of it thou most highly affrontest him.

Yea further, is it not a monstrous unnaturalness towards thyself, as well as impiety towards God, not to desire that perfect, final blessedness? Doth not every thing naturally tend to its ultimate perfection and proper end? What creature would not witness against thee, if thou neglect, in thine own capacity and kind, to aim at thine? Surely thou canst not allow thyself to think any thing beneath *this*, worthy to be owned by thee, under that notion, of thy highest good and thy last end. But that thy spirit should labor under an aversion towards thy highest good, towards thy blessedness itself, is not that a dismal token upon thee? If thou didst disaffect and nauseate the things in which thy present life is bound up, and without which thou canst not live, wouldst thou not think thy case deplorable? What dost thou think will become of thy soul, whose everlasting life is bound up in that very good which thou desirest not; which cannot live that life without that good, nor with it, if thou hast no desire to it? O the eternal resentments thy soul will have of this cruelty! to be withheld from that wherein its life lies! Wouldst thou not judge him unnatural that should kill his brother, assassinate his father, starve his child? What shall be said of him that destroys himself? How may that soul lament that ever it was thine; and say, O that I had rather been of any such lower kind, to have animated a fly, to have inspirited a vile worm, rather than to have served a reasonable beast, that by me knew the good it would never follow, and did not desire! But if thou hast any such desires, in a low degree, after this blessedness, as thou thinkest may entitle thee to the name thou bearest, of a saint, a christian; is it not still very unnatural to pursue a good, approved by thy stated judgment as best in itself, and for thee, with so unproportionable, so slothful desires? For the same reason thou dost desire it at all, thou shouldst desire it much; yea, and still more and more, till thou attain it, and be swallowed up into it. Thy best and last good thou canst never desire too much. And let it be considered by thee, that the temper thou thinkest thyself innocent of, an habitual prevalent disaffection to the true blessedness of saints, may for ought thou knowest be upon thee; while it appears thou art so very near the borders of it; and it appears not with such certainty that thou partakest not in it. It is not so easy a matter, critically to distinguish and conclude of the lowest degree (in *hypothesi*, or with application to thy own case) of that de-

sire which is necessary to qualify thee for the enjoyment of this blessedness. And is it not a matter both of shame and terror, that thou shouldst desire thy blessedness so faintly, as not to know whether thou truly desire it at all? It is true, that a certainty, amongst such as may be sincere, is very little common; but whenee proceeds it, but from their too common, indulged sloth; out of which all this is designed to awaken thee. And the commonness whereof doth as little detract from the reproach and sinfulness, as from the danger of it. It is but a poor defence, for what is intrinsically evil in itself, that it is common.

But further, as the case is, this is so reproachful a thing, even in common estimate,—not to desire heaven and eternal glory, or to desire it with very cold and careless desires—that there are few will profess it, or own it to be their temper; much fewer that will undertake to excuse or justify it. It is so evilly thought of, that among merely sober and rational men, it can never find an advocate, or any that will afford it patronage. The generality pretend a desire of going to heaven and being with God. If any be so observant of themselves as to know, and so ingenuous as to confess it otherwise with them, they complain of it as their fault, and say, they would fain have it redressed but are far from assuming that confidence, to defend or plead for it. Consider then, wilt thou persist in such a temper and disposition of mind as all men condemn; and be guilty of so odious a thing, as shall be censured and blamed by the common concurrent vote and judgment of mankind; Thou wouldst be ashamed to stand forth and profess openly to men, that thou desirest an earthly felicity more than a blessedness in heaven; or at least, that thou art so indifferent, and the scales hang so even with thee, that thou canst hardly tell which way they incline most. And art thou not ashamed that this should be thy usual temper; how much soever thou conceal it from the notice and observation of the world? Moreover, how can it escape thy serious reflection, that if thou pretend it otherwise with thee, it is but to add one sin to another, and cover thy carnality with hypocrisy and dissimulation? Yea, while thou continuest in that temper of spirit, not to desire this blessedness as thy supreme end, the whole of thy religion is but an empty shew, an artificial disguise: it carries an appearance and pretence, as if thou wast aiming at God and glory, while thy heart is set another way, and the bent of thy soul secretly carries thee a counter-course. Hath not religion an aspect towards blessedness? What mean thy praying, thy hearing, thy sacramental communion, if thou have not a design for eternal glory? What maketh thou in this way, if thou have not thy heart set towards this end?

Nor is it more dishonest and unjust, than it is foolish and absurd, that the disposition and tendency of thy soul should be di-



rectly contrary to the only design of the religion thou professest and dost externally practice. Thy profession and desires are nothing but self-contradiction. Thou art continually running counter to thyself; outwardly pursuing what thou inwardly declinest. Thy real end (which can be no other than what thou really desirest and settest thy heart upon) and thy visible way are quite contrary: so that while thou continuest the course of religion, in which thou art engaged, having taken down from before thine eyes the end which thou shouldst be aiming at, and which alone religion can aptly subserve, thy religion hath no design or end at all, none at least which thou wouldst not be ashamed to profess and own. Indeed this temper of heart I am now pleading against, an undesirousness or indifferency of spirit towards the eternal glory, renders religion the vainest thing in the world. For whereas all the other actions of our lives have their stated, proper ends, religion hath in this case none at all; none to which it hath any designation in this nature, or any aptness to subserve. This monstrous absurdity it infers, and how strange it is, that it should not be reflected on? That whereas if you ask any man of common understanding, what he doth this or that action for, especially if they be stated actions, done by him in an ordinary course, he can readily tell you, for such and such an end: but ask him why he continues any practice of religion, he cannot say (in this case) for what. For can any man imagine what other end religion naturally serves for, but to bring men to blessedness? Which being no other thing than what hath been here described; such as are found not to desire it really and supremely, as their end, can have no real attainable end of their being religious at all. To drive on a continued course and series of actions in a visible pursuit of that which they desire not, and have no mind to, is such a piece of folly, so fond and vain a trifling, that as I remember, Cicero reports Cato to have said concerning the sooth-sayers of his time, he did wonder they could look in one another's faces and not laugh, (being conscious to each other's impostures, and the vanity of their profession;) so one would as justly wonder, that the generality of carnal men, (who may shrewdly guess at the temper of one another's minds) do not laugh at each other, that they are jointly engaged in such exercise of religion, to the design whereof the common and agreed temper of their spirits do so little correspond. As if all were in very good earnest for heaven, when each one knows for himself, and may (possibly with more truth than charity) suppose of the rest, that if they might always continue in their earthly station, they had rather never come there; and therefore that they desire it not supremely, and so not as their end at all. Consider it then, that thy no-desire of this blessed state quite dispirits thy religion, utterly ravishes away its soul, leaves it a dead, foolish, vain thing, renders it an idle

impertinency, not a mean to a valuable end. This desire is the life of religion; all duties and exercises of piety are without it, but empty formalities, solemn pieces of pageantry; every service done to God, but the sacrifice of a fool, if not animated by the desire of final blessedness in him, and be not part of our way thither, a means designed to the attainment of it; which nothing can be, that we are not put upon by the virtue of the desired end. Without this, religion is not itself. A continuance in well-doing, is as it were the body of it; and therein a seeking honor, glory, and immortality, the soul and spirit. The desire of a heavenly country must run the whole course of our earthly pilgrimage: it were otherwise a continued error, an uncertain wandering, no steady tending towards our end: so that thou art a mere vagrant, if this desire do not direct thy course towards thy Father's house. And methinks all this should make thee even ashamed of thyself, if thou canst not find this desire to have a settled residence, and a ruling power in thy soul. Then,

(2.) Sense of praise should signify something too, as the apostle, whatsoever things are—pure, lovely, &c. If there be any virtue,—any praise, think of these things. And hath not the eternal glory those characters upon it of purity and loveliness beyond all things? Is it not a laudable and praise-worthy thing, to have a mind and heart set upon that? The blessed God puts a note of excellency upon this temper of spirit: but they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, &c. Heb. 11. 16. This renders them a people worthy of him who hath called them to his kingdom and glory; fit for him to own a relation to. 1 Thes. 2. 12. Had they been of low, terrene spirits, he would have accounted it a shame to him, to have gone under the name and cognizance of their God. But inasmuch as they desire the heavenly country, have learned to trample this terrestrial world, cannot be contained within this lower sphere, not satisfy themselves in earthly things; they now discover a certain excellency of spirit, in respect whereof, God is not ashamed to own a relation to them, before all the world to be called their God; to let men see what account he makes of such a spirit. Yea, this is the proper, genuine spirit and temper of a saint, which agrees to him as he is such. He is begotten to the eternal inheritance. A disposition (and therein a desire) to it is in his very nature, (the new nature he hath received,) implanted there from his original: He is born spirit of Spirit, and by that birth is not entitled only, but adapted and suited also to that pure and spiritual state of blessedness. That grace, by the appearance whereof men are made christians, teachers also, instructs to this very thing, to look for this blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: that which you know consummates that blessedness. For when Christ, who is their

life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory ; by the participation of the divine nature, their spirits escape and get up above this corrupt, impure world. That new nature is a holy flame that carries their hearts upwards towards heaven.

Further, such desires appear hence to be of divine original, an infusion from the blessed God himself. That nature is from him immediately in which they are implanted. The apostle speaking of his earnest, panting desire, to have mortality swallowed up of life, presently adds, he that wrought us to the self-same thing is God. 2 Cor. 5. 4. They are obedient desires ; the soul's present answer to the heavenly call, (Heb. 3. 1.) by which God calls it to his kingdom and glory. This glory is (as hath been formerly noted) the very term of that calling. 1 Thes. 2. 12. The God of all grace hath called us unto his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus. 1 Pet. 5. 10. The glorified state is the mark, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. Phil. 3. 14. It is the matter of the apostle's thanksgiving unto God, on the behalf of the Thessalonians, that they were called by his gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thes. 2. 14. When the soul desires this glory, it obediently answers this call. This is a compliance and subjection of heart to it. How lovely and becoming a thing is this, when God touches the heart with a stamp and impress of glory, and it forthwith turns itself to that very point, and stands directly bent towards the state of glory ; is not wayward or perverse, but herein yields itself to God, and complies with the divine pleasure. Such desires have much in them of a child-like ingenuity ; to desire the sight of a father's face ; when this is the intimate sense of the soul, Shew me the Father and it suffices. To desire the fullest conformity to his nature and will, to be perfect as that heavenly Father is perfect, what doth better become a child ? They are generous desires ; they aim at perfection, the highest that created nature is capable of ; not contented to have had some glances of divine glory, some strokes and lines of his image, but aspiring to full-eyed visions, a perfect likeness. They are victorious desires ; they (as it were) ride in triumph over the world and every sublunary thing ; they must be supposed to have conquered sensual inclinations, to have got the mastery over terrene dispositions and affections. With what holy contempt and scorn of every earthly thing doth that lofty soul quit this dirty world and ascend, that is powerfully carried by its own desire towards that blessed state ? The desire of such a knowledge of Christ, as might transform into his likeness, and pass the soul through all degrees of conformity to him, till it attain the resurrection of the dead, and become like a risen, glorified Jesus ; such a desire I say, if it make all things seem as loss and dung in comparison, (even a formal, spiritless religion itself,) will it not render this world the most despicable

dunghill of all the rest? Try such a soul if you can, tempt it down to enjoy a flattering, kind world, or to please it when angry and unkind. When desires after this glory are once awakened into an active, lively vigor, when the fire is kindled, and the flame ascends, and this refined spirit is joyfully ascending therein; see if you can draw it back, and make it believe this world a more regardable thing. Why should not all those considerations make thee in love with this blessed frame of spirit, and restless till thou find thyself incapable of being satisfied with any thing but divine likenes?

6. That while we cannot as yet attain the mark and end of our desires, we yield not to a comfortless despondency in the way, but maintain in our hearts a lively joy, in the hope that hereafter we shall attain it. We are not all this while persuading to the desire and pursuit of an unattainable good. Spiritual desires are also rational, and do therefore involve hope with them; and that hope ought to infer and cherish joy. Hopeless desire is full of torment, and must needs banish joy from that breast which it hath got the possession of. It is a disconsolate thing, to desire what we must never expect to enjoy, and are utterly unlikely ever to compass. But these desires are part of the new creature, which is not of such a composition, as to have a principle of endless trouble and disquiet in itself. The Father of mercies is not so little merciful to his own child, to lay it under a necessity, from its very natural constitution, of being for ever miserable by the desire of that which it can never have. It had been very unlike the workmanship of God, to make a creature to which it should be necessary to desire, and impossible to enjoy the same thing. No: but as he hath given holy souls, (as to the present case,) great incentives of desire, so doth he afford them proportionable encouragement of hope also; and that hope intervening, can very well reconcile desire and joy, and lodge them together in the same bosom. So that as it is a thing capable of no excuse, to hear of this blessedness and not desire it; so it would be, to desire and not expect it, to expect it, and not rejoice in it, even while we are under that expectation. And it must be a very raised joy that shall answer to the expectation of so great things. If one should give a stranger to Christianity an account of the christian hopes, and tell him what they expect to be and enjoy, before long; he would sure promise himself, to find so many angels dwelling in human flesh, and reckon, when he came among them he should be as amidst the heavenly quire; every one full of joy and praise. He would expect to find us living on earth, as the inhabitants of heaven, as so many pieces of immortal glory lately dropped down from above, and shortly again returning thither. He would look to find, every-where in the Christian world, incarnate glory sparkling through the overshadowing veil; and wonder how this earthly sphere should be

able to contain so many great souls. But when he draws nearer to us, and observes the course and carriage of our lives, when he sees us walk as other men, and considers the strange disagreement of our daily conversation to our so great, avowed hopes, and how little sense of joy and pleasure we discover ourselves to conceive in them; would he not be ready to say, "Sure some or other (willing only to amuse the world with the noise of strange things) have composed a religion for these men, which they themselves understand nothing of. If they do adopt and own it for theirs, they understand not their own pretences; they are taught to speak some big words, or to give a faint or seeming assent to such as speak them in their names, but it is impossible they should be in good earnest, or believe themselves in what they say and profess." And what reply then should we be able to make? For who can think that any who acknowledge a God, and understand at all what that name imports, should value at so low a rate, as we visibly do, the eternal fruition of his glory, and a present sonship to him, the pledge of so great a hope. He that is born heir to great honors and possessions, though he be upon great uncertainties as to the enjoyment of them, (for how many interveniences may prevent him?) yet when he comes to understand his possibilities and expectancies, how big doth he look and speak? what grandeur doth he put on? His hopes form his spirit and deportment. But is it proportionably so with us? Do our hopes fill our hearts with joy, our mouths with praise, and clothe our faces with a cheerful aspect, and make a holy alacrity appear in all our conversations?

But let not the design of this discourse be mistaken. It is not a presumptuous confidence I would encourage, nor a vain ostentation, nor a disdainful over-looking of others whom we fancy ourselves to excel. Such things hold no proportion with a Christian spirit. His is a modest, humble exultation; a serious, severe joy; suitable to his solid, stable hope. His spirit is not puffed up and swollen with air, it is not big by an inflation, or a light and windy tumor, but it is really filled with effectual pre-apprehensions of a weighty glory. His joy accordingly exerts itself with a steady, lively vigor, equally removed from vain lightness and stupidity, from conceitedness, and insensibleness of his blessed state. He forgets not that he is less than the least of God's mercies, but disowns not his title to the greatest of them. He abases himself to the dust, in the sense of his own vileness; but in the admiration of divine grace, he rises as high as heaven. In his humiliation, he affects to equal himself with worms, in his joy and praise, with angels. He is never unwilling to diminish himself, but afraid of detracting any thing from the love of God, or the issues of that love. But most of all he magnifies (as he hath cause) this its last and most perfect issue.

And by how much he apprehends his own unworthiness, he is the more wrapt up into a wonderful joy, that such blessedness should be his designed portion. But now, how little do we find in ourselves of this blessed frame of spirit? How remote are we from it? Let us but inquire a little into our own souls: are there not too apparent symptoms with us of the little joy we take in the fore-thoughts of future blessedness? For,

(1.) How few thoughts have we of it? What any delight in, they remember often. It is said of the same person, that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and that in his law he doth meditate day and night. Psal. 1. 2. And when the Psalmist professes his own delight in God's statutes, he adds, I will not forget thy word. Psal. 119. 16. Should we not be as unapt to forget heaven, if our delight were there? But do not days pass with us, wherein we can allow ourselves no leisure to mind the eternal glory; when yet vanities throng in upon us, without any obstruction or check? And (what is consequent hereupon,) how seldom is this blessed state the subject of our discourse? How often do christians meet, and not a word of heaven? O heavy, carnal hearts! Our home and eternal blessedness in this, appears forgotten among us. How often may a person converse with us, before he understand our relation to the heavenly country? If exiles meet in a foreign land, what pleasant discourse have they of home? They suffer not one another to forget it. Such was their remembrance of Sion, who sat together bemoaning themselves by the rivers of Babylon, a making mention of it, as the phrase is often used. And methinks (even as to this remembrance) it should be our own common resolution too; If we forget thee, O Jerusalem; if we forgot to make mention of thee, O thou city of the living God; let our right hand forget her cunning; our tongue shall sooner cleave to the roof of our mouth; and so it would be, did we prefer that heavenly Jerusalem above our chief joy.

(2.) How little doth it weigh with us? It serves not to outweigh the smallest trouble; if we have not our carnal desire in every thing gratified, if any thing fall out cross to our inclinations, this glory goes for nothing with us. Our discontents swallow up our hopes and joys; and heaven is reckoned as a thing of nought. If when outward troubles afflict or threaten us, we could have the certain prospect of better days, that would sensibly revive and please us. Yea, can we not please ourselves with very uncertain groundless hopes of this kind, without promise or valuable reason? But to be told of a recompense at the resurrection of the just, of a day when we shall see the face of God, and be satisfied with his likeness; this is insipid and without savour to us, and affords us but cold comfort. The uncertain things of time, signify more with us, than the certain things of eternity. Can we think it is all this while well with

us? Can we think this is a tolerable evil, or suffer with patience such a distemper of spirit? Methinks it should make us even weary of ourselves, and solicitous for an effectual, speedy redress.

The redress must be more in our own doing, (striving with our souls and our God for them) than in what any man can say. Most of the considerations under that foregoing rule, are with little variation applicable to this present purpose. I shall here annex only some few subordinate directions; which may lead us into this blessed state of life, and give us some joyful fore-tastes of the future blessedness, according as our spirits shall comply with them. But expect not to be cured by prescriptions, without using them; or that heavenly joy can be the creature of mortal, unregarded breath; we can only prescribe means and methods through which God may be pleased to descend, and in which thou art diligently to insist and wait. And because I cannot well suppose thee ignorant, where much is said to this purpose; I shall therefore say little.

[1.] Possess thy soul with the apprehension, that thou art not at liberty in this matter? but that there is a certain spiritual delectation, which is incumbent on thee as indispensable duty. Some, whose moroser tempers do more estrange them from delights, think themselves more especially concerned, to banish every thing of that kind from their religion, and fancy it only to consist in sour and righteous severities. Others seem to think it arbitrary and indifferent; or that, if they live in a continual sadness and dejection of spirit, it is only their infelicity, not their fault; and apprehend not the obligation that is upon them by a divine law, otherwise to manage and order their spirits. But what then, Are such words thought to be spoken at random, Her ways are ways of pleasantness. Prov. 3. 17. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. Psal. 16. 5. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, (or, in the midst of pleasantness, as the expression hath been noted to signify?) Do such precepts carry no sense with them; Delight thyself in the Lord. Psal. 37. 4. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice; Phil. 4. 4. with many more? Do all passages of this kind in Scripture stand for cyphers, or were they put in them by chance? Is there such a thing as an aptitude to delectation in our natures; and doth the sanctification thereof entitle the joy of saints to a place among the fruits of the Spirit; (Gal. 5. 22.) and yet is the exercise of it to have no place in their hearts and practice? Do not think you are permitted so to extinguish or frustrate so considerable a principle of the divine life. Know, that the due exercise of it is a part of the order and discipline of God's family: that it is a constitution of the divine goodness and wisdom both to cherish his own, and invite in strangers to him. Yea, that is the scope and aim of the whole gospel reve-

lation, that what is discovered to us of the word of life, was purposely written to draw souls unto fellowship with the Father and Son, that their joy might be full; (1 John 1. 4.) that the ministers of this gospel are therefore styled the helpers of their joy. 2 Cor. 1. 24. Therefore, though here it be not required nor allowed, that you should indulge a vain, trifling levity, or a sensual joy, or that you should rejoice you know not why, (imitating the laughter of a fool,) or inopportunately, when your state admits it not, or when the Lord calls to mourning; yet settle however this persuasion in your hearts, that the serious, rational, regular, seasonable exercise of delight and joy is matter of duty, to be charged upon conscience, from the authority of God; and is an integral part in the religion of christians. And then sure you will not think any object more proper and suitable for it to be exercised upon, than the foreseen state of blessedness, which is in itself a fulness of joy; (Psal. 16. 11.) the joy of our Lord. Mat. 25. 21. And is, in the pre-apprehensions of it, a more considerable matter of joy than our present state affords us beside; and without relation whereto we have no matter of rational joy at all.

[2.] Keep faith in exercise; both in that act of it which persuades the soul of the truth of the gospel revelation, and that act of it which unites it to God through the Mediator. The apostle prays on the behalf of his Roman christians, that they might be filled with joy and peace in believing; (Rom. 15. 13.) and we are told, how effectually (as to this) it supplied the place of sight. Such as had not seen Christ, (which was the privilege of many other christians of that time,) yet believing, did rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious. 1 Pet. 1. 8. Faith directly tends, in that double office before-mentioned, to excite and foment this joy. As it assents to the truth of the gospel revelation, it realizes the object, is the substance and evidence of the invisible glory. Heb. 11. 1. As it unites the soul with God through Christ, in a fiducial and obediencial closure, it ascertains our interest therein, and is our actual acceptance of our blessedness itself; for when we take God through Christ to be our God, what is it, but to accept him as our eternal and satisfying portion, whom we are after fully to enjoy, in the vision and participation of his glorious excellencies and infinite fulness? Which two acts of faith we have mentioned together in one text,—they were persuaded of the promises, and embrace them; the former respecting the truth of the promises, the latter the goodness of the thing promised. And hereupon they confessed themselves (as it follows) pilgrims and strangers on earth; which abdication of the earth as none of their country, could not be, but that through their faith they had a joyous pre-apprehension of that better state. That confession did manifestly involve in it a lively joy, springing from the sight and embrace of



that more taking, distant good which the promise presented them with; whence they could not think it enough, to be such to themselves in their own thoughts and the temper of their minds; but they cannot forbear (so overcoming were their sights and tastes) to give it out, so speak, and look, and live, as those that were carried up in their spirits above this earth, and who did even disdain to own themselves in any other relation to it than that of foreigners and strangers.

Set thy faith on work, soul, and keep it at work, and thou wilt find this no riddle; it will be so with thee too; we have much talk of faith among us, and have the name often in our mouths, but how few are the real lively believers? Is it to be thought that such blessedness should not more affect our hearts; nay would it not ravish away our very souls, did we thoroughly believe it? And were it our present daily work, to renew the bonds of a vital union with the blessed God, in whom we expect to be blessed forever, could that be without previous gusts of pleasure? It is not talking of faith but living by it, that will give us the experience of heavenly delights and joys.

[3.] Take heed of going in thy practice against thy light; of persisting in a course of known or suspected sin, that states thee in a direct hostility and rebellion against heaven; and can never suffer thee to think of eternity and the other world with comfort; will fill thy mind with frightful apprehensions of God, render the sight of his face the most terrible thing to thy thoughts thou canst imagine; and satisfaction with his likeness the most impossible thing. Let a good understading and correspondence, be continued between God and thee, (which is not possible, if thou disobeyest the dictates of thy conscience, and takest the liberty to do what thou judgest God hath forbidden thee) that this may be thy rejoicing; the testimony of a good conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not according to fleshy wisdom, but by the grace of God thou hast had thy conversation. Take God for a witness of thy ways and walkings; approve thyself to his jealous eye; study to carry thyself acceptably towards him, and unto all well pleasing. Let that be thy ambition, to stand right in his thoughts, to appear gracious in his eyes. Hold fast thine integrity, that thy heart may not reproach thee as long as thou livest. If iniquity be in thy hand, put it away; then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot and without fear. Be a faithful subject of that kingdom of God, (and here conscience rules under him,) which consists first in righteousness, and then in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thou wilt, so, daily behold the face of God in righteousness and with pleasure; but wilt most of all please thyself to think of thy final appearance, before him, and the blessedness that shall ensue.

[4.] Watch and arm thyself against the too forcible strokes

and impressions of sensible objects. Let not the savour of such low, vile things corrupt the palate of thy soul. A sensual, earthly mind and heart cannot taste heavenly delights; they that are after the flesh do savour the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Labor, to be thoroughly mortified towards this world and the present state of things. Look upon this scene and pageant as passing away; (1 Cor. 7. 31. 1 John. 2. 17.) keep natural appetites under restraint, (the world and the lusts of it pass away together:) sensuality is an impure thing. Heavenly, refined joy cannot live amidst so much filth. Yea, and if thou give thy flesh liberty too far in things that are (in specie) lawful it will soon get advantage to domineer and keep thy soul in a depressing servitude. Abridge it then, and cut it short, that thy mind may be enlarged and at liberty, may not be thronged and prepossessed with carnal imaginations and affections, "Let thy soul" (if thou wilt take this instruction from a heathen, Max. Tyr. in disser. *τί οί θεοί κατὰ Πλάτωνος on the nature of the gods according to Plato,*) "look with a constant erect mind into the undefiled light, neither darkened nor borne down towards the earth; but stopping its ears, and turning its eyes and all other senses back upon itself; and quite abolishing out of itself, all earthly sighs, and groans, and pleasures and glories and honors and disgrace; and having forsaken all these, choose for the guides of its way, true reason and strong love, the one whereof will shew it the way, the other make it easy and pleasant."

[5.] Having voided thy mind of what is earthly and carnal, apply and turn it to this blessed theme. The most excellent and the vilest objects are alike to thee, while thou mindest them not. Thy thoughts possibly bring thee in nothing but vexation and trouble, which would bring in as soon joy and pleasure, didst thou turn them to proper objects. A thought of the heavenly glory is as soon thought of as an earthly cross. We complain the world troubles us; then what do we there? Why get we not up, in our spirits, into the quieter region? What trouble would the thoughts of future glory be to us? How are thoughts and wits set on work for this flesh? But we would have our souls flourish as the lilies, without any thing of their own care. Yea, we make them toil for torture, and not for joy, revolve an affliction a thousand times before and after it comes, and have never done with it, when eternal blessedness gains not a thought.

[6.] Plead earnestly with God for his Spirit. This is joy in the Holy Ghost; or whereof he is the author. Many christians (as they must be called) are such strangers to this work of imploring and calling in the blessed Spirit, as if they were capable of adopting these words, we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. That name is with them as an empty

sound, How hardly are we convinced of our necessary dependence on that free Spirit, as to all our truly spiritual operations? This Spirit is the very earnest of our inheritance. The foretastes and first fruits we have here of the future blessedness, the joy and pleasure, the complacential relishes we have of it before-hand, are by the gracious vouchsafement and work of this blessed Spirit. The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, are revealed by this Spirit. Therefore doth the apostle direct his prayer on the behalf of the Ephesians, to the Father of this glory that he would give this Spirit of wisdom and revelation,—to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, that they might know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in (or among) the saints. Eph. 1. 18. And its revelation is such as begets an impression; in respect whereof, it is said also, to seal up to the day of redemption. Therefore pray earnestly for this Spirit; not in idle, dreaming words of course, but as being really apprehensive of the necessity of prevailing: and give not over till thou find that sacred fire diffusing itself through thy mind and heart, to enlighten the one and refine the other, and so prepossess both of this glory, that thy soul may be all turned into joy and praise. And then let me add here, (without the formality of a distinct head) that it concerns thee to take heed of quenching that Spirit, by either resisting or neglecting its holy dictates or, as the same precept is otherwise given, of grieving the Spirit: he is by name and office the Comforter. The primitive christians, it is said, walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Is it equal dealing, to grieve him whose business it is to comfort thee? Or canst thou expect joy where thou causest grief? Walk in the Spirit; adore its power. Let thy soul do it homage within thee. Wait for its holy influences, and yield thyself to its ducture and guidance; so wilt thou go as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon thy head till thou enter that presence, where is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

Nor do thou think it improper or strange, that thou shouldst be called upon to rejoice in what thou dost not yet possess. Thy hope is instead of fruition; it is an anticipated enjoyment. We are commanded to rejoice even in the hope; (Rom. 12. 12.) and saints have professed to do so, to rejoice even in the hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5. 2. Nor is it unreasonable that should be thy present highest joy. For though yet it be a distant thing, and indistinctly revealed, the excellency of the object makes compensation for both, with an abundant surplusage. As any one would much more rejoice to be assured by a great person, of ample possessions he would make him his heir to, (though he knew not distinctly what they should be,) than to see a shilling, already his own, with his own eyes.

## CHAPTER XX.

The addition of two rules, that more specially respect the yet future season of this blessedness, after this life; namely, Rule 7. That we patiently wait for it until death. Rule 8. That we love not too much this present life.

There are yet two more rules to be superadded, that respect the season of this blessedness,—when we awake,—that is, not till we go out of time into eternity, not till we pass out of the drowsy darkness of our present state, till the night be over with us, and the vigorous light of the everlasting day do shine upon us. Hence therefore it will be further necessary :

7. That while the appointed proper season of this blessedness is not yet come, (that is, till God shall vouchsafe to translate us from our present earthly state,) we compose our spirits to a patient expectation of it. Upon a twofold account, the exercise of patience is very requisite in the present case, namely, both in respect of this every expectation itself, and also in respect of the concomitant miseries of this expecting state. In the *former* respect, an *absent* good is the matter of our *patience*; in the *latter*, *present* and *incumbent* evil. It falls more directly in our way, to speak to the exercise of *patience* upon the former account; yet as to the latter, (though it be more collateral as our present purpose,) it cannot be unseasonable briefly to consider that also.

(1.) Therefore, The very expectation itself of this blessedness, renders patience very requisite to our present state. Patience hath as proper and necessary an exercise in expecting the good we want and desire, as in enduring the evil that is actually upon us. The direction (it must be remembered) intends such only as apprehend and desire this blessedness as their greatest good, whose souls are transported with earnest longings fully to enjoy what they have foretasted. I am apprehensive enough, that others need it not. There is no use of patience in expecting what we desire not. But as to those who desire it most, and who therefore are most concerned in this advice, it may possibly become a doubt, how since there is sin in our present ignorance of God and unlikeness to him, this can be the matter of any patience. We must therefore know, that as our knowledge of God, and conformity to him, are both our duty and blessedness, the matter both of our endeavor and of God's vouchsafement; so our ignorance of him, and unlikeness to him, are

both our sin and our misery; which, misery though God hath graciously removed it in part, yet also he continues it upon us in part, (as our sad experience tells us,) by his just and wise dispensation, which we cannot except against. Now therefore, looking upon the defect of our knowledge of God and likeness to him, under the former notion, though we are to reflect upon ourselves with great displeasure and indignation; yet looking on them in the latter notion, we are to submit to the righteous dispensation of God with a meek, unrepining patience. By this patience, therefore, I mean not a stupid succumbency under the remaining disease and distemper of our spirits, in this our present state; a senseless indifferency and ositant cessation from continual endeavors of further redress; but a silent and submissive veneration of divine wisdom, and justice, and goodness, that are sweetly complicated in this procedure with us, with a quiet, peaceful expectation of the blessed issue of it. This being premised, I shall briefly shew,—that we have need of patience, and—that we have reason for it in this present case.

[1.] That we have need of it, (supposing our souls are intent upon glory, that we are in earnest in this pursuit) will appear upon sundry accounts.

First, The greatness of the thing we expect. To behold the face of God, to be satisfied with his likeness. What serious heart, apprehensive of its own concerns, can without much patience hold out under such an expectation? How do lovers that expect the marriage day, tell the hours, and chide the sun that it makes no more haste? But how can that soul contain itself, that expects the most intimate fruition of the Lord of glory?

Secondly. Consider the continual representation and frequent inculcations of this glory. Its vigorous, powerful beams are by often repeated pulsations, continually beating upon such souls as are intent towards it. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel; and they are obliged by command and inclination to attend its discoveries. The eye that is once smitten, looks again and again, it is not satisfied with seeing: and every renewed look meets with still fresh rays of glory; they have frequent foretastes and prelibations, which still give life to new desires. To lie under the direct stroke of the powers of the world to come, this requires much patience to sustain the burden of such an expectation. Life itself were otherwise a bitter and a wearisome thing. \*And the want of such foretastes (for alas they

\* *Canerem tibi angelica voce thronorum, quam mirifica semper in patria dulcedine repleamur; nisi vereretur, ne forte, posthac, tantæ dulcedinis hujus comparatione, tota tibi in terris vita non solum amarissima, verum etiam amaritudo ipsa penitus videatur; I would sing to thee in a voice of the angelic choirs; we would ever indulge the most extatic delight in our country; were it not to be feared lest from the contrast of such sweetness, the whole of this life on earth should afterwards seem to thee not only exceedingly bitter, but even bitterness itself. M. Ficin. Epis.*

are not constant) makes desire more restless, and expectation more bitter and grievous.

Thirdly. Consider the nature and spring of these desires, that work in heavenly souls towards this glory. They are of a divine nature and original; He that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God, 2 Cor. 5. 5. Observe the tenor of this proposition; God is not the subject of predication, but the predicate. The action is not predicated of God, as it would in this form of words, God hath wrought us &c. but God is predicated of this agent, as if he had said, this is the work of a Deity; none but God could be the author of such desires. That a soul should be acted towards glory by the alone power of an almighty hand! here needs a divine patience to sustain it, and make it strong and able to endure such a motion, where there is divine power to act and move it forward. The frame could not hold else, it must dissolve. The apostle therefore praying for the Thessalonians, that God would direct their hearts into the love of himself, (which could not but enflame their souls with a desire of a perfect vision and enjoyment,) presently adds, and into the patient waiting for Christ. 2 Thes. 3. 5. Where we cannot by the way but reflect upon the admirable constitution and equal temper of the new creature, as to the principles that are ingredient into the composition of it, fervent desires, allayed with meek submission, mighty love, with strong patience. If we consider it in *actu signato*, or in its *abstract idea*, this is its temperament; and of these there is a gradual participation, wherever you find it actually existing. God had otherwise formed a creature (the prime of his creatures) so as by its most intrinsical constituent principles to be a torment to itself.

Fourthly. The tiresome nature of expectation in itself, is not least considerable. It carries (it is true) pleasure (if it be hoping expectation) with it; but not without a great admixture of pain. It brings a kind of torture to the mind, as a continued exertion or stretching forth of the neck (by which it is expressed) doth to the body. Therefore it is most significantly said by the wise man, Hope deferred makes the heart sick. Prov. 13. 12. All these, I say, together discover the truth of what the apostle tells us, We have need of patience, that when we, &c. we may inherit the promise. Heb. 10. 26.

[2.] And as we have need of it, so we have also reason for it, upon many accounts. It is no piece of rigorous severity to be put upon the exercise of some patience, to be kept awhile in a waiting posture for the completion of this blessedness. For,

First, The thing you expect is sure. You have not to do in this matter with one who is inconstant or likely to change. If such a one should make us large promises, we should have some cause never to think ourselves secure, till we had them made

good to us. But since we live in the hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie (Tit. 1. 2.) and who, we know, is faithful, hath promised, (Heb. 10. 23.) we may be confident, and this confidence should quiet our hearts. What a faithful friend keeps for us, we reckon as safe in his hands as in our own. He that believes, makes not haste. And impatient haste argues an unbelieving jealousy and distrust. Surely, there is an end, and thy expectation will not be cut off.

Secondly. It is a happiness that will recompense the most wearisome expectation. It were good sometimes to consider with ourselves, What is the object of our hope? are our expectations pitched upon a valuable good, that will be worth while to expect? so the Psalmist, What wait I for? and he answers himself; My hope is in thee. Psal. 39. 7. Sure then that hope will not make ashamed. It were a confounding thing to have been a long time full of great hopes that at last dwindle into some petite trifle, but when we know before-hand the business is such as will defray itself, bear its own charges, who would not be contented to wait?

Thirdly. Nor will the time of expectation be long—when I shall awake—when he shall appear. Put it to the longest term, it was said, sixteen hundred years ago, to be but a little while; three times over in the shutting up of the Bible he tells us, I come quickly. He seems to foresee he should be something impatiently expected: and at last, Surely I come quickly, as if he had said, What, will you not believe me? Be patient, saith the apostle, to the coming of the Lord: and presently he adds, be patient, stablish you hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. James 5. 8.

Fourthly. Yea, and amidst the many troubles of that short time of expectation many present comforts are intermixed. Heaven is open to us. We have constant liberty of access to God. He disdains not our present converse. We may have the constant pleasure of the exercise of grace, the heavenly delights of meditation, the joy of the public solemnities of worship, the communion and encouragement of fellow christians, the light of that countenance whereof we expect the eternal vision, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, the continual prospect of glory all the way thither. What cause have we of impatience or complaint?

Fifthly. Saints of all ages have had their expecting time. We are required to be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. Our Saviour himself waited a life's time for his glorification. I have (saith he) glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do! And now, Father, glorify me with thine own self, &c.

Sixthly. And while we are waiting, if it be not our fault, our

glory will be increasing. We may be glorifying God in the mean time, which is the end of our beings; we need not live here to no purpose.

Seventhly. We were well enough content, till God more clearly revealed that other state, to live always as we do. It is not now ingenuous to be impatiently querulous about the time of our entering into it. It is his free vouchsafement; we never merited such a thing at his hands. It is not commendable among men, to be overquick in exacting debts even where there was an antecedent right, much less where the right only shall accrue by promise, not yet sueable; would it not shame us to have God say to us, Have patience with me, and I will pay you all? And our former state should be often reflected on. If you had promised great things to a wretch lately taken off the dunghill, and he is every day impatiently urging you to an untimely accomplishment, would you not check his over-bold haste, by minding him of his original? It becomes not base and lowborn persons to be transported with a preposterous, over-hasty expectation of high and great things. And if God bear with the sinfulness of our present state, is it not reasonable we should bear with the infelicity of it to his appointed time? Besides that, we should much injure ourselves by our impatience; embitter our present condition, increase our own burden, dissipate our strength, retard our progress towards the perfection we profess to aim at; for patience must have its perfect work, that we may be perfect. Jam. 1. 4.

And others, that have had as clear apprehensions and vigorous desires (at least) of the future state of glory as we can, with modesty, pretend to, have yet herein moderated themselves so, as to intend their present work with composed spirits. Take that one instance of the blessed apostle, who, whilst in this earthly tabernacle he groaned, being burdened to be clothed with glory, and to have mortality swallowed up of life, being sensible enough, that during his abode or presence in the body, he was absent from the Lord; yet notwithstanding the fervor and vehemency of these longings, with the greatest calmness and resignation imaginable, as to the termination or continuance of his present state, he adds, that though he had rather be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord, it was yet his chief ambition (as the word *φιλοτιμέμεθα* he uses signifies) whether present or absent (as if in comparison of that, to be present or absent were indifferent, though otherwise out of that comparison, he had told us, he would be absent rather) to be *εὐάρετοι*, accepted, to appear grateful and well-pleasing in the eye of God; such that he might delight and take content in, as his expression imports. As if he had said, though I am not unapprehensive of the state of my case, I know well, I am kept out of a far more desirable condition, while I remain in this tabernacle; yet, may I but please



and appear acceptable in the sight of God, whether I be sooner dismissed from this thralldom, or longer continued in it, I contend not. His burden here, that so sensibly pressed him, was not a present evil so much as an absent good. He was not so burdened by what he felt and could not remove, as by what he saw and could not enjoy. His groans accordingly were not brutal, as those of a beast under a too heavy load; but rational, the groans of an apprehensive spirit panting after an alluring, inviting glory, which he had got the prospect of but could not yet attain. And hence the same spiritual reason which did exercise, did also, at once, moderate his desires; so that, as he saw there was reason to desire, so he saw there was reason his desires should be allayed by a submissive, ingenuous patience, till they might have a due and seasonable accomplishment. And that same temper of mind we find in him, when he professes to be in a strait between two, having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, (Phil. 1. 23.) which he thought to be far better, and yet apprehended his longer abode in the world to be needful for the service of the church; whereupon he expresses his confidence, that he should abide longer, and therein discovers how well contented he was, it should be so. Therefore, as in reference to this very expectation itself, there is great need of patience; so the exercise of it in this case hath nothing harsh or unreasonable in it, or which the spirit of a saint may not well comport with.

(2.) And for the exercise of patience upon the latter account; the concomitant miseries of this our present expecting state: I need not insist to show how needful it is, this being that which our own sense will sufficiently instruct us in. We are not to expect the future state of blessedness in a state of present ease and rest, in a quiet, friendly world, in a calm and peaceful region, under placid and benign influences from men and times; but amidst storms, and tempests, and troubles on every side, under frowns and displeasures, threats and dangers, harsh and rough severities, ill and ungentle usages, flouts and scorns, wrongs and injurious dealings, wants and pressures in many kinds. When the world is once forsaken by us, it grows angry; if we disclaim it, and avow ourselves not to be of it, become confessed strangers and pilgrims in it, set ourselves seriously and visibly to mind and design something above and beyond it, discover ourselves to be of them that are called out of it; from the same principle that it loves its own, it will hate us; when once God calls us his sons, the world will not know us. 1 Joh. 3. 1. We see in this context we are discoursing from, what the Psalmist's condition was, whilst as yet he remained under this blessed expectation; he found the men of time, whose portion was in this life, to be deadly enemies, wicked oppressors, proud insulters; they were to him as greedy lions, as a blood-thirsty sword.

His cries to be delivered from them, shew what he met with at their hands, or thought he had reason to fear. Nor can so raging enmity and hate, ever cease to meditate mischiefs and cruelties. The same principle still remains in all the serpent's brood, and will still be putting forth itself in suitable practices, which cannot but infer to the contrary seed continual trouble and matter of complaint.

And, in short, whatever is here the matter of your complaint, ought to be the matter of your patience. Whence it cannot be doubted the matter of it will be very copious; so as to require the *all* of patience (as the apostle speaks;) which his addressing this solemn request to God on the behalf of these Collossian christians plainly intimates. He prays that they may be strenghtened with all might according to the glorious power of God unto *all* patience, &c. Col. 1. 11. Patience is the christian's suffering power, it is passive fortitude, an ability to suffer; and so apprehensive he is of their great need of a full and ample supply of this power, that he prays that they might be strengthened in this kind with might, with all might; that they might be even almighty sufferers; strengthened with a might according and corresponding to the glorious power of God himself; such as might appear the proper impress and image of divine power, whereof the divine power might be both the principle and the pattern (for the patience whereby God bears the wrongs done to him is called the power too; Let the power of the Lord be great as thou hast spoken, saying, the Lord is long-suffering, forgiving, &c.) And this *unto all patience*, where patience is put for an act of this power, or must be understood of patience in exercise, actual bearing. Nor are we to look upon the expressions of this prayer as so many hyperbolical strains, or rhetorical schemes of speech. He prays according to the apprehension he had of the necessity of suffering christians.

And yet how much soever the need is, the reason is not less, it is a thing as possible as it is necessary; yea, there is more in the power of the cause, than to work this single effect. I mean it not only of the efficient cause mentioned before, but of the objective or final (as having such a superabundant sufficiency in its kind also) hinted in the close of the following verse. He doth not utter vain and groundless wishes, when he prays, that to that all of patience they might add joyfulness too, and giving of thanks; no, the matter (as if he had said) will bear it, even the inheritance of the saints in light, the very expectation objective, I am speaking of. It hath enough in it to induce, not only patience, but joy, not a contented bearing only, but giving of thanks too, to him that hath made you meet for that inheritance. ver. 12. True it is indeed, that the very need we have of patience, and the gain that would accrue by it, is itself a reason, why we should labor to frame our spirits to it: for if such

evils must be undergone, how much better is it to bear them alone, than to have the disease of a wounded, impatient spirit, to bear also as an additional burden. The *law* of patience is certainly a most indulgent, merciful law, a gracious provision (as much as can be made by a law) for the quiet and ease of our spirits, under the sharpest and most afflictive sufferings. As might at large be shown, were it suitable to fall into discourse of patience in itself considered; and to treat of that rest and pleasure, that liberty of spirit, that possession and dominion of one's own soul, which it carries in it: but that were too much a digression. It only falls directly here in our way to consider, that as we have many grievances and pressures to undergo, while we are expecting the future blessedness, which render the exercise of patience very requisite, so that there is enough of weight and worth in that very expectation, (that is in what we expect) to outweigh them all, and to render the exercise thereof highly reasonable upon that account. I reckon (saith the apostle) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, Rom. 8. 18. Thus (saith he) I reckon, that is, It is my stated, settled judgment, not a sudden, rash thought. When I have reasoned the matter with myself, weighed it well, considered the case, turned it round, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things which are fit to come into consideration about it, this is the result, the final determination, that which I conclude and judge at last, (judgment is the last product and issue of the most exquisite inquiry and debate, the ultimate and most perfect act of reason,) that the sufferings of this now of time are of no value; things not fit, as it were, to be mentioned the same day with the glory to be revealed, &c. It can therefore be no *hard law*, no unreasonable imposition, that shall oblige us to the exercise of *patience*, under such sufferings, in the expectation of so transcendent glory. For, consider,—These sufferings are but from men, (for the sufferings of which the apostle here speaks, are such as wherein we suffer together with Christ, that is for his name and interest, on behalf of the Christian cause:) but this glory is from God. How disproportionable must the effects be of a created and in-created cause.—Again, these sufferings reach no further than the bone and flesh, (fear not them that kill the body, and after they have done that, can do no more, &c.) but this glory reaches unto, and transforms the soul. How little can a clod of earth suffer, in comparison of what an immortal spirit may enjoy? And further, there is much mixture in our present sufferings; the present state of suffering saints is not a state of total misery; there are, as it were, rays of glory interlaced with their present afflictions: but there will be nothing of affliction mingled with their future glory.

Yea, and (what may not only convince, but even transport us too) these sufferings are but temporary, nay but momentary, this glory eternal. What heart is big enough to comprehend the full sense of these words, Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. 4. 17. How might I dwell here upon every syllable, light affliction, weighty glory, *exceeding weight*; affliction for a moment, eternal weight of glory! O then, how unworthy is it of the Christian name and hopes, that we should have an impatient resentment of this method God follows with us, (as he did with our great Redeemer and Lord) that we should suffer first, and then enter into glory! Heaven, were a poor heaven, if it would not make us savers. It were high time for us to give over the Christian profession, if we do not really account, that its reward and hope do surmount its reproach and trouble; or do think its cross more weighty than its crown. Is the price and worth of eternal glory fallen? It hath been counted worth suffering for. There have been those in the world that would not accept deliverance from these sufferings, that they might obtain the better resurrection. Are we grown wiser? Or would we indeed wish God should turn the tables, and assign us our good things here, and hereafter evil things? Ungrateful souls! How severe should we be to ourselves, that we should be so apt to complain for what we should admire and give thanks! What, because purer and more refined Christianity in our time and in this part of the world hath had public favor and countenance, can we therefore not tell how to frame our minds to the thoughts of sufferings? Are tribulation and patience antiquated names, quite out of date and use with us, and more ungrateful to our ears and hearts, than heaven and eternal glory are acceptable? And had we rather (if we were in danger of suffering on the Christian account) run a hazard as to the latter, than adventure on the former? Or do we think it impossible we should ever come to the trial, or be concerned to busy ourselves with such thoughts? Is the world become stable and so unacquainted with vicissitudes, that a state of things less favorable to our profession can never revolve upon us? It were, however, not unuseful to put such a case by way of supposition to ourselves. For every sincere christian is in affection and preparation of his mind a martyr. He that loves not Christ better than his own life, cannot be his disciple. We should at least inure our thoughts more to a suffering state, that we may thence take some occasion to reflect and judge of the temper of our hearts towards the name and cause of Christ. It is easy suffering indeed, in idea and contemplation; but something may be collected from the observation, how we can relish and comport with such thoughts. It is as training in order to fight; which is done often upon a very remote supposition, that such occasions may possibly fall out.

Therefore, What now do we think of it if our way into the kingdom of God shall be through many tribulations? If, before we behold the smiles of his blessed face, we must be entertained with the less pleasing sight of the frowning aspect and visage of an angry world? If we first bear the image of a crucified Christ, before we partake of the likeness of a glorious God? What, do we regret the thoughts of it; Do we account we shall be ill dealt with, and have a hard bargain of it? O how tender are we grown, in comparison of the hardiness and magnanimity of primitive christians? we have not the patience to think of what they had the patience to endure. We should not yet forget ourselves, that such a thing belongs to our profession, even in this way to testify our fidelity to Christ, and our value of the inheritance purchased by his blood, if he call us thereunto. We must know it is a thing inserted into the religion of christians, and (with respect to their condition in this world) made an essential thereto. He cannot be a christian, that doth not deny himself and take up the cross. How often when the active part of a christian's duty is spoken of, is the passive part studiously and expressively annexed? Let us run *with patience* the race that is set before us. Heb. 12. 1. The good ground brought forth fruit, *with patience*, Matt. 13. eternal life is for them that by a *patient* continuance in well-doing seek after it. Rom. 2. 7. Yea, and hence the word of Christ is called the word of his *patience*. Rev. 3. chap. 1. And the style wherein the beloved disciple speaks of himself, and his profession is this, I John, a companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ. Do we mean to plead prescription against all this? or have we got an express exemption? Have we a discharge to shew, a manumission from all the suffering part of a christian's duty? and is it not a discharge also from being christians as much? Will we disavow ourselves to belong to that noble society of them that through faith and patience inherit the promises? Surely we are highly conceited of ourselves, if we think we are too good to be numbered among them of whom the world was not worthy. Or we design to ourselves a long abode here, while we so much value the world's favor, and a freedom from worldly trouble: or eternity is with us an empty sound, and the future blessedness of saints an airy thing, that we should reckon it insufficient to counterpoise the sufferings of a few hasty days that will so soon have an end. It is a sad symptom of the declining state of religion, when the powers of the world to come are so over-mastered by the powers of this present world, and objects of sense so much out-weigh those of faith. And is not this apparently the case with the christians of the present age? Do not your thoughts run the same course with theirs, that meditated nothing but sitting on the right and left hand of Christ, in an earthly dominion, while they never dreamed of drinking of

his cup, or being baptized with his baptism? How many vain dreamers have we of golden mountains, and (I know not what) earthly felicity; whose pretended prophecies about (a supposed) near approaching prosperity to the church on earth, gain easier belief, or are more savoury and taking with too many, than all that the sacred oracles discover about its glorious state in heaven? Hence are our shoulders so unfitted to Christ's yoke (like the unaccustomed heifer,) and the business of suffering will not enter into our hearts. Methinks the belief and expectation of such a state hereafter, should make us even regardless of what we see or suffer here; and render the good or evil things of time as indifferent to us. Yet neither plead I for an absolute social apathy, but for patience. A great follower of that sect acknowledges, "It is not a virtue to bear what we feel not, or have no sense of. Stupidity under providence is not a christian temper;" as that moralist says of the wise man, "It is not the hardness of stone or iron that is to be ascribed to him." Sen. de Constant. sapientis. But lest any should run into that more dangerous mistake, to think, that by the patience we have been all this while persuading to (in the expectation of the blessedness yet to come) is meant a love of this present world, and a complacential adherence of heart to the earth, (which extreme the terrene temper of many souls may much incline them to;) it will be necessary upon that account to add (in reference also to the yet future expected season of this blessedness) this further and concluding instruction, namely,

8. That (however we are not to repine at our being held so long in this world in an expecting state, yet) we let not our souls cleave too close to their terrestrial stations, nor be too much in love with the body, and its present low state of life on earth. For evident it is, that notwithstanding all the miseries of this expecting state, the most are yet loth to leave the world, and have hearts sordidly hankering after present things. And surely there is much difference between being *patient* of an abode on earth, and being *fond* of it. Therefore since the true blessedness of saints consists in such things as we have shewn, and cannot be enjoyed till we awake, not within the compass of time and this lower world; it will be very requisite to insist here awhile in the prosecution of this last rule. And what I shall say to it shall be by way of caution, and enforcement.

(1.) For caution: that we misapprehend not that temper and disposition of spirit, we are in this thing to endeavor and aim at. And it especially concerns us to be cautious about the inducements, and degree, of that desire of leaving this world, or contempt of this present life, which we either aspire to, or allow ourselves in.

[1.] Inducements. Some are desirous, others at least content, to quit the world upon very insufficient, or indeed wicked considerations.

First. There are, who desire it merely to be out of the way of present troubles, whereof they have either too impatient a sense, or an unworthy and impotent fear. Many times the urgency and anguish of incumbent trouble impresses such a sense, and utters itself in such language as that, Now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. Jonah 4. 3. Or, that, My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life: makes men long for death, and dig for it as for hid treasure; rejoice and be exceeding glad when they can find the grave, Job 7. 15.

Yea, and the very fear of troubles that are but impendent and threatening, makes some wish the grave a sanctuary, and renders the clods of the valley sweet unto their thoughts. They lay possibly so humorsome and fanciful stress upon the mere circumstances of dying, that they are earnest to die out of hand to avoid dying so and so; as the poet would fain persuade himself it was not *Demite naufragium, mors nihi munus erit, Death he feared not, but shipwreck: it would not trouble them to die, but to die by a violent hand,* (Ovid.) or to be made a public spectacle; they cannot endure the thoughts of dying so. Here is nothing commendable or worthy of a christian in all this. It were a piece of christian bravery to dare to live in such a case, even when there is a visible likelihood of dying a sacrifice in the midst of flames. How much this glory was affected in the earlier days of Christianity is sufficiently known: though, I confess there were excesses in that kind, altogether unimitable. But if God call a man forth to be his champion and witness, to lay down a life, in itself little desirable, in a truly worthy cause, the call of his providence should be as the sound of the trumpet to a truly martial spirit; it should fill his soul with a joyful courage and sense of honor, and be complied with cheerfully, with that apprehension and resentment a stout soldier would have of his general's putting him upon some very hazardous piece of service, namely, he would say, (as the moralist expresses his sense for him) *Imperator de me non male meruit, sed bene judicavit, my general hath not deserved ill of me, but it appears he judged well.* Sen. It should be counted all joy to fall into such trials; Jam. 1. 2. that is, when they become our lot by a providential disposition, not by a rash precipitation of ourselves. And as it is a wickedness inconsistent with Christianity, to be of that habitual temper, to choose to desert such a cause for the saving of life; so it is a weakness very reproachful to it, to lay down one's life in such a case with regret, as unwilling in this kind to glorify him who laid down his for us. We are no more to die to ourselves, than to live to ourselves. Our Lord Jesus hath purchased to himself a dominion over both states, of the living and dead, and whether we live we must live to him, or die, we must die to him. Rom. 14. 8. It is the glory of a christian to live so

much above the world, that nothing in it may make him either fond of life, or weary of it.

Secondly. There are others who are (at least) indifferent and careless how soon they die, out of either a worse than paganish infidelity, disbelieving the concernments of another world; or a brutish stupidity, not apprehending them; or a gross conceited ignorance, misunderstanding terms of the gospel, and thinking themselves to be in a good condition, as to eternity, when the case is much otherwise with them. Take heed thy willingness to die be from no such inducements, but a mere desire of being with God and of attaining this perfection and blessedness, which he hath engaged thee in the pursuit and expectation of, and then, having made sure it be right as to the rise and principle.

[2.] Be careful it be not undue in point of degree; that is, a cold intermittent velleity is too little on the one hand, and a peremptory, precipitant hastiness is too much on the other. The middle and desirable temper here is a complacential submission to the divine will in that affair, with a prepondering inclination on our part, towards our eternal home, if the Lord see good. For we have two things to attend in this business, and by which our sprits may be swayed this way or that, that is the goodness of the object to be chosen, and the will of God which must guide and over-rule our choice; the former whereof we are permitted to eye in subordination to the latter and not otherwise. Now our apprehension of the desirableness and intrinsic goodness of the object ought to be such, (we are infidels else, if we have not that account of it,) that nothing we can eye under the notion of a good to us, may be reckoned so eligible as that, namely, our final and complete blessedness in the other world; which because we know we cannot enjoy without dying, death also must be judged more eligible than life, that is, our blessedness must be judged eligible for itself, and death as requisite to make it present. So that the entire object we are discoursing of being present blessedness, consider it in comparison with any thing else, that can be looked upon by us as a good which we ourselves are to enjoy, it ought to be preferred and chosen out of hand, inasmuch as nothing can be so great a present good to us, as that. And this ought to be the proper habitual inclination of our sprits, their constant frame and bent, as they respect only our interest and welfare. But considering God's dominion over us, and interest in our lives and beings, and that as well ingenuity as necessity binds us to be subject to his pleasure, we should herein patiently suffer ourselves to be over-ruled thereby, and not so abstractly mind our own interest and contentment in this matter, as if we were altogether our own, and had no Lord over us. Plato (In Phæd. Vid. et Plotin.) who abounds in discourses of the desirableness of dying, and of the blessed change it makes with them, that are good, yet hath this apt ex-



pression of the subjection we ought to be in to the divine pleasure as to this matter, *περὶ ἐξαρρωγῆς* Enead. 1. "That the soul is in the body as soldiers in a garrison, from whence they may not withdraw themselves without his order and direction who placed them there: and expostulates thus, "If (saith he) a slave of yours should destroy his own life without your consent, would you not be displeased; and if there had been any place left for revenge, been apt enough for that too? So he brings in Socrates discoursing; and discovers himself herein to have had more light in this matter, touching that subordinate interest only men have in their own lives, and the unlawfulness of self-murder, (as he had in other things too,) than most heathens of the more refined sect ever arrived to.

If therefore God would give us leave to die, we should upon our own account be much more inclined to choose it; but, while he thinks fit to have it deferred, should yield to his will with an unrepining submission. Only it ought not to rest at all on our part, or that as to ourselves we find any thing more grateful to us in this world, that we are willing to stay a day longer in it. That for our own sakes we should affect a continuance here, would argue a terrene, sordid spirit. But then such should be our dutiful filial love to the Father of our spirits, that in pure devotedness to his interests, we would be content to dwell (if he would have it so) a Methuselah's age in an earthly tabernacle for his service: that is, that we may help to preserve his memorial in a lapsed world, (over-run with atheism and ignorance of its Maker,) and win him hearts and love (to our uttermost) among his apostate, disloyal creatures; and in our capacities be helpful to the encouragement of such as he continues in the world for the same purposes. This is the very temper the apostle expresses when in that strait. Phil. 1. 23. Which way the poise of his own spirits inclined him, in the consideration of his own interest, and what was simply more eligible to him, he expresses with high emphasis; To be with Christ, saith he, is more, more desirable to be, (for there are two comparatives in the Greek text,) and therefore he professes his own desire in order thereto, to be dissolved; but that private desire was not so peremptory and absolute, but he could make it yield and give place to his duty towards God and his church, as it follows. So we know it is possible, that respects to a friend may over-sway a man's own particular inclination; and the inclination remain notwithstanding, but is subdued only; otherwise, had any reason or argument that did respect myself persuaded me to change it, I should then follow but my own proper inclination still, and so my friend hath nothing to thank me for.

So it ought to be with us here. Our inclination should preponderate towards a present change of our state; only our devotedness to his interest and pleasure, whose we are, should ea-

sily over-rule it. This is the lovely temper of a gracious spirit, as to this thing, that to die might be our choice, and to live in the mean time submitted to as our duty. As an ingenuous son whom his father hath employed abroad in a foreign country, though duty did bind him cheerfully therein to comply with his father's will, and the necessity of his affairs; yet, when his father shall signify to him, that now he understands no necessity of his longer continuance there, and therefore he may if he please return, but he shall have leave to follow his own inclination, it is not hard to conjecture, that the desire of seeing a father's face would soon determine the choice of such a son that way. But how remote are the generality of them that profess themselves God's children from that pious ingenuity! We have taken root in the earth, and forgotten our heavenly originals and alliances. We are as inhabitants here, not pilgrims; hardly persuaded to entertain with any patience the thoughts of leaving our places on earth; which yet, do we what we can, shall shortly know us no more. In short then: that vile temper of spirit, against which I professedly bend myself in the following discourse, is, when men, not out of any sense of duty towards God, or solicitude for their own souls, but a mere sordid love to the body, and affixedness of heart to the earth and terrene things, cannot endure the thoughts of dying. And that which I persuade to is, that having the true prospect of the future blessedness before our eyes, and our hearts possessed with the comfortable hope of attaining to it, we shake off our earthly inclinations, and expect with desire and joy the time of our dismissal hence, that we may enjoy it; which is the design of what was promised in the next place, namely,

(2.) The enforcement of this instruction. Suffer we therefore ourselves to be reasoned with about this matter; and let us consider whether we can in good earnest think such an aversation, as we discover, to our blessed translation hence, an excusable, a tolerable temper; or whether it be not highly reasonable, that we should entertain the thoughts, at least, with more content and patience (if not with more fervent desire) of our departure hence and introduction into that other state. Let me demand of thee, dost thou thus regret the thoughts of death, as being unwilling to die at all, or as being unwilling to die as yet? Is it the thing itself, or only the circumstance of time that thou exceptest against? It is likely thou wilt say that which will seem more plausible, and so fix only on the latter; and that thou wilt not profess to desire an eternity on earth, but only more time. Well, let that for the present be supposed, as it is a more modest, so to be a true account of thy desires: yet what is the reason of this moderation with thee herein; and that thou so limitest thyself? Is it that thou believest the blessedness of the other will prove better than any thing thou canst enjoy here; and that thou art

not willing eternally to be deprived of? But dost thou not think it is *now* better also? And what canst thou pretend, why what is *now* the best and most desirable good, should not be *now* chosen and desired out of hand? Or is it that thou thinkest it unbecomes thee to cross the supreme will of him that made thee, who hath determined, that all men once shall die? And then, how knowest thou but he hath also determined concerning thee, that thou shall die the next day or hour? and it is only a present willingness to die, in subordination to the divine will, or upon supposition of it, thou art persuaded to. Why, art thou not afraid, lest thy present unwillingness should cross his present will? Dost thou not think that sovereign power is as sufficient to determine of the circumstance, as the thing itself? And art thou not ashamed to pretend an agreement with God about the thing itself, and yet differ with him about a circumstance? Shall that be a ground of quarrel between him and thee?

But while thou only professest that more modest desire of more time in the world, what security canst thou give, that when that desire hath been liberally gratified, it shall be at length laid down, and tumultuate no more? What bounds wilt thou fix to it, which thou darrest undertake it shall not pass? Art thou sure, when thou shalt have lain at the world's breast ten or twenty years longer, thou wilt then imagine thyself to have drawn it dry; or that then thou shalt begin to nauseate the world and wish for heaven? Or hast thou not reason from thy former experience to suspect, that the longer thou dwellest on earth, the more terrene thou wilt grow; and that if thou be indisposed to leave it this day or year, thou wilt be more so the next; and so thy desire become boundless and infinite, which is to desire to be here always, the thing which thou seemedst so unwilling to own? And if that prove at last the true state of thy case, art thou then a christian, or art thou a man, that thou harborest in thy breast so irreligious and irrational, yea, so sordid a wish? What! wish eternally to be affixed to a clod of earth? Is that at length become thy God? Or wilt thou say, he is thy God whom thou never desirest to enjoy? Or that thou hast already enough of him, but not of the world, and yet that he is thy God? Or wouldst thou overturn the laws of nature, and subvert the most sacred divine constitutions, abortive the designs of eternal wisdom and love, evacuate and nullify the great achievements of thy merciful and mighty Redeemer, only to gratify a sensual, brutish humor? But evident it is, thou dost only in vain disquiet thyself, thou canst not disturb the settled order of things. Eternal laws are not repealable by a fond wish. Thou settest that dreadful thing; *death*, at nothing the further distance, by thine abhorrency of it. It will overtake thee whether thou wilt or no; and methinks thine own reason should instruct thee to attemper and form thyself to what thou canst not avoid, and possess thee with

such thoughts and desires as those of that discreet pagan, (Epictet.) "Lead me, O God, (saith he) whither thou wilt, and I will follow thee willingly; but if I be rebellious and refuse, I shall follow thee notwithstanding." What we cannot decline, it is better to bear willingly, than with a regret, that shall be both vain and afflictive.

And what hast thou hitherto met with in the world, that should so highly endear it to thee? Examine and search more narrowly into thy earthly comforts; what is there in them to make them self-desirable, or to be so for their own sakes? What is it to have thy flesh indulged and pleased? to have thy sense gratified? thy fancy tickled? What so great good, worthy of an immortal, reasonable spirit, canst thou find in meats and drinks, in full barns and coffers, in vulgar fame and applause, that should render these things desirable for themselves? And if there were any real felicity in these things for the present, whilst thou art permitted to enjoy them, yet dost thou not know that what thou enjoyest to day thou mayst lose to-morrow, and that such other unthought of evils may befall thee, as may infuse a bitterness into all thou enjoyest, which causes immediately the enjoyment to cease, while the things themselves remain, and will be equal to a total loss of all? And thus (as the moralist ingeniously speaks Sen. de brev. vit.) "thou wilt continually need another happiness to defend the former, and new wishes must still be made on the behalf of those which have already succeeded. But canst thou indeed think it worth the while, that the Maker of the universe should create a soul, and send it down into the world on purpose to superintend these trivial affairs, to keep-alive a silly piece of well-figured earth while it eats and drinks, to move it to and fro in chase of shadows, to hold it up while others bow the knee and do it homage, if it had not some higher work to mind in reference to another state? Art thou contented to live long in the world to such purposes? What low worthless spirit is this, that had rather be so employed than in the visions of his Maker's face; that chooses thus to entertain itself on earth, rather than partake the effusions of divine glory above; that had rather creep with worms than soar with angels: associate with brutes than with the spirits of just men made perfect? Who can solve the phænomenon, or give a rational account why there should be such a creature as man upon the earth, abstracting from the hopes of another world? Who can think it the effect of an infinite wisdom; or account it a more worthy design, than the representing of such a scene of actions and affairs by puppets on a stage? For my part, upon the strictest inquiry, I see nothing in the life of man upon earth, that should render it, for itself, more the matter of a rational election (supposing the free option given him in the first moment of his being) than presently again to cease to be the next moment.

Yea, and is there not enough obvious in every man's experience, to incline him rather to the contrary choice; and supposing a future blessedness in another world, to make him passionately desirous (with submission to the divine pleasure) of a speedy dismissal into it? Do not the burdens that press us in this earthly tabernacle teach our very sense, and urge oppressed natures into involuntary groans, while as yet our consideration doth not intervene? And if we do consider, Is not every thought a sting, making a much deeper impression than what only toucheth our flesh and bones? Who can reflect upon his present state and not presently be in pangs? The troubles that follow humanity are many and great, those that follow Christianity more numerous and grievous. The sickness, pains, losses, disappointments, and whatsoever afflictions that are in the apostle's language, human, or common to men, (1 Cor. 10. 13.) (as are all the external sufferings of christians, in nature and kind, though they are liable to them upon an account peculiar to themselves, which there the apostle intimates,) are none of our greatest evils; yet even upon the account of them, have we any reason to be so much in love with so unkind a world? Is it not strange, our very bridewell should be such a heaven to us? But these things are little considerable in comparison of the more spiritual grievances of christians, as such; that is, those that afflict our souls while we are (under the conduct of Christ) designing for a blessed eternity; if we indeed make that our business, and do seriously intend our spirits in order thereto. The darkness of our beclouded minds; the glimmering, ineffectual apprehension we have of the most important things; the inconsistency of our shattered thoughts, when we would apply them to spiritual objects; the great difficulty of working off an ill frame of heart, and the no less difficulty of retaining a good: our being so frequently tossed as between heaven and hell; when we sometimes think ourselves to have even attained and hope to descend no more, and are all on a sudden plunged in the ditch, so as that our own clothes might abhor us; fall so low into an earthly temper, that we can like nothing heavenly or divine, and because we cannot, are enforced justly most of all to dislike ourselves! are these things little with us? How can we forbear to cry out of the depths, to the Father of our spirits, that he would pity and relieve his own offspring? Yea, are we not weary of our crying; and yet more weary of holding in? How do repelled temptations return again, and vanquished corruptions recover strength! We know not when our work is done. We are miserable that we need to be always watching, and more miserable that we cannot watch, but are so often surprised and overcome of evil. We say sometimes with ourselves, we will seek relief in retirement; but we cannot retire from ourselves; or in converse with godly friends, but they sometimes prove snares to

us and we to them, or we hear but our own miseries repeated in their complaints. Would we pray? How faint is the breath we utter? How long is it before we can get our souls possessed with any becoming apprehensions of God, or lively sense of our own concernments? Would we meditate? We sometimes go about to compose our thoughts, but we may as well assay to hold the winds in our fist. If we venture forth into the world, how do our senses betray us? how are we mocked with their impostures? Their nearer objects become with us the only realities, and eternal things are all vanished into airy shadows. Reason and faith are laid asleep, and our sense dictates to us what we are to believe and do, as if it were our only guide and lord. And what are we not yet weary? Is it reasonable to continue in this state of our own choice? Is misery become so natural to us, so much our element that we cannot affect to live out of it? Is the darkness and dirt of a dungeon more grateful to us than a free open air and sun? Is this flesh of ours so lovely a thing, that we had rather suffer so many deaths in it, than one in putting it off and mortality with it? While we carry it about us, our souls impart a kind of life to it, and it gives them death in exchange. Why do we not cry out more feelingly, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Is it not grievous to us to have so cumbersome a yoke-fellow, to be tied (as Mezentius is said to have done) the living and the dead together? Do we not find the distempers of our spirits are mostly from these bodies we are so in love with, either as the proper springs or as the occasion of them? From what cause is our drowsy sloth, our eager passions, our aversion to spiritual objects, but, from this impure flesh; or what else is the subject about which our vexatious cares, or torturing fears, our bitter griefs are taken up day by day?

And why do not we consider, that it is only our love to it that gives strength and vigor to the most of our temptations, as wherein it is most immediately concerned, and which makes them so often victorious, and thence to become our after-afflictions? He that hath learned to mortify the inordinate love of the body, will he make it the business of his life to purvey for it? Will he offer violence to his own soul, to secure it from violence? Will he comply with men's lusts and humors for its advantage and accommodation: or yield himself to the tyranny of his own avarice for its future, or of his more sensual lusts for its present content? Will it not rather be pleasing to him, that his outward man be exposed to perish, while his inward man is renewed day by day? He to whom the thoughts are grateful of laying it down, will not (though he neglect not duty towards it) spend his days in its continual service, and make his soul a hell by a continual provision for the flesh and the lusts of it. That is cruel love that shall enslave a man, and subject him to

so vile and ignoble a servitude. And it discovers a sordid temper to be so imposed upon. How low are our spirits sunk, that we disdain not so base a vassalage! God and nature have obliged us to live in bodies for a time, but they have not obliged us to measure ourselves by them, to confine our desires and designs to their compass, to look no further than their concerns, to entertain no previous joys in the hope of being one day delivered from them. No such hard law is laid upon us. But how apt are we to become herein a most oppressive law to ourselves; and not only to lodge in filthy, earthen cottages, but to love them and confine ourselves to them, loth so much as to peep out. It is the apt expression of a philosopher, upbraiding that base, low temper, Ἡ δὲ δειλὴ ψυχὴ κατωρυγμένη ἐν σώματι, ὡς ἔρπτεον νοδὸς εἰς φωλεὸν, φιλεῖ τὸν φωλεὸν, &c. *the degenerate soul buried in the body, is as a slothful, creeping thing, that loves its hole and is loth to come forth.* Max. Tyr. Diss. 41.

And methinks, if we have no love for our better and more noble self, we should not be altogether unapprehensive of an obligation upon us, to express a dutiful love to the Author of our beings; doth it consist with the love we owe to him, to desire always to lurk in the dark, and never to come into his blessed presence? Is that our love, that we never care to come nigh him? Do we not know, that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord? 2 Cor. 5. 6. 8. Should we not therefore be willing rather to be present with the Lord, and absent from the body? Should we not put on a confidence, a holy fortitude, (as it is there expressed, we are confident, or of good courage, and thence, willing, &c.) that might carry us through the grave to him. As is the brave speech of that last mentioned philosopher, Δειλὸς ὀδύγεται, *God will call thee ere long, expect his call. Old age will come upon thee, and shew thee the way thither; and death, which he that is possessed with a base fear, laments and dreads as it draws on, but he that is a lover of God expects it with joy, and with courage meets it when it comes.* &c. Item. diss. 1. Is our love to God so faint and weak, that it dares not encounter death, nor venture upon the imaginary terrors of the grave to go to him? How unsuitable is this to the character which is given of a saint's love? Cant. 8. And how expressly are we told, that he who loves his life better than Christ, or that even hates it not for his sake, (as certainly he cannot be said to do, that is not willing to part with it to enjoy him) cannot be his disciple? If our love to God be not *supreme* it is *none*, or not such as can denominate us lovers of him; and will we pretend to be so, when we love a putrid flesh and this base earth better than him? And have we not professedly, as a fruit of our avowed love to him, surrendered ourselves? Are we not his devoted ones? Will we be his, and yet our own? or pretend ourselves dedicated to his holy pleasure, and will yet be

at our own disposal, and so dispose of ourselves too, as that we may be most ungrateful to him, and most incapable of converse with him? How doth this love of a perishing life and of a little animated clay stop all the effusions of the love of God, suspend its sweet and pleasant fruits, which should be always exerting themselves towards him? Where is their love, obedience, joy, and praise, who are through the fear of death all their lives subject to bondage, and kept under a continual dismal expectation of an unavoidable dissolution? But must the great God lose his due acknowledgments because we will not understand wherein he deals well with us? Is his mercy therefore no mercy? As we cannot nullify his truth by our unbelief, so nor his goodness by our disesteem. But yet consider, doth it not better become thee to be grateful than repine that God will one day unbind thy soul and set thee free, knock off thy fetters and deliver thee out of the house of thy bondage; couldst thou upon deliberate thoughts judge it tolerable, should he doom thee to this earth forever? (as the pagan emperor and philosopher excellently speaks M. Aurel. Ant. de vit. sua. 1. 12. ἀπὸτι ἰδέως ὁ ἀπολύων ἰδέως *He hath however judged otherwise, who is the author both of the first composition of thy present being and now of the dissolution of it; thou wert the cause of neither, therefore depart and be thankful, for he that dismisseth thee dealeth kindly with thee.* If yet thou understandest it not, yet remember, it is thy Father that disposes thus of thee. How unworthy is it to distrust his love? what child would be afraid to compose itself to sleep in the parent's bosom? It expresses nothing of the duty and ingenuity, but much of the frowardness and folly of a child: they sometimes cry vehemently in the undressing; but should their cries be regarded by the most indulgent parent? or are they fit to be imitated by us?

We have no excuse for this our frowardness. The blessed God hath told us his gracious purposes concerning us, and we are capable of understanding him. What if he had totally hidden from us our future state? and that we knew nothing, but of going into an eternal, silent darkness? the authority of a Creator ought to have awed us into a silent submission. But when we are told of such a glory, that it is but drawing aside the fleshly vail and we presently behold it, methinks the blessed hour should be expected not with patience only, but with ravishing joy. Did we hear of a country in this world, where we might live in continual felicity, without toil, or sickness, or grief, or fear, who would not wish to be there, though the passage were troublesome? Have we not heard enough of heaven to allure us thither? Or is the eternal truth, of suspected credit with us? Are God's own reports of the future glory unworthy our belief or regard? How many, upon the credit of his word, are gone already triumphantly into glory? that only seeing the



promises afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them ; and never after, owned themselves under any other notion than of pilgrims on earth, longing to be at home in their most desirable, heavenly country. We are not the first that are to open heaven ; the main body of saints is already there ; it is in comparison of their number, but a scattering remnant, that are now alive upon the earth. How should we long to be associated to that glorious assembly ? Methinks we should much more regret our being so long left behind.

But if we should desire still to be so, why may not all others as well as we, and as much expect to be gratified as we ? And then we should agree in desiring, that our Redeemer's triumph might be deferred, that his body might yet remain incomplete, that he might still be debarred of the long expected fruit of the travail of his soul, that the name of God might be still subjected to the blasphemy and reproach of an atheistical world, who have all along said with derision, Where is the promise of his coming ? Would we have all his designs to be still unfinished ; and so the mighty wheels stand still for us, while we sport ourselves in the dust of the earth, and indulge our sensual inclination, which sure this bold desire must argue to be very predominant in us ; and take heed it argue not its habitual prevalency. At least, if it discover not our present sensuality, it discovers our former sloth and idleness. It may be, we may excuse our averseness to die by our unpreparedness, that is, one fault with another : though that be besides the case I am speaking of. What then have we been doing all this while ? What ! were the affairs of thy soul not thought of till now ? Take then thy reproof from a heathen, (Sen.) that it may convince thee the more, " No one, saith he, divides away his money from himself, but yet men divide away their very life—But doth it not shame thee (he after adds) to reserve only the relics of thy life to thyself, and to devote that time only to a good mind which thou canst employ upon no other thing ? How late is it to begin to live when we should make an end ; and defer all good thoughts to such an age as possibly few do ever reach to. The truth is (as he speaks) we have not little time but we lose much, we have time enough were it well employed, therefore we cannot say we receive a short life, but we make it so, we are not indigent of time but prodigal : what a pretty contradiction is it to complain of the shortness of time, and yet do what we can to precipitate its course ; to hasten it by what we call pastime ? If it have been so with thee, art thou to be trusted with more time ?" But as thy case is, I cannot wonder that the thoughts of death be most unwelcome to thee ; who art thou that thou shouldst desire the day of the Lord ? I can only say to thee, hasten thy preparation, have recourse to rule second, and third, and accordingly guide thyself till thou find thy spirit made more suitable to this

blessedness; that it become savory and grateful to thy soul, and thy heart be set upon it. Hence thou mayst be reconciled to the grave, and the thoughts of death may cease to be a terror to thee.

And when thou art attained so far, consider thy great advantage in being willing and desirous to die upon this further account, That thy desire shall now be pitched upon a thing so certain. Thine other desires have met with many a disappointment. Thou hast set thy heart upon other things, and they have deceived thy most earnest, thirsty expectations. Death will not do so. Thou wilt now have one certain hope; one thing in reference whereto thou may say, "I am sure." Wait awhile, this peaceful sleep will shortly seize thy body and awaken thy soul. It will calmly period all thy troubles, and bring thee to a blessed rest. But now, if only the mere terror and gloominess of dying, trouble thy thoughts, this of all other seems the most inconsiderable pretence against a willing surrender of ourselves to death. Reason hath overcome it, natural courage, yea, some men's atheism; Shall not faith? Are we not ashamed to consider, what confidence and desire of death some heathens have expressed? Some that have had no pre-apprehension or belief of another state (though there were very few of them,) and so no hope of a consequent blessedness to relieve them, have yet thought it unreasonable to disgust the thoughts of death. What wouldst thou think if thou hadst nothing but the sophisms of such to oppose to all thy dismal thoughts? I have met with one arguing thus, (Epicurus in Gassend. Synt.) "Death which is accounted the most dreadful of all evils, is nothing to us (saith he) because while we are in being, death is not yet present, and when death is present we are not in being; so that it neither concerns us, as living, nor dead; for while we are alive it hath not touched us, when we are dead we are not.— Moreover (saith he) the exquisite knowledge of this, that death belongs not to us, makes us enjoy this mortal life with comfort; not by adding any thing to our uncertain time, but by taking away the desire of immortality." Shall they comfort themselves upon so wretched a ground, with a little sophistry, and the hope of extinguishing all desire of immortality; and shall not we, by cherishing this blessed hope of enjoying shortly an immortal glory?

Others of them have spoken magnificently of a certain contempt of this bodily life, and a not only not fearing but desiring to die, upon a fixed apprehension of the distinct and purer immortal nature of the soul, and the preconceived hope of a consequent felicity. I shall set down some of their words, added to what have been occasionally mentioned, (amongst that plentiful variety wherewith one might fill a volume,) purposely to shame the more terrene temper of many christians.

"The soul (saith one of them\*) is an invisible thing, and is going into another place, suitable to itself, that is noble, and pure, and invisible, even into hades, indeed, to the good and wise God, whither also my soul shall shortly go, if he see good. But this he saith in what follows) belongs only to such a soul as goes out of the body pure, that draws nothing corporeal along with it, and did not willingly communicate with the body in life, but did even fly from it and gather up itself into itself, always meditating this one thing. A soul so affected, shall it not go to something like itself, divine, (and what is divine, is immortal and wise,) whither when it comes, it becomes blessed, free from error, ignorance, fears, and wild or enormous loves, and all other evils incident to men."

† One writing the life of that rare person, Plotinus, says, That he seemed as if he were in some sort ashamed that he was in body; which (however it would less become a christian, yet) in one that knew nothing of an incarnate Redeemer, it discovered a refined, noble spirit. The same person speaks almost the language of the apostle, concerning his being wrapt up into the third heaven, and tells of such an alienation of the soul from the body: "That when once it finds God (whom he had before been speaking of under the name of the τὸ καλὸν or the *beauty*) shining in upon it, it now no longer feels its body, or takes notice of its being in the body, but even forgets its own being, that it is a man, or a living creature, or any thing else whatsoever, for it is not at leisure to mind any thing else, nor doth it desire to be: yea, and having sought him out, he immediately meets it presenting itself to him. It only views him instead of itself,—and would not now change its state for any thing, not if one could give it the whole heaven in exchange."

"And elsewhere discussing, whether life in the body be good and desirable, yea or no, he concludes it to be good, not as it is a union of the soul and body, but as it may have that virtue annexed to it, by which what is really evil may be kept off. But yet that death is a greater good: that life in the body is in itself evil; but the soul is by virtue stated in goodness; not as enlivening the body with which it is compounded, but as it severs and sejoins itself from it; meaning so, as to have as little communion as possibly it can with it." To which purpose is the

\*Plato in Phedone, From whom I adjoin what (to them that understand it) is more elegant in his own language, "ὄν ἴδης ἀγανακτῆντα μέλλοντα ἀποθανεῖσθαι οὐκ ἄρα φιλόσοφος ἀλλὰ τις φιλοσωμῆματος. Ibid. Ἀγρίων ἐρωτῶν, if you see any one overwhelmed with grief in the approach of death, he is not a philosopher, but a lover of his own body.

† Porphyrius. Plotinus Enead. 7. Lib. 6. (whom though a just admirer of him would fain have men reckon to have been a christian, because he writes much against the Pseudo-Christian gnostics, nothing against christianity, yet it appears not he ever made profession of it. Enead. 1. lib. 7.)

expression of another: "That the soul of a happy man so collects and gathers up itself out from the body while it is yet contained in it—and that it was possessed of that fortitude, as not to dread its departure from it." Marin. Proclus.

Another gives this character of a good man, "That as he lived in simplicity, tranquillity, purity, not being offended at any that they believed him not to live so; he also comes to the end of his life, pure, quiet, and easy to be dissolved, disposing himself without any constraint to his lot." εὐλυτος. M. Aur. Ant. Another is brought in speaking thus. "If God should grant me to become a child again, (Cato in Cicerone de Senect.) to send forth my renewed infant cries from my cradle, and having even run out my race, to begin it again, I should most earnestly refuse it; for what profit hath this life? and how much toil?—Yet I do not repent that I have lived, because I hope that I have not lived in vain. And now I go out of this life, not as out of my dwelling-house, but my inn. O blessed day! when I shall enter into that council and assembly of souls, and depart from this rude and disorderly rout and crew, &c."

I shall add another, (of a not much unlike strain and rank, as either being not an open, or no constant friend to Christianity,) that discoursing who is the heir of divine things, saith, "He cannot be, who is in love with this animal, sensitive life; but only that purest mind that is inspired from above, that partakes of a heavenly and divine portion, that only despises the body, &c." with much more of like import. Philo. Judæus.

Yea, so have some been transported with the desire of immortality, that (being wholly ignorant of the sin of self-murder,) they could not forbear doing violence on themselves. Among the Indians, (Q. Curt. lib. 8.) two thousand years ago, were a sort of wise men, as they were called, that held it a reproach to die of age, or a disease, and were wont to burn themselves alive, thinking the flames were polluted if they came amidst them dead. The story of \*Cleombrotus is famous, who hearing Plato discourse of the immortality of the soul, by the sea-side, leaped from him into the sea, that he might presently be in that state. And it is storied, that † Nero refused to put Apollonius to death, though he were very much incensed against him, only upon the apprehensions he had that he was very desirous to die, because he would not so far gratify him.

I only make this improvement of all this; Christian principles and rules, do neither hurry nor misguide men, but the end (as we have it revealed) should much more powerfully and constantly attract us. Nothing is more unsuitable to Christianity our

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\* Cicer. Quæst, Tuscul.

† Scil. Domitianus aliquoties sic dictus. Philostr. in vit. Apoll. Tyanæi.

way, nor to that blessedness the end of it, than a terrene spirit. They have nothing of the true light and impress of the gospel now, nor are they ever like to attain the vision of the blessed face of God, and the impress of his likeness hereafter, that desire it not above all things, and are not willing to quit all things else for it. And is it not a just exprobration of our earthliness and carnality, if mere philosophers and pagans should give better proof than we of a spirit erected above the world, and alienated from what is temporary and terrene? Shall their gentileism outvie our Christianity? Methinks a generous indignation of this reproach should inflame our souls, and contribute somewhat to the refining of them to a better and more spiritual temper.

Now therefore, O all you that name yourselves by that worthy name of christians, that profess the religion taught by him that was not of the earth, earthly, but the Lord from heaven; you that are partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the great Apostle and High-Priest of your profession, who only took our flesh that we might partake of his Spirit, bore our earthly, that we might bear his heavenly image, descended that he might cause us to ascend. Seriously bethink yourselves of the scope and end of his apostleship and priesthood. He was sent out from God to invite and conduct you to him, to bring you into the communion of his glory and blessedness. He came upon a message and treaty of peace: to discover his Father's love and win yours: to let you know how kind thoughts the God of love had conceived to you-wards; and that, however you had hated him without cause, and were bent to do so without end, he was not so affected towards you: to settle a friendship, and to admit you to the participation of his glory. Yea, he came to give an instance, and exemplify, to the world in his own person, how much of heaven he could make to dwell in mortal flesh; how possible he could render it, to live in this world as unrelated to it; how gloriously the divine life could triumph over all the infirmities of frail humanity. And so leave men a certain proof and pledge, to what perfections human nature should be improved by his grace and Spirit, in all them that should resign themselves to his conduct, and follow his steps: that heaven and earth were not so far asunder, but he knew how to settle a commerce and intercourse between them: that a heavenly life was possible to be transacted here, and certain to be gloriously rewarded and perfected hereafter.

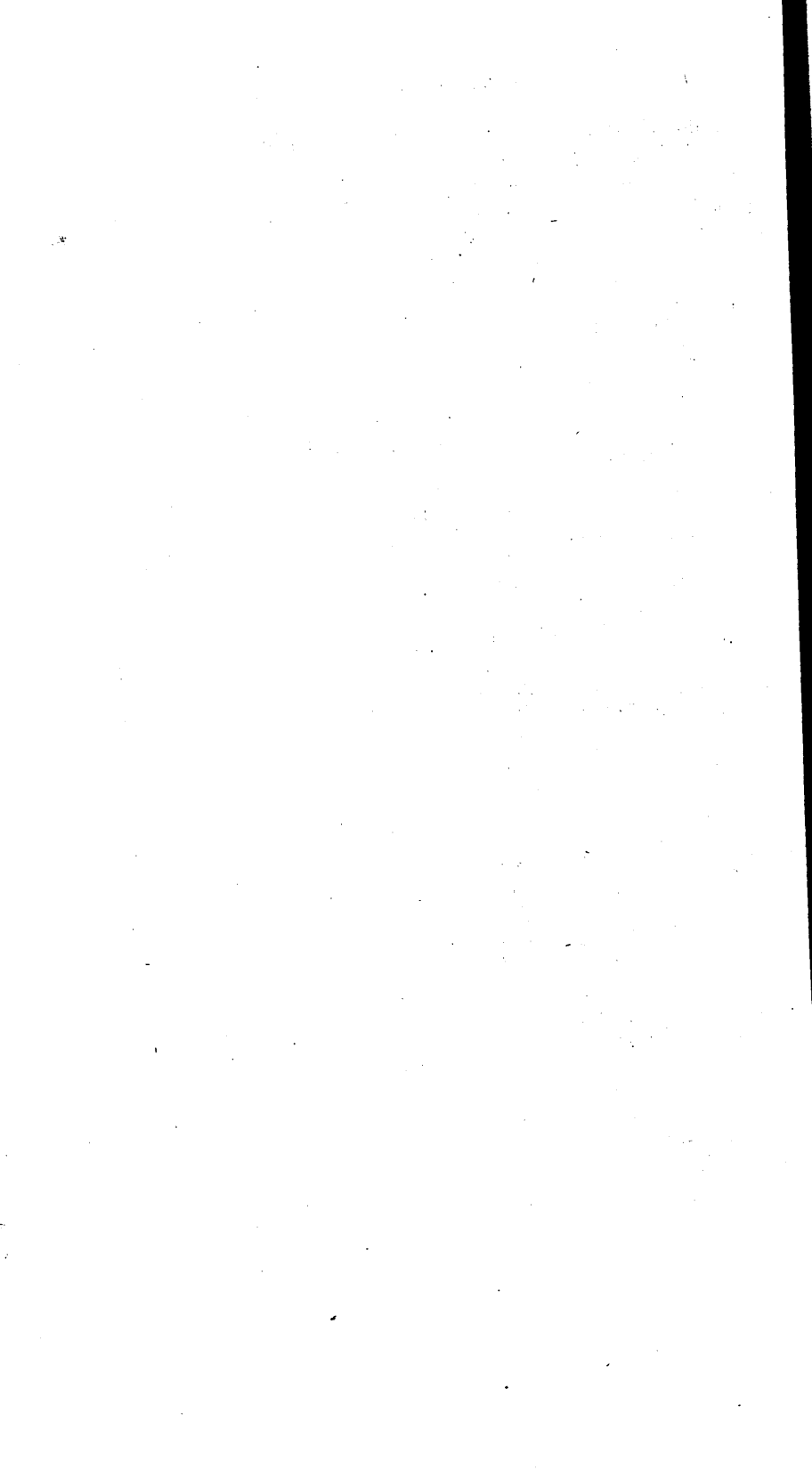
And having testified these things, he seals the testimony and opens the way for the accomplishment of all by his death. Your heavenly Apostle becomes a Priest and a Sacrifice at once: that no doubt might remain among men of his sincerity, in what even dying he ceased not to profess and avow. And that by his own propitiatory blood and mutual reconciliation might be wrought between God and you: that your hearts might be won to him,

and possessed with an ingenuous shame of your ever having been his enemies. And that his displeasure might for ever cease towards you, and be turned into everlasting friendship and love: that eternal redemption being obtained, heaven might be opened to you, and you finally be received to the glory of God; your hearts being bent thitherward and made willing to run through whatsoever difficulties of life or death to attain it. Do not think that Christ came into the world and died to procure the pardon of your sins, and so translate you to heaven; while your hearts should still remain cleaving to the earth. He came and returned to prepare a way for you; and then call, not drag you thither: that by his precepts, and promises, and example, and Spirit, he might form and fashion your souls to that glorious state; and make you willing to abandon all things for it. And lo! now the God of all grace is calling you by Jesus Christ unto his eternal glory. Direct then your eyes and hearts to that mark, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilized world, not to intend the proper business of our calling. It is your calling to forsake this world and mind the other; make haste then to quit yourselves of your entanglements, of all earthly dispositions and affections. Learn to live in this world as those that are not of it, that expect every day, and wish to leave it, whose hearts are gone already.

It is dreadful to die with pain and regret: to be forced out of the body; to die a violent death, and to go away with an unwilling reluctant heart. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness. Fain he would stay longer, but cannot. He hath not power over the spirit, to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death. He must away whether he will or no. And indeed much against his will. So it cannot but be, where there is not a previous knowledge and love of a better state, where the soul understands it not, and is not effectually attempered and framed to it.

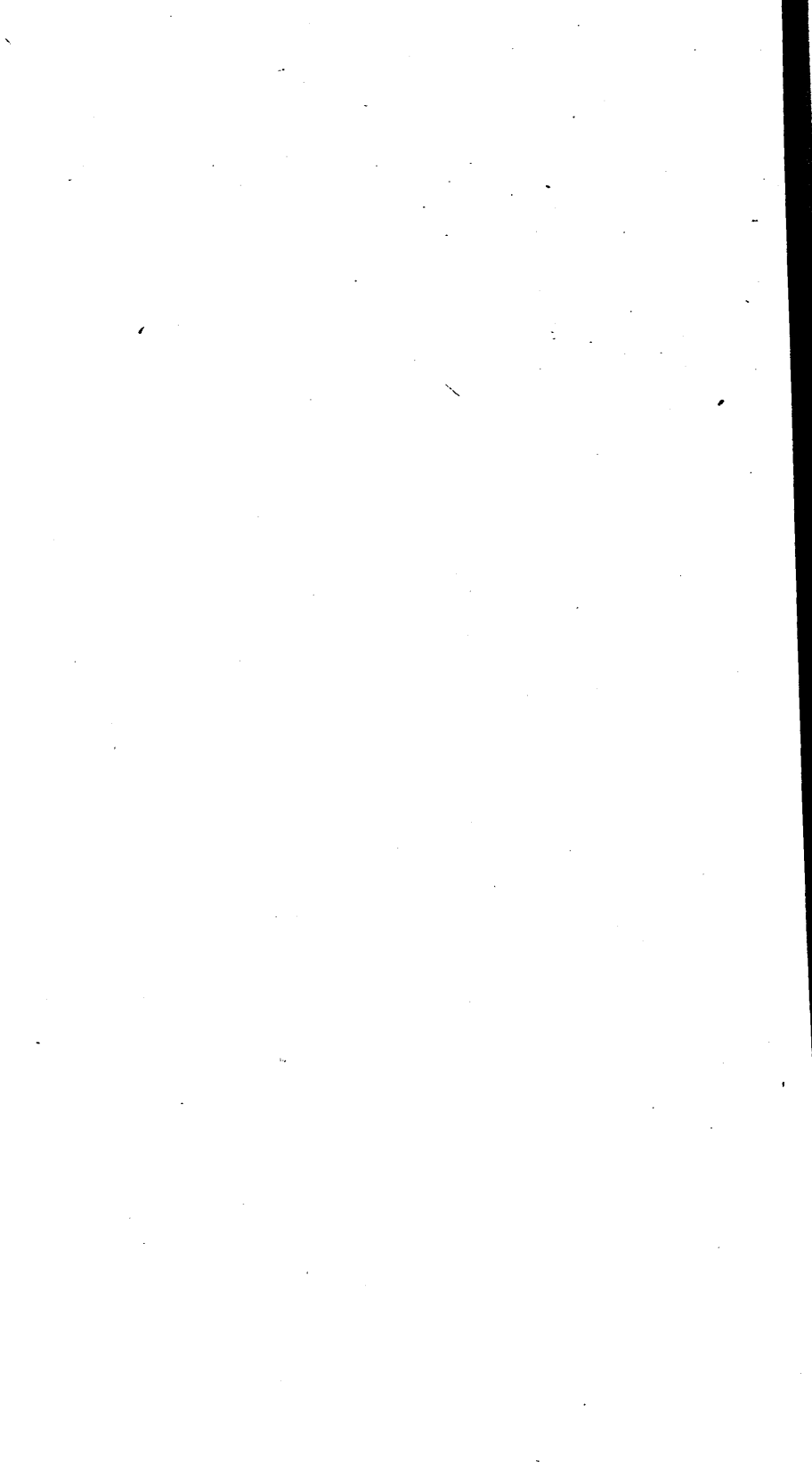
O get then the lovely image of the future glory into your minds. Keep it ever before your eyes. Make it familiar to your thoughts. Imprint daily there these words, I shall behold thy face, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness. And see that your souls be enriched with that righteousness, have inwrought into them that holy rectitude, that may dispose them to that blessed state. Then will you die with your own consent, and go away, not driven, but allured and drawn. You will go, as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads: as those that know whither you go, even to 'a state infinitely worthy of your desires and choice, and where it is best for you to be. You will part with your souls, not by a forcible separation, but a joyful surrender and resignation. They will dislodge from this earthly tabernacle, rather as putting it off than having it rent and torn away. Loosen yourselves from this body by degrees,

as we do any thing we would remove from a place where it sticks fast. Gather up your spirits into themselves. Teach them to look upon themselves as a distinct thing. Inure them to the thoughts of a dissolution. Be continually as taking leave. Cross and disprove the common maxim, and let your hearts, which they use to say are wont to die last, die first. Prevent death, and be mortified towards every earthly thing beforehand, that death may have nothing to kill but your body; and that you may not die a double death in one hour, and suffer the death of your body and of your love to it both at once. Much less that this should survive to your greater, and even incurable misery. Shake off your bands and fetters, the terrene affections that so closely confine you to the house of your bondage. And lift up your heads in expectation of the approaching jubilee, the day of your redemption; when you are to go out free, and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; when you shall serve, and groan, and complain no longer. Let it be your continual song, and matter of your daily praise, that the time of your happy deliverance is hastening on; that ere long you shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. That he hath not doomed you to an everlasting imprisonment within those close and clayey walls, wherein, you have been so long shut up from the beholding of his sight and glory. In the thoughts of this, while the outward man is sensibly perishing, let the inward revive and be renewed day by day. "What prisoner would be sorry to see the walls of his prison house (so a heathen speaks, Max. Tyr. Dissert. 41.) mouldering down, and the hopes arriving to him of being delivered out of that darkness that had buried him, of recovering his liberty, and enjoying the free air and light. What champion inured to hardship, would stick to throw off rotten rags, and rather expose a naked, placid, free body, to naked, placid, free air? The truly generous soul (so he a little above) "never leaves the body against its will." Rejoice that it is the gracious pleasure of thy good God, thou shalt not always inhabit a dungeon, nor lie amidst so impure and disconsolate darkness? that he will shortly exchange thy filthy garments for those of salvation and praise. The end approaches. As you turn over these leaves, so are your days turned over. And as you are now arrived to the end of this book, God will shortly write *finis* to the book of your life on earth, and shew you your name, written in heaven, in the book of that life which shall never end.





**THE**  
**VANITY**  
**OF THIS**  
**MORTAL LIFE:**  
**OR,**  
**OF MAN,**  
**CONSIDERED ONLY IN HIS**  
**PRESENT MORTAL STATE.**



TO THE  
DESERVEDLY HONORED,  
**JOHN UPTON, OF LUPTON, ESQ.**  
WITH THE MANY  
SURVIVING BRANCHES  
FORMERLY SPRUNG OUT OF THAT RELIGIOUS FAMILY, AND  
THE WORTHY CONSORTS  
OF ANY OF THEM.

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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, 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

\*Mr. Anthony Upton, the son of John Upton, of Lupton, Esq.

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; namely, 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 those 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 bodings, 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 review 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 disposal.

And I shall now take the liberty to add, my design in consenting to this request of yours (and I hope the same of your 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 honor of their families, yea, or for the glory of their nation: but how few are acted by that more laudable and en-

larged 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 endeavor, 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-despiciency 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 honor of his country be justly infamous, and thought worthy severest punishment; 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 principles 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, Mahometans, 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 honor, 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 vigor 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 tenor 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 honor, 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 labor 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 at first make. But give me leave to inculcate from it what was said to you when the occasion was fresh and new: that we labor 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 from a family long famous for so exemplary mutual love, and dispose him into

so remote a part, not permitting to most of his nearest relations the enjoyment of him for almost thirty years (and therein all the flower) of his age, and at last, when you 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 endeavor, 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.**

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Psal. 89. 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? Selah.*

We are not concerned to be particular and curious in the inquiry, touching the special reference or occasion of the foregoing complaints, from the 37 verse. It is enough to take notice, for our present purpose, that besides the evil which had already befallen the plaintiff, a farther 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 discourse with himself, representing the reason of that rough charge, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver," &c. As though he had said; 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 shew themselves: have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a phænomenon, 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 ab-

surdity. It is hard sure to design the supposal, (or 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 lightsome prospect, when in the next words we find him contemplating God's sworn loving-kindness unto David: (ver. 49.) the truth and stability whereof he at 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 19 verse of the psalm to the 38, 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, (ver. 27.) 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. ver. 29. 37.

That God himself meant it not so, experience and the event of things hath shown; and that these predictions cannot otherwise have had their accomplishment than in the succession of the spiritual and everlasting kingdom of the Messiah (whom God raised up out of his loins to sit on his throne Act. 2. 30.) 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, (ver. 28.—34.) 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: ver. 39. though he sufficiently expresses his confidence both before and after, that this could never be. 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 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. 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, ver. 30—34. All which is solemnly sealed up with this, Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lie unto David, ver. 35. So that, they that will make a scruple to accuse the Holy Ghost 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. Isa. 55. 1—5. 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. 23. 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 tenor 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 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 posterities' worldly greatness. And to put us out of doubt, our Saviour, (who well knew his spirit) expressly enough tells us, that he in spirit called him Lord, Matt. 22. 43. when he said, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy foot-stool, Psal. 110. 1. A plain discovery how he understood God's revelation touching the future concernments of his kingdom (and the covenant relating thereto,) namely, 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 Peter, (Act. 2. ver. 25. &c.) who after he had cited those lofty triumphant strains of David. Psal. 16. 8.—11. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be 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 shew me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more. All which he tells us, (ver. 25.) was spoken concerning Christ. He more expressly subjoins, (ver. 30.) 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; (ver. 31.) 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. nor can we think he thus rejoices, in another's resurrection, forgetting his own.

And yet we have a further evidence from the apostle Paul, who affirms, that the promise made to the fathers, God had fulfilled to their children, in that he had raised up Jesus again; 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. Act. 13. 32.—34. Which is now apparent, must be understood of eternal mercies; such as Christ's resurrection and triumph over the grave doth ensure 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 his faithful subjects through all the troubles of life and terrors of death (through both whereof he himself as their king and leader hath shewn 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 a dying, as we find him expressing, 2 Sam. 23. 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 forever more, 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, which is either false, a fiction, an appearance only, a shadow, or evanid thing; or which is useless, unprofitable, and to no valua-

ble 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.

I. It were vain, that is, little other than a shew, 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 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 shew; 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, &c. Psal. 62. 9. 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, namely, in respect of the *minuteness*, and—*instability* of this, his material and perishable being.

*First.* 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*, that is, 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 fullness 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 εἶδωλον, ψεῦδος (as are the expressions of a noble philosopher) *a mere semblance, or a lie.* Plotin. En. 2. 1. 6. And it is the language not of philosophers only, but of the Holy Ghost concerning all the nations of men, They are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Isa. 40. 17. 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 ?

*Secondly.* 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. Job 27. 19. 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, (Heracl.) All things flow, nothing stays ; after the manner of a river. The same thing which the apostle's words more elegantly express ; The fashion of this world passeth away. 1 Cor. 7. 31. The scheme, the shew, 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 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 shew, the pomp and glitter-

ing 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 shew, disquieteth himself in vain, &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. Job 20. 7, 8, 9. Psal. 73. 20.—39. 5. 6.

II. 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 inasmuch 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 best be done by taking some view,—of his nature, and—of the ends for which, upon that supposition, we must suppose him made.

*First.* 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. And 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. truth is great, &c.* In the mean time 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 management 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;

A capacity of an immortal state, that is, 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 unconceivable 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 subtilty or tenuity, and to the highest vigor, shall then become intelligent and rational, how is it that we observe not, as any matter is more subtile 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 agitation and collision of the minute parts of a 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 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 shew of reason, attribute these operations to any mere matter, that 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.

*Secondly*, 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 what 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.

1. 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.

(1.) Sense is actually the great dictator to the most of men, and *de facto, in fact*, determines them to the mark and scope which they pursue, and animates the whole pursuit. Not that sense is by itself capable of designating 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 2. 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 science to tend hogs.

(2) 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 labor 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, decends to others, little better the case, when they that succeed are all hastening down also into the same ignoble dust. Besides, there is an increase of sorrow, both because the objects of knowledge do but increase and 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 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 labor 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 a 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 endeavor 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 tranquility their study, or that should intend their thoughts and endeavors to the finding out the exactest 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 an attiring 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 designs or care? Who would not rather bless himself in a more rational neglect and regardlessness of all human affairs; and account an unconcerned indifference the highest wisdom? Yea

(3.) If we suppose *religion* (which we need not because it is mentioned in this order conceive exclusive of reason, but rather perfective of it: for 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 honor 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 alloy and abatement must it needs be to the vigor 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 light-some scene.

To think every time one enters that blessed presence, 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 taste 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 endeavors 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 labor 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 farther 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 lapsed 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 endeavors of his life and all his powers in vain, (for certainly his principal endeavor 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 and 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 dishonorable 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, speaks a low design or no design at all, but either a humor to trifle, or a mischievous nature and disposition, and would never fail to be thought inglorious and infamous; as may be seen in the instances of Sardanapalus' 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 any 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 own 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 delighteth in these things, Jer. 9. 24.) and the maintaining the just honor 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 forever. Rom. 11. 36.

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 maim 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* 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 favor, 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 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 shew 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 it is from no defect of *mercy*, that all men are not equally favored 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.) 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 an 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 pure 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 shews, 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 one's self 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 mean time 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 conscience 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 over-awe sinners, the execution may at least right himself: and that, in the mean time, he do not (that which would least of all become him, and which are most repugnant to his nature) make 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 a 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 restraint their most innate, reluctant inclinations; and in the mean time expect the administrations of providence to be such, towards them, that they shall find harder usage all the 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 recompense. 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 enthrallment 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 honorable 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. And

(2.) How congruous and agreeable would this supposition prove to the goodness of God? As the 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. Psal. 119. 68. 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. Psal. 33. 5. 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 to 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 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, 2 Cor. 5. 4. (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. 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 own 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 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 dishonorable 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. Cor. 15. 19.) 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 dishonorable 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 affront 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 shall 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 humor, 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 rising 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 days 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 con-

fine 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, and a torture to ourselves, to speak it as our settled apprehensions 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.

1. 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 farther 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 he hereafter perfected into 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 reconcilableness, 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 consequences 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 acclamations and praises. We can fasten upon nothing exceptionable or unaccountable, yea, or that is not highly laudable and praise-worthy 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 darker 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 amusement 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 vail, 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 endeavors about such things, and even the vilest and most despicable of these; and so live not to our own dishonor 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 most men 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 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 provenance 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 occasions 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 neighborhood, 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 rend the sacred name of God, and make proof of their high valor 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 over-match 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 sentiment 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 favor 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 over-power, 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 besides himself that should say the same of the composition of a clock or a watch, though it were a thousand times more sup-

posable. 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 how 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 over-shot 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 that requires it to be done as a work of darkness. Neither yet is it a vain-glorious ostentation, or the affectation of making shew of an excellency above the vulgar pitch, that I persuade to: but a modest, sober avowing of our high 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 honor 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 shew itself; and while it doth not glare, yet cannot forbear to shine. We should endeavor 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 with 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 them.

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; (Heb. 11.) 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 endeavor 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 them : to keep our passions under a strict rein 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 endeavored, 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 over 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 humorous 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 vigor 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 waived, "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 confi-

dence, 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 one's self 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 shew 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 therefore in the mean time. 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 goods, knowing within themselves they have in heaven a better and enduring substance:" nor 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 ingulphed: 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 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 requisiteness 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 favorite to his much more glorious sovereign, whom he is shortly to attend at home could have no great temptation to sue for offices and honors, 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 honor and glory which is conjunct with immortality, (Rom, 2. 7.) 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 favors 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 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 various 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 the 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 favorable 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, contempered only to this sublunary region, concorporate with the earth, so as to partake in all its pangs and paroxisms, 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 concernments 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 appearances 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 endeavors 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 may 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 over-much 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, *Non qua eundum est sed qua itur: not the way they ought, but which they see others go before them. Sen.*

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 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 commodious, 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 concerns 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 were 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 any 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 endeavor whereof is a further congruity in the present case, namely,

[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 placè forever.

This we ought to be constantly intent upon, as the business of our lives, our daily work, to get our spirits so attempered 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 as 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 endeavors of preparing ourselves, it were a like thing as if an unbred peasant should go about to thrust himself, with an expectation of high honors 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 uninstruèted 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 deflexions and obliquities of our spirits, settle our methods, and 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 upon 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 loth 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 endeavor 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 endeavor 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 a 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 enwrapt in its own darkness, and hidden from his sight, and be an everlasting tormentor 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 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 aim to dwell forever, 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 person, of his high office and power, of his merciful design and great achievements for the restoring of lapsed and lost souls: 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 mortality 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, enroll 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 and 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.

[6.] 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 hereafter; 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' over-reaching 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 shew 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 so 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 but 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 centering 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 disform 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 passage) indecencies are to be avoided, because of those blessed spirits. 1. Cor. 11. 10. May we not then be ashamed, that they should discern our terrene dispositions; and see us come so unwillingly into their consort 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, 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 unaccountable 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 any 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 content, 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 loth 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 able otherwise 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 disposal 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 honorable enterprizes, 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 farther? These are too narrow bounds for a truly great spirit: Any thing that is tinctured with earth, or savors 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

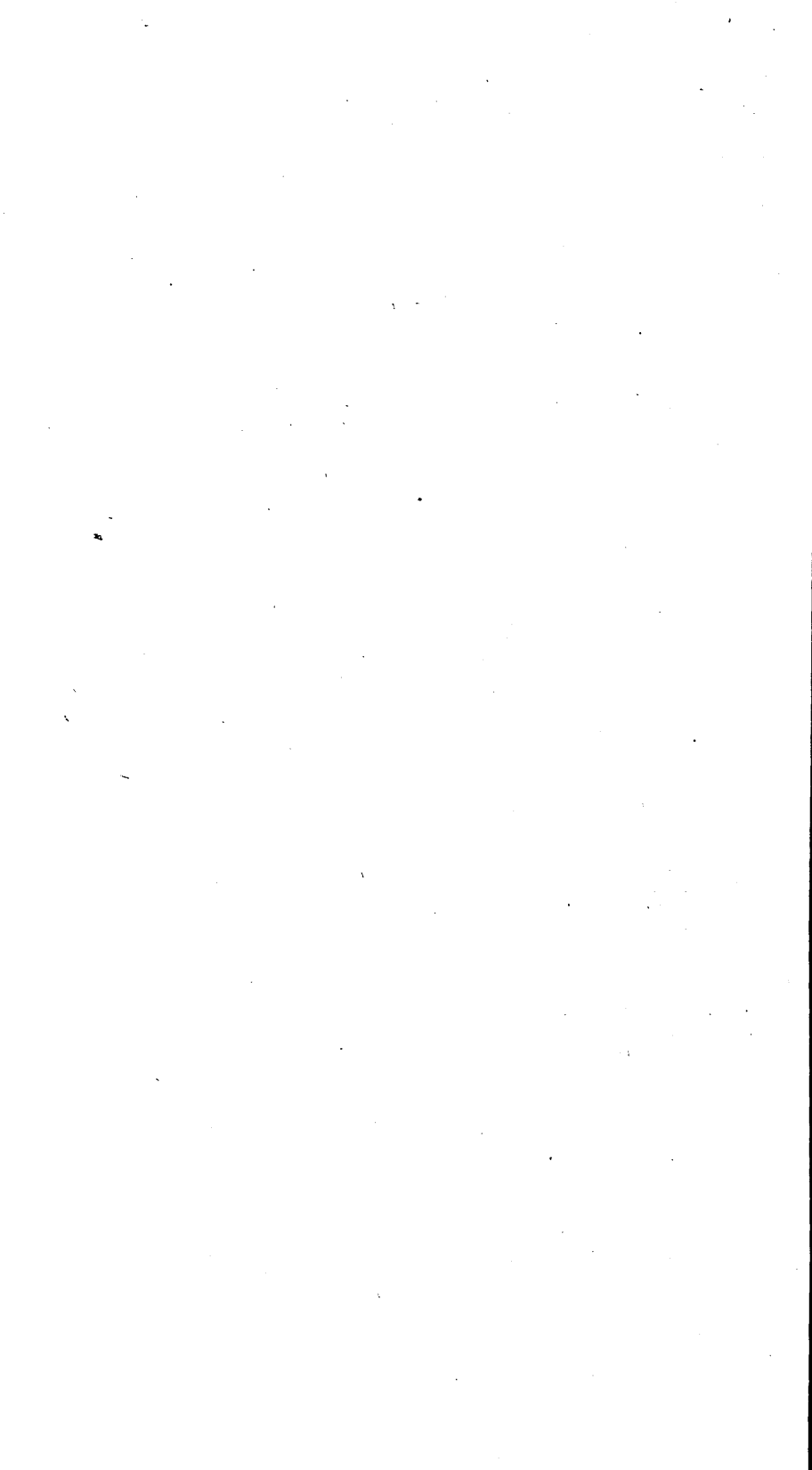
this earth, which they cannot endure to think of leaving, holds their hearts.

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, who shall change their vile bodies (the bodies of their humiliation, or low abject state,) and make them like his own glorious body. Phil. 3. 20. 21. God, who will render to every man according to his works, will give them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek honor and glory and immortality, eternal life. Rom. 2. 6. 7. 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. Col. 3. 2. 3. 4. 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 the 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) because we love this world better, and our hearts centre in it as our most desirable good.

Therefore we see how unreasonable 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, (namely, 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 endeavor of getting our souls purged from the dross of this world, and enamored 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.



## BIOGRAPHY

OF

### DR. WILLIAM BATES.

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The author of the *Discourses on the Four last things*, which occupy the remainder of this volume, was DR. WILLIAM BATES. Of his general claims to the remembrance both of scholars and of christians we have abundant evidence, not only in his works, but in the very high estimation, in which he was held by the best men of all parties among his contemporaries. Probably no one of the non-conformist divines of his age was so *generally* popular, or sustained so high a reputation as a writer, especially in regard to his style and manner; and yet the biographical notices preserved respecting him are peculiarly scanty. The following sketch comprises all the important facts, which I have been able to discover.

Dr. Bates was born Nov. 1625, of respectable parents, his father being a physician and an author of some eminence. We have no farther account of him, except that he received a suitable school education, till his entrance at the university. He was sent to Cambridge and admitted first, though the year is not mentioned, of Emanuel College, from which he removed to Kings in 1644. He commenced Bachelor of Arts in 1647 at the age of 22, and applying himself to the study of divinity, soon became a distinguished and popular preacher. From this time he seems to have enjoyed the favor of all parties, as a man of great learning, talents and piety, till after the restoration of Charles II. At some period during this interval he became fixed as a preacher in the metropolis, being made vicar, and receiving the valuable living, of St. Dunstan's in the West. He continued to discharge the duties of his station till 1662, when the celebrated act of uniformly occasioned his removal. Believing that he could not consistently with his duty conform to the requirements of this act, he surrendered his living and preached a farewell sermon to his

people, Aug. 17th of that year. Of his residence or employments immediately after this event no definite account is given. We find him in 1665 taking the oath required of non-conformists by the *five-mile act*, and it seems not to have been many years after he left his charge at St. Dunstan's till he became settled over a dissenting congregation at Hackney near London, where he spent the remainder of his life.

Apart from his more ordinary employment and influence as a minister of the gospel, Dr. Bates acted a conspicuous and important part in relation to the more general and public interests of religion. He was among those ministers, who took an active part in the restoration of Charles II. and was so distinguished in the view of that monarch as to be made soon after one of his chaplains in ordinary. By royal mandate, issued in November of the same year, he was admitted to the degree of Doctor in Divinity at Cambridge university. Subsequently the Deanery of Coventry and Litchfield was offered to him, but refused from conscientious scruples; and so high did his character stand at this time, that it is said he might have had any Bishoprick in the kingdom, would his principles have permitted an entire conformity to the established church.

In the various efforts that were made to effect a reconciliation of parties, and comprehend the dissenters within the establishment, Dr. Bates was much consulted, and took a very active part. He was one of the commissioners at the Savoy conference in 1660; and when three of the commissioners on each side were selected to discuss certain points in dispute more particularly, he was chosen on the part of the Presbyterians, together with Mr. Baxter and Dr. Jacomb. During the whole of this debate he is said to have conducted himself with great wisdom and moderation, and to have spoken so "very solidly, judiciously, and pertinently," as to procure great respect from his brethren. When again, in 1667—8, a treaty was proposed, by some of the more moderate in the establishment, for a comprehension of such of the Dissenters as could be brought into the church, and a toleration of the rest, Dr. Bates was one of those appointed by the dissenters to draw up a scheme of the alterations which they desired. In the same year we find him concerned with Drs. Manton and Jacomb in presenting an address to the king, with a view to obtain relief for the non-conformists, but without any ultimate success. He was again engaged in 1674 or 5 in the promotion of peace; and by their request, in company with some of his associates, had an interview with Tillotson and Stillingfleet for this purpose. In these men he found a congenial spirit, and terms were agreed upon; but other bishops opposing, the movement was unsuccessful.

In the mean time the strength of his principles was tried, not only by the loss or abandonment of his higher hopes in the

church, but by his exposure to those severe persecutions, which occasionally prevailed against the dissenters. He seems not, like Mr. Baxter, however, to have been ever imprisoned, or otherwise deprived of his personal liberty, though he fearlessly exposed himself to the displeasure of the persecutors.

The accession of William and Mary placed the dissenters in more favorable circumstances; and the part which Dr. Bates was called to act on this and subsequent occasions, shows the place which he still held among them. The dissenting ministers in London and the neighborhood being assembled for the purpose of congratulating their majesties on their accession to the crown, Dr. Bates was chosen as speaker, and addressed each of them in a manner suited to the occasion. On the death of the queen also he preached a funeral sermon, which is preserved among his works, and presented to the bereaved monarch an address of condolence on behalf of his dissenting brethren. He seems to have been, on all important occasions, the most approved organ of the dissenters in their intercourse with the court and the established church; and was on terms of intimacy and friendship with Dr. Tillotson, which continued to the death of that distinguished prelate. Among the dissenters, he was closely and confidentially associated with Baxter, Manton, Jacomb, Howe and other leading men, till one by one these eminent divines, who had formed so bright a constellation during the latter half of the 17th century, were removed to a better world.

Dr. Bates seems to have experienced little of the usual infirmities of age in regard to his intellectual powers, even to the close of his life. His memory, says Howe, was admirable, and never failed, that any one could observe, not impaired by his great age of 74. He still took his turn at one of those public Lectures, which the leading ministers of the day kept up by preaching in rotation, and was himself to have preached the Tuesday lecture at Salter's Hall in London, on the day, when Howe was unexpectedly called there to preach his funeral sermon. He died at Hackney the death of the righteous, on the 14th of July, 1699, in the 74th year of his age.

Of the person and character of Dr. Bates we have a valuable description, in the funeral sermon above mentioned, by Howe, who enjoyed, as he tells us, "the opportunity and great pleasure of his acquaintance above forty years." He speaks here of his "graceful mien and the comeliness of his person," fitting him "to stand before kings," as he had often occasion to do. "His aspect and deportment," he adds, "was not austere, but both decently grave and amiable, such as might command at once both reverence and love, and was herein not a lying, but a true picture of his mind." "His *natural endowments and abilities* appeared to every observer great, much beyond the common rate. His *apprehension*—quick and clear; his *reasoning*

*faculty*—acute, prompt, and expert; his *judgment*—penetrating and solid, stable and firm; his *wit*—never vain or light, but most facetious and pleasant, by the ministry of a *fancy* both very vigorous and lively.

“His *learning*, and acquired knowledge of things, usually reckoned to lie within that compass, was a vast treasure. He had lived a long, studious life, an earnest gatherer, and, as the phrase is, devourer of books,” yet, “he knew how to choose, and was curious in his choice.”

His *conversation* is represented by Howe, as uncommonly interesting and useful, seasoned, as occasion served, with facetious pleasantry, enriched by his ample and varied stores of knowledge, but “interwoven with religion from the settled temper and habit of his soul. Into what transports of admiration of the love of God have I seen him break forth! With what high flights of thought and affection was he wont to speak of the heavenly state! even like a man much more of kin to that other world than to this.”

“And for his *ministerial qualifications and labors*,” he proceeds, “do I need to say any thing to themselves, who had the benefit thereof? Either of them, who have so many years lived under his most fruitful, enlightening, quickening, edifying ministry? whether week by week as his beloved, peculiarly privileged charge at Hackney, that mournful, desolate people, who have been fed with the heavenly, hidden manna, and with the fruits of the tree of life, that grows in the midst of the Paradise of God, so prepared and presented to them, and made pleasant to their taste, as few besides have ever had. Or do I need to inform such inhabitants of London, as in a doubled three monthly course have for many years, in throng-assembly, been wont to hang upon his lips?”

As a writer, he seems to have been much admired by his contemporaries; and Howe applies to him the remark made by Bishop Wilkins of Mr. Baxter, “*that he cultivated every subject he handled, and had he lived in an age of the Fathers he would have been one.*” He was particularly celebrated for the elegance of his style, which was considered “even inimitably polite and fine.” In this respect he probably approaches nearer, than almost any other distinguished writer of the age, to our more modern standards of taste in writing.

His theoretical and practical views of divine truth and of personal piety will be found to coincide in all important points with those of Baxter, Howe, and the other divines, with whom he was associated. He was less bold in speculation, apparently, than either Baxter or Howe; and in unfolding the principles of practical piety he derives less aid than they do from the general principles of philosophy. He is consequently less profound in his views of religion, considered subjectively; and was not led,

as Howe was; more especially by his fondness for Platonism, to develop its psychological relations, and turn the attention of his readers immediately to their own inward being.

“His judgment in ecclesiastical matters, says Howe, was to be known by his practice, and it was such, that he needed not care who knew it. He was for *entire union* of all *visible christians*, (or *saints* or *believers*, which in scripture are equivalent terms,)—meaning by *Christianity* what is essential thereto, whether doctrinal or practical, as by *humanity* we mean what is essential to man, severing accidents as not being of the essence, and by *visibility* the *probable appearance* thereof,—and for free communion of all such of whatever persuasion in *extra-essential* matters, *if they pleased*. And this design he vigorously pursued, as long as there was any hope, desisting when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable thereto; from an apprehension, that when principles on all hands were so easily accommodable, and yet there was with too many a remaining insuperable reluctancy to *the thing itself*, God must work the cure, and not men. Accounting also in the mean time, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better to cast a mantle over the failings of brethren, than be concerned to detect and expose them. Knowing that if we be principally solicitous for the *name of God*, he will in his own way and time take care of *ours*. And in this sentiment he was not alone.”

The works published by Dr. Bates during his life, were the following. 1. Discourses on the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the divinity of the Christian religion. 2. The Harmony of the Divine attributes. 3. The great duty of resignation. 4. The danger of prosperity. 5. Sermons on the forgiveness of sins. 6. The sure trial of uprightness. 7. The Four last things. 8. Of spiritual perfection. 9. Eleven sermons on several occasions. 10. A sermon on the death of Queen Mary. 11. Funeral sermons on Dr. Manton, Dr. Jaccob, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Clarkson and Mr. Benjamin Ashhurst. 12. Discourses on divine meditation. 13. On the fear of God.

These were collected and republished soon after his death in one volume folio, and afterwards a posthumous work on the Everlasting Rest of the Saints, in an octavo volume. A second edition was published in 1723, including the whole of these, and his funeral sermon by Mr. Howe, in one volume folio. An octavo edition was published at London, in 1815. Besides these he was concerned as editor in collecting and publishing the lives of eminent persons written by various authors in Latin, and entitled, “*Vitæ Selectorum aliquot Virorum, qui doctrina, dignitate, aut pietate inclaruere.*” London, 1681. 4to.

The *discourses on the Four last things* have been selected for this work, as being on the whole best adapted to the object

which I have in view. They exhibit a bold and impressive view of the tendencies and the ultimate ends of our beings, and I trust may be found instrumental in promoting that rational contemplation of divine truth, and that deep seriousness, which distinguished the christians of that age—which are so much needed in our own—and which in every age are the appropriate characteristics of rational beings and especially of christians.

THE EDITOR.



THE

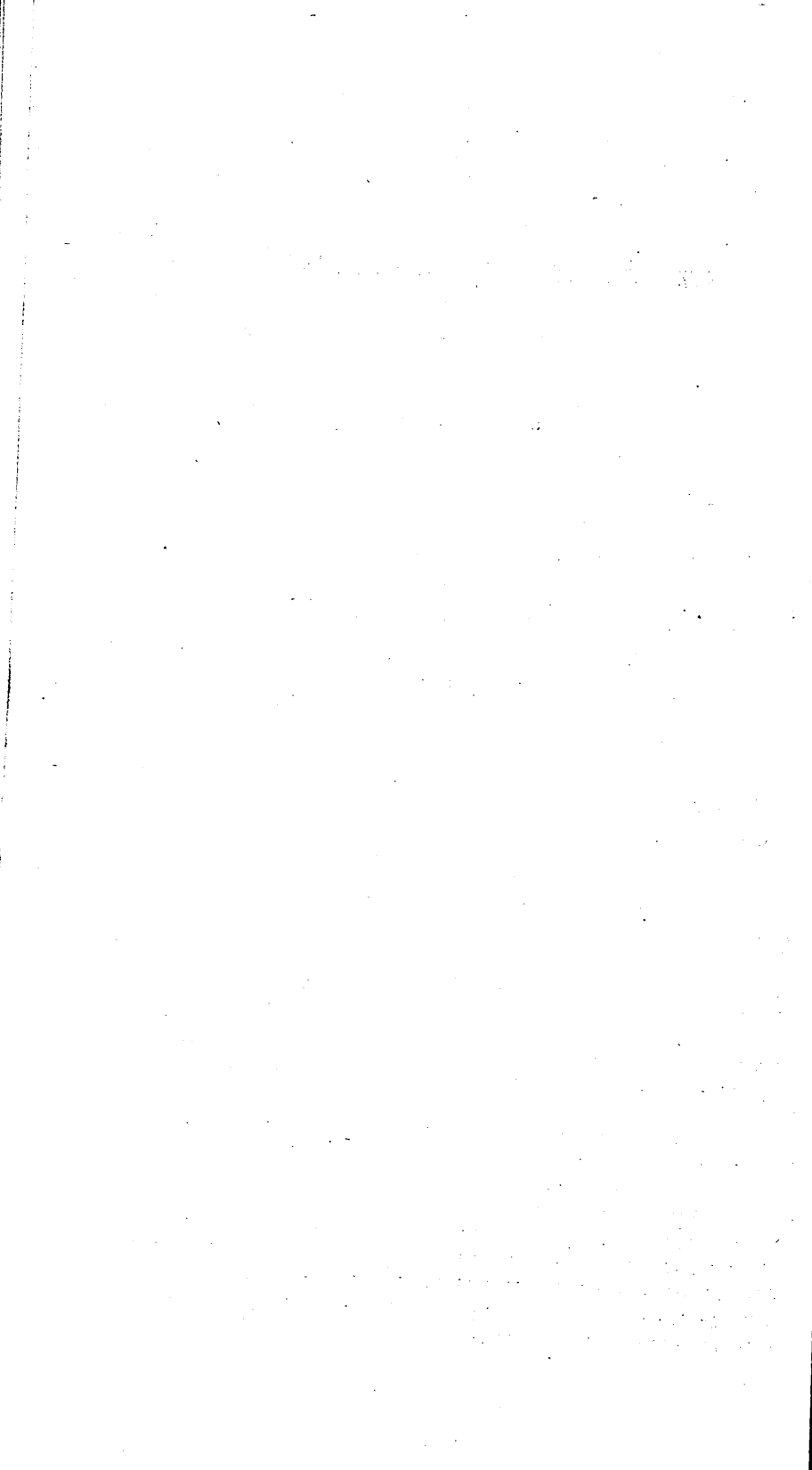
**FOUR LAST THINGS:**

NAMELY:

**DEATH, JUDGMENT, HEAVEN AND HELL,**

**PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED AND APPLIED:**

**IN SEVERAL DISCOURSES.**



## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

RACHEL LADY RUSSEL.

Of all affairs, for the compassing whereof men are so diligent and solicitous, there is none of that absolute necessity, and high importance, as the preparation for *Death* and *Judgment*, and the immediate consequence of them, *Heaven* and *Hell*, to obtain the one, and escape the other. This requires the whole man in his best vigor, and should be the work of the day; but 'tis usually delayed till the melancholy evening of age, or the twilight of death. The trifles of this world divert them from that main business, to which all other things should be subordinate. It equally deserves wonder and compassion, that death which is so constantly in men's view, should be so seldom the matter of their application, when all are of the same glass, made of the same frail natural principles; and no argument is more frequently and pathetically urged upon them.

'Tis not strange that deep truths, which by the strength and exercise of the mind are drawn like gold out of the mines, have no efficacy upon those that are not capable of understanding them: But the doctrines of *Death* and *Judgment*, *Heaven* and *Hell*, are plain truths, by natural, moral, and divine evidence known to all; yet no more affect men, than a paradox of incredible novelty. If the doctrine of eternal Judgment were but a probable opinion, controverted with equal arguments, yet 'tis a matter of such vast concernment, that reason requires all our possible diligence to avoid an eternal evil, that may be the loss of celestial glory, and the torments of Hell: But since 'tis an infallible truth, as certain as the word of God, 'tis a miracle to astonish Heaven and earth, that men live as carelessly as if they should never die, and die as securely as if they should not live in the next state, to receive the just punishment of their sins. They are fearless whilst death is far off in their thoughts; and when age has snowed upon their heads, that no marks of decaying nature should appear, make their own winter to flourish with

another's spring : But 'tis in vain, for Death knows them under their disguise, and will not stay beyond the appointed time. And in that decisive hour, infidelity or presumption hardens men to pass as quietly and boldly, in appearance, into another world, as unfeigned faith, and a regular lively hope in the promises of the gospel. But as deceitful physic stops the fit for the present, that will return more violently and fatally afterwards ; so a counterfeit short peace transmits them to everlasting sorrows.

The design of the following DISCOURSE is to awaken men, that they may be wise and consider their latter end ; to secure an interest in our Redeemer, who has disarmed death of its sting, and made that enemy our friend ; and to practice dying every day, by withdrawing their hearts from the vanities of this transient world, that have such a pernicious influence to excite the carnal appetites, and stupify the conscience, which are the true causes of their sin and misery. And what can be more powerful to render them temperate and sober in the use of present things, vigilant and serious in their preparations for their great and final change, than the remembrance that *death* is immediately attended with *judgment*, and *judgment* with blessedness or misery forever ? I know this argument is naturally displeasing, but the usefulness should recommend it to our most solemn and composed thoughts, before all the vain entertainments of the fancy and sensual affections. As herbs of medicinal virtue, that are not pleasing to the sight or smell, yet are valued by the skilful as treasures of health ; and preferred before the fairest flowers that are perfumed and painted by nature, so as to excel the richest lusture of Solomon's glory.

The body is in a continual consumption, and no art can long preserve it : but whilst the *outward man* is irrecoverably declining and wasting, if the *inward man* be ascending and renewing to perfection, the advantage is incomparable. O how comfortable is it to a holy believer in the parting hour to commit his spirit into the hands of his heavenly father ! (for thus he is authorized and encouraged by our Saviour's example) and *lay down the flesh to rest in hope* : for Christ is the guardian of the grave, *has the keys of death*, and will revive the bodies of his saints incorruptible and immortal, the copies of his own glorious body.

The immediate recompenses of eternal judgment, Heaven and Hell, are worthy of our most attentive and applicative thoughts, that we obtain the one, and escape the other. Heaven is the true happiness of the reasonable creature, and is the first and last in the order of things desirable ; the first for its attractive excellence, the last in its consummate fruition. This may be certainly and perpetually enjoyed by all who sincerely and diligently seek it. If in the very different states of life here, there were any incapable of eternal life, or that have another object for their last end, there might be some reason why they should

be coldly affected towards celestial happiness, and to justify their sole pretensions to the things of time, wherein their interests are confined: But the offer of heaven regards all that upon God's terms will accept it. The most sensible inequality that riches, dignity, or any temporal accident makes between men here, is so true a nothing in comparison of eternal glory, that it makes no difference of one from another as to the obtaining it. For this reason it most nearly concerns every person, first to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, as the only way to ascend to it.

The serious consideration of everlasting hell prepared for unreformed sinners, is most necessary and useful, tho' carnal men are extremely averse from thinking on that terrible object. For this is the first motive that turns men from sin to holiness. The joys of heaven being spiritual and divine, have no attractive influence upon the carnal affections, would never convert and reform any; but the torment of fire being most evident and vehement to sense, is strongly represented by the imagination, and moves the affections. How many by solemn and believing thoughts of the unquenchable fire, have felt the miracle upon the three children in the furnace renewed in themselves, their strong cords and obstinate habits of sin burnt asunder, and their powers restored to the freedom of duty, the blessed liberty of obedience? In this respect the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, that directs us in the way to blessedness.

Madam, I shall not attempt the celebrating your ladyship's virtues, that render you a bright ornament of your sex, and more truly honorable than your noble descent and alliance: But direct my best desires to God, that your family may be a singular and eminent example of the divine favor; that the fading gloss of this world may not deceive you, but *your heart may be above, where your treasure is*; that you may live to God, and your soul, for heaven and eternity.

I am, MADAM,

Your Honor's very humble

And faithful servant,

WILLIAM BATES.



# OF DEATH.

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HEB. II. 15.

*And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

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## CHAPTER I.

The coherence of the text opened; wherein the proofs of the Eternal Deity of Christ are clearly alledged from scripture. An account given of the reasons of his incarnation. In what respects the Devil is said to have the power of death. The death of Christ frees his people from the tormenting fear of death. An account of death's entrance into the world, in a threefold respect.

In the first chapter of this epistle, the proofs of the eternal Deity of Christ are produced with that evidence of scripture-light, that only a veiled heart, obstinate infidelity can resist. The medium which the inspired penman makes use of, is, the comparing him with the angels, the most noble flower of the creation, and shewing that he is infinitely dignified above them. This he does by a strong connexion of arguments: First, by his title that is divinely high and peculiar to himself. He is declared by the testimony of the eternal Father to *be his Son*, ver. 4, 5. in the most proper and sublime sense: *begotten of him*, and therefore having the same essential perfections of the Godhead in their uncreated glory. But the angels are not dignified with this name in any places of scripture, where the excellency of the angels is in the fullest terms expressed. And that this name is taken from his nature, is clearly proved: because adoration is due to him upon this account, even from the angels of the highest order. When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him, ver. 6.

Divine worship is a prerogative inseparably annexed to the Deity, both upon the account of the supreme excellencies of the nature of God and his relation to angels and men as creator and preserver, the fountain of their being and happiness. This,

without the most open defiance of his authority, cannot be given to a mere creature; and by the command of God himself is to be performed as a respect due to the filial Godhead, Deut. 6. 13. and 10. 20. The argument proceeds from the name to the offices. Of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire, ver. 7. They are the prime instruments of his providence, most zealous and active to accomplish his pleasure. But the Son is God, not by analogy and deputation, as princes are, nor with a limitation and diminution, as Moses was made a God to Pharaoh, but absolutely and really as subsisting in the divine nature: and consequently he is the supreme king, and to him the ensigns of majesty divinely royal are ascribed: But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom, ver. 8. Whereas the sceptres of earthly kings are often unrighteously managed, and their thrones ruinously fall. There is a further confirmation from his works, that are divinely great and glorious, wherein no creature has any share of Efficiency. The making of the world is ascribed to him: Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands, ver. 10.

The divine attributes, the peculiar character of the Deity, belong to him: eternity and immutability. The most solid parts of the visible creation shall perish and be changed: But thou remainest, and art the same. His life is an entire, uniform, unchangeable perfection. His glory and felicity are in the same invariable tenor for ever possessed by him. Lastly, the Son sits in that quality at the right hand of the Father, ver. 13. in the society of empire, as equal to him in power and honor, commanding all in the visible and invisible world, most easily and irresistibly, though gradually, subduing his enemies to a consummate victory. But the angels, so numerous and powerful, *are ministering spirits*, ver. 14. employed for the defence and benefit of the Church.

From this summary account we may understand how firmly the Divinity of Christ is established in the scripture. For those passages of the prophets, that speak of the God of Israel as creator, and the sole object of adoration, are directly referred to Jesus Christ. And the name Jehovah, Psal. 97. 9. the majesty of which consists in its being incommunicable, is attributed to him. This is the foundation upon which the whole fabric of the gospel is built. The office of mediator in the prophetic, priestly, and regal administration, is necessarily joined with the divinity of his person. And the revelation of it from heaven, is as clear as the sun is visible in the firmament. All the difficulties in our conceiving this great mystery of Godliness, are but like the shadows that attend the light. And all the heretical subtilties to pervert the sense of such plain and positive texts, are as impertinent as impious.



This being established, the apostle proceeds to give an account of the Son of God's assuming the human nature, and submitting to sufferings and death. This is a divine secret so miraculously strange, that the contrivance was without the compass of the angelical minds, and the discovery of it is only by supernatural revelation; but when revealed, the account of it is so open and consentaneous to reason, as being the most congruous means for the illustration of God's glory in the saving lost men, that the human mind, if not deeply corrupted with the tincture of prejudice, must consent to it as "worthy of all acceptation."

The substance of his reasoning is this: That it was the product of the most wise, merciful, and righteous counsel of God, that the Saviour of men should have communion with them in their nature, that he might have a right to redeem them by his alliance and propinquity: for he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all one, Chap. 2. 11. and that he might undergo sufferings, even to death, for the price of their redemption, and the remedy of their infirmities. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: And deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lives subject to bondage."

The devil is said to have the power of death:

1. Because he induces men to commit sin, that meritoriously renders them liable to death. He tempted the first man *cum effectu*, and "was a murderer from the beginning."

2. In that he inspires them with furious thoughts, and inflames their passions, from whence proceed strifes and wars, that efficiently cause death. He is supreme in all the arts of mischief, and always intent upon evil. It is by his instigation that men become more like raging beasts, animated and bent on mutual slaughter.

3. Because he is many times the executioner of God's wrath, and inflicts death upon rebellious and incorrigible sinners. It is recorded by the Psalmist, That God cast upon the Egyptians the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels, Psal. 78. 49. those princes of the air, the instruments of the thunder, and fiery storms of hail that destroyed them.

4. Because he makes death more formidable to sinners, by heightening their guilty fears of God's tribunal. The false spirit tempts men to sin by many blandishments, but afterward he is a severe accuser of them to God, and to themselves.

Lastly, This title may signify his tormenting sinners with unrelenting cruelty in hell, which is the second death.

Now these evils being the penal consequence of sin, our Saviour by his death appeased the injured justice of God, and thereby destroyed the cruel tyranny of the Devil. As the lamb of God, in the notion of a sacrifice, he overcomes our spiritual en-

emies. Sin, Satan and death, lie vanquished at the foot of his cross. Besides, our Saviour having felt such sorrows and infirmities as are usual to his people, by that correspondence and resemblance between them, is compassionately inclined to relieve them.

I shall now insist upon the blessed privilege of believers set down in the text, viz.

*That Jesus Christ by his death frees his people from the servile, tormenting fear of death.*

In prosecuting the point, I shall, 1. Consider the account the scripture gives of death's entrance into the world. 2. Shew what the fear of death includes, and the bondage consequent to it. 3. How the death of Christ frees us from the thralldom of that fear. 4. Who are partakers of this blessed privilege. And then apply it.

I. The scripture gives an account of death's entrance into the world, in a threefold respect. 1. As the desert of sin. 2. As the effect of the divine decree. 3. As the sentence of the law.

1. As the desert of sin. The first design of the Creator was his own glory in conjunction with the happiness of man. He was made accordingly holy in perfection, placed in Paradise, and his state contained all the ingredients of felicity proper to his nature. He was capable of dying, as sad experience proves; yet no accident from without, no distemper from within had impaired his vigor, and made him actually subject to death without sin. Whilst innocent he was immortal, not from everlasting principles of nature, but by divine preservation; of which the tree of life was the ordained means and sacramental pledge. For God unchangeably loves his own image: And though by his sovereignty and absolute power he may resume the being he gives, yet his goodness and covenant were a sacred assurance that man's happy life should run parallel with his perseverance in his duty. This immortality was not the singular privilege of Adam's person, but had been the inheritance of all his progeny. But he soon revolting from his just obedience, of immortal became mortal, and according to the original establishment of propagation, transmitted his nature, with the guilt and poison of sin to all his posterity. Thus by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, Rom. 3. 12. As his obedience had been rewarded, so his rebellion is punished in all that naturally descend from him. From hence it is, that so numerous a part of mankind are cut off before the commission of actual sin. Death enters into the forge of life, and destroys the conception that newly began to live. And what is more righteous than that man, when he disobeyed the author of life, should forfeit his life and blessedness? The soul voluntarily lost the spiritual life, by forsaking God, therefore unwillingly loses the natural life, by

expulsion from the body. The Apostle says, *the wages of sin is death*; Rom. 6. 23. not only that of the body, but the death of the soul, which is a dreadful concomitant of it. And from hence we may discover the false philosophy of the wisest heathens in their opinion of death. They judged it to be the primary necessity and condition of nature, fixed by irresistible fate: And not understanding the true and just reason of its coming into the world, they could not apply a sufficient remedy against its evil.

2. As the effect of the divine decree respecting sin. This is discovered by revelation in the word of God, and the real execution of it. It is appointed to men once to die, Heb. 9. 27. This decree is universal and unrepealable. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: Eccles. 1. 4. like the ebbing and flowing of the sea in its stated periods. Nothing can interrupt or frustrate this appointment. There are divers conditions of men, and various ways of living in the world; some are high in dignity, others are level with the earth: Some walk in a carpet way, smooth and easy, others in a thorny and troublesome: Some walk on the golden sands, others on the mire: But the same uncontrollable necessity of dying involves all. And whatever the way be, whether pleasant or doleful, yet every one passes with equal steps, measured by the same invariable spaces of hours and days, and arrives at the same common end of life. Those who are regarded as visible deities amongst men, that can by their breath raise the low, and depress the lofty, that have the lives of millions in their power; yet when the ordained time is come, as they cannot bribe the accusing conscience for a minute's silence, so neither delay death. "I have said ye are Gods, but ye shall die like men."

3. Death is to be considered as the sentence of the law. The reasonable creature was made under a law, the rule of his actions. The moral law directed him how to continue in his holy and blessed state: To which was annexed the precept of not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, only as a mark of his subjection, and for the trial of his obedience. This precept had an infallible sanction by the most high lawgiver: in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death, Gen. 2. 17. Man did not keep this command of so easy observation, and justly incurred its doom. As sin is the violation of the law, so death is the violation of the sinner in his nature and felicity re-torted from the law.

The deaths of men are very different in their kinds; and are comprised in the words of David concerning Saul: The Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into the battle, and perish, 1 Sam. 26. 10. Sometimes they are cut off by the immediate flaming hand of God, for the more exemplary revenge of sin; sometimes by surprising accidents; sometimes by bloody contentions; sometimes by consuming diseases.

But though death be not uniform, it is always the execution of the law upon offenders. As of those who are condemned by human justice, some suffer a more easy and honorable death, others a more disgraceful and torturing; some are beheaded, others are crucified, yet all die as malefactors. Thus some die a natural death, others a violent; some by a gentle preparing sickness, without reluctance, others die upon the rack, by sharp pains: Some die attended with their friends, and all supplies to sweeten their passage, others forsaken of all comforts: Yet death is the same sentence of the law upon all men. And this, if duly considered, makes it terrible in whatever shape it appears.

## CHAPTER II.

What the fear of death includes. The passion of fear in general considered. The special causes that make death so fearful. It is an evil universally known. It is certainly future. The bondage of men from the fear of death. The reason why men are not always under the actual fear of death.

II. The next thing to be considered is, what the fear of death includes, and the bondage that is consequent to it. This I shall explain and amplify, by considering four things.

1. The nature of fear in general, as applicable to the present subject. 2. The particular causes that render death so fearful. 3. The degree of this fear expressed by bondage. 4. How it comes to pass that men are not always under the actual fear of death, but subject to the revolutions of it all their lives.

[1.] I will consider the nature of fear in general, as applicable to the present subject.

Fear is a passion implanted in nature, that causes a flight from an approaching evil. Three things are requisite to qualify the object, and make it fearful. (1.) The evil must be apprehended. Knowledge, or at least suspicion, excites fear, by representing an evil that is likely to seize upon us. Till the mind discerns the danger, the passions are unmoved: And imaginary evils, by the mere apprehension, are as strongly feared as real. (2.) The evil must be future. For the naked theory of the most pernicious evil does not wound the soul, but the apprehension of falling under it. If reason can open an expedient to prevent an evil, this passion is quiet. And fear precisely regards its object, as to come. Present evils induce grief and sorrow: Past evils by reflection affect with joy, and give a quicker relish to present felicity. Approaching evils alarm us

with fear. (3.) The evil must be apprehended as prevalent to make it fearful. For if by comparison we find our strength superior, we either neglect the evil for its levity, or determine to encounter it; and resistance is the proper effect of anger, not of fear. But when an impendent evil is too hard for us, the soul shrinks and recoils from it.

Now all these qualifications that make an object fearful, concur in death.

1. It is an evil universally known. The frequent funerals are a real demonstration that speaks sensibly to our eyes, that death reigns in the world. On every side death is in our view, and the shadow of it darkens our brightest days.

2. It is certainly future. All the wretched accidents of this life, such as concern us in our persons, relations, estates and interests; a thousand disasters that a jealous fear and active fancy will extend and amplify; as they may, so they may not happen to us. And from this mixture of contrary possibilities, from the uncertainty of event, hope, that is an insinuating passion, mixes with fear, and derives comfort. For as sometimes a sudden evil surprizes, not forethought of; so often the evil that was sadly expected, never comes to pass. But what man is he that lives, and shall not see death? Psal. 89. 4. Who is so vain as to please himself with an imagination of immortality here? Though men are distinguished in the condition of living, yet all are equal in the necessity of dying. Human greatness in every kind, nobility, riches, empire cannot protect from the sudden and sovereign hand of death, that overthrows all. The most conspicuous difference in this world is between the victorious, and the vanquished prostrate at their feet: But death makes them equal. Then the wretched captive shall upbraid the proud conqueror, "Art thou become weak as we? Art thou become like us?" The expressions of scripture concerning the frailty of man, are often literally and precisely verified: "He is like the grass, in the morning it flourishes and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth."

3. Death is a prevalent insuperable evil: Hence the proverbial expression, Strong as death, that subdues all, cruel as the grave that spares none. It is in vain to struggle with the pangs of death. No simples in nature, no compositions of art, no influence of the stars, no power of angels can support the dying body, or retain the flitting soul. There is no man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war. Eccles. 8. 8. The body sinks in the conflict; and death feeds on its prostrate prey in the grave.

[2.] I shall consider more particularly, the causes that render death so fearful to man: 1. In the apprehension of nature. 2. In the apprehension of conscience.

1. In the apprehension of nature, death has this name engraven in its forehead, *Ultimum-terribilium*, the supreme of terrible things, upon several accounts.

(1.) Because usually sickness and pains languishing and tormenting, make the first changes in the body, and the natural death is violent. This Hezekiah complained of with a mournful accent, He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night thou wilt make an end of me. I reckoned till morning that as a lion, so will he break all my bones. Isa. 38. A troop of diseases are the forerunners of this *king of terrors*. There is a preceding encounter, and sometimes very fierce, that nature feels the cruel victory before it yields to this enemy. As a ship that is tossed by a mighty tempest; and by the concussion of the winds and waves, loses its rudder and masts, takes in water in every part, and gradually sinks into the ocean: So in the shipwreck of nature, the body is so shaken and weakened by the violence of a disease; that the senses, the animal and vital operations decline, and at last are extinguished in death.

(2.) Death considered in the strictest propriety, as destructive of the natural being, that is our first and most valuable good in the order of nature, is the just object of fear. The union between soul and body is very intimate and dear, and like David and Jonathan, they part unwillingly. Nature has a share in the best men, and works as nature. St. Paul declares, we would not be unclothed, not finally put off the body, but have it glorified in conjunction with the soul. Our blessed Saviour, without the least impeachment of the rectitude and perfection of his nature, expressed an averseness from death, and with submission to the divine will, desired a freedom from it. His affections were holy and human, and moved according to their objects.

(3.) The natural consequents of death render it fearful. Life is the foundation of all natural enjoyments; and the loss of it induces the loss of all forever. It is from hence that such evils as are consistent with life, and deprive us only of some particular content and pleasure, are willingly chosen rather than death. The forfeiture of estate, the degrading from honor, the confinement to a perpetual prison, the banishing from our native country, are less penalties than death.

There is a natural love of society in man, and death removes from all. The grave is a frightful solitude. There is no conversation in the territories of darkness. This also Hezekiah, in his apprehensions of death, speaks of with tears: I shall see man no more in the land of the living, Isa. 38, 11. As in the night the world is an universal grave, all things are in a dead silence; palaces, courts of justice, temples, theatres, schools, and all places of public conversation are shut up; the noise and rumor that keeps men in continual observation and action ceases.

Thus when the sun of this present life is set, all the affairs and business, all the vain joys of company, feasting, dancing, music, gaming, ceases. Every one among the dead is confined to his sealed obscure cell, and is alone an entertainment for the worms.

The psalmist saith of princes, Their breath goeth forth, they return to the earth, in that very day their thoughts, their glorious compassing thoughts perish. This the historian observes was verified in Julius Cæsar: After his assuming the imperial dignity, he thought to reduce the numerous laws of the Romans into a few volumes, comprising the substance and reason of all; to enrich and adorn the city of Rome, as was becoming the regent of the world; to epitomize the works of the most learned Grecians and Romans for the public benefit. And whilst he was designing and pursuing these, and other vast and noble things, death surprized him, and broke off all his enterprizes.

At the terrible gate that opens into eternity, men are stripped of all their honors and treasures, and as naked as they come into the world, go out of it. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him, Psal. 49. 16. 17. Death equally vilifies, makes loathsome and ghastly the bodies of men, and reduces them to sordid dust. In the grave, the dust is as precious and powerful of one, as of another. Civil distinctions are limited to the present time. The prodigious statue in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, Dan. 2. 32. 33. 34. 35. while it was upright, the parts were really and visibly distinct: The head was of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay; but when the stone cut out without hands, smote the image upon the feet, then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff the wind carries away. Who can distinguish between royal dust taken out of magnificent tombs, and plebeian dust from common graves? Who can know who were rich, and who were poor, who had power and command, who were vassals, who were remarkable by fame, who by infamy? They shall not say this is Jezebel, 2 Kings 9. 37. not know this was the daughter and wife of a king. The king of Babylon, stiled Lucifer, the bright star of the morning, that possessed the first empire in the world, was degraded by death, humbled to the grave, and exchanged all his glorious state for worms and putrefaction. The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee, Isa. 14. 11. In short, death separates men from all their admired charming vanities. Now considering men merely in the order of nature, what reflection is more fearful and tormenting, than the necessity, that cannot be overruled, of parting for ever with all the delights of life? Those who have ascended to

the throne, that are arrived at the height of temporal happiness, what a melancholy prospect is before them of death, and the dark grave? When all things conspire to make men happy here, the sensitive faculties and their fruitions are ebbing and declining, till they sink into death, the whirlpool that will shortly swallow them up for ever. This renders the thoughts of mortality so frightful, and checks the freest enjoyments of carnal pleasures.

2. Death is fearful in the apprehension of conscience, as it is the most sensible mark of God's wrath, that is heavier than death, and a summons to give an account of all things done in this life, to the righteous judge of the world. It is appointed to all men once to die, and afterwards the judgment, Heb. 9. 27. The penal fear is more wounding to the spirit than the natural. When the awakened sinner presently expects the citation to appear before the tribunal above, where no excuses, no supplications, no privileges avail; where the cause of eternal life or death must be decided, and the awards of justice be immediately executed; O the convulsions and agonies of conscience in that hour! When the diseased body cannot live, and the disconsolate soul dare not die, what anxieties surround it? This redoubles the terrors of death, that the first transmits to the second, that was figured by it. O the dismal aspect of Death riding on a pale horse, with Hell, the black attendant, following! This fear surprized the sinners in Sion. "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can remain with everlasting burnings?" This made a heathen, the Governor of a province, to tremble before a poor prisoner: While Paul discoursed of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; Act. 24. 25. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who lives for ever, and can punish for ever; Heb. 10. 31. None is so powerful as God; nothing so fearful as the guilty conscience.

[3.] The degrees of this fear are expressed by bondage. This passion, when regular in its object and degree, is excellently useful; it is a wise counsellor and faithful guardian, that plucks off the mask from our enemies, and keeps reason vigilant and active to prevent a threatening evil, or to sustain it in the best manner. It is observable in the brute creatures, that the weak and fearful are most subtle and ingenious to secure themselves, and supply the want of strength with artifice: But when fear is inordinate, it is a tyrannous master, that vexes the weary soul, and hinders its free and noble operations. Cæsar chose rather to be exposed to sudden death, than to be continually harrassed with fear how to avoid it. The Greek word implies the binding of the spirit, that causes an inward slavery; And in the Apostle's writing, the spirit of fear and the spirit of bondage are equivalent. Ishbosheth, when Abner (provoked by the charge about



Saul's concubine) imperiously threatened to translate the kingdom to David, was struck with such a fear, that he could not answer Abner a word; 2 Sam. 3. 10, 11. the sudden passion stifled his reply, and reduced him to a defenceless silence. Now the fear of death, as it is remiss or vehement, such are the degrees of bondage from it.

1. It embitters the enjoyments of the present life, and makes the most prosperous in the world, "even in the fulness of their sufficiency, to be in straits." Though the senses are pleased with the quick sweetness of change from one object to another, yet the soul cannot have a delightful undisturbed fruition, foreseeing that the streams of pleasure will issue into the dead sea. Truly light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun; Eccles. 11. 7. But how short is this life with all its pleasures, in comparison of the days of darkness that follow? Now though it is our best wisdom and truest liberty, to rejoice in this world as if we rejoiced not, and frequently to meditate on the cooling doctrines of death and judgment, to repress the transports of the voluptuous appetite; yet since the comforts of this are liberally indulged to us by the love of God, to be the motives of our grateful and affectionate obedience, to sweeten our passage to Heaven, we may with tranquillity of spirit make a pure and cheerful use of them in his service: And it is an oppressing bondage, when the disquieting anxious fears of death hinder our temperate enjoyment of his favors and blessings.

2. The fear of death oppresses the souls of men under a miserable bondage to the devil; for his dominion is maintained by the allurements and terrors of the world. Though men do not explicitly acknowledge his sovereignty, yet by voluntary yielding to his pleasing temptations, they are really his slaves: And the apprehension of temporal evils, especially of death, dressed up in a frightful representation with his bloody pomp, is the strongest snare to the soul. Prov. 29. The faint-hearted prove false-hearted in the time of trial: For the timorous spirit being wholly intent how to avoid the incursion of a present evil, forgets or neglects what is indispensably to be done, and thinks to find an excuse in the pretended necessity. How many have been terrified from their clearest duty, and resolved constancy? To escape death, they have been guilty of the most insufferable impieties, by renouncing God their maker and Saviour, and worshipping the Devils for Deities. Every age presents sad spectacles of many that choose iniquity rather than affliction, Job 36. 21. that relinquish their duty, and by wicked compliances save their lives, and lose their souls. Carnal desires and carnal fears are the chains of Hell, that retain men Satan's captives: But what folly, what madness is it, for the avoiding the impotent fury of the creature, to venture on the powerful wrath of God, that exceeds all the terrors that can be conceived by fear? This renders them

more brutish than the horse, that starting at his shadow, springs over a desperate precipice. The fearful are excluded from heaven, and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever; Rev. 21.

3. The extreme fear of death and judgment dejects and discourages the soul from the use of means to prevent eternal misery, and induces a most woful bondage. Fear anticipates and exasperates future evils; for as knowledge excites fear, so fear increases knowledge, by the incessant working of the thoughts upon terrible objects. The fearful mind aggravates the foreseen evil, and distils the poison from all the circumstances and consequences of it: And when the evil is apprehended as insuperable and indeclinable, all endeavors to escape are cut off. What a philosopher observes of an earthquake, compared with other destructive evils, is true in this case: There may be a safe retreat from fire, from inundations, from storms, from war, from pestilence; but an earthquake astonishes with so violent a perturbation, that stops our flight from the imminent danger. So the vehement impressions of fear from the approaches of death, and the severe executions upon the sinner after it, distract the mind, and disable from flying from the wrath to come. These fears are more heavy by the suggestions of Satan, who represents God so terrible in his majesty, inexorable in his justice, and unchangeable in his threatenings, that all hopes of obtaining his favor are lost. As the Egyptian darkness was not merely from the absence of the sun, but from feculent vapours condensing the air, that it might be felt; so these dark and fearful expectations of the divine wrath, are not only from the withdrawing the light of God's countenance, but from the prince of darkness, that foul spirit. And as we read of the Egyptians, that no man arose from his place for three days; as if they had been buried in that darkness, and deprived of all active power and motion: so the despairing soul sits down mourning at the gates of death, totally disabled from prosecuting the things that belong to its peace. It is hope inspires and warms us with alacrity, encourages our endeavors: despair blunts our edge and industry. The soul suffers the hardest bondage, and the condition is inexpressibly sad under the tyranny of this fear. O how enthralled, how desolately miserable! Despair does meritoriously and effectually ruin the soul. For whereas there is no attribute more divine, no clearer notion of the Deity than love and mercy; this passion disparages his mercy, as if sin were more omnipotent than his power to pardon; and all the tears that flow from it, are so far from expiating, that they increase guilt: And whereas the believing view of Christ would as completely and presently recover the soul-wounded sinner, as the Israelites were by looking to the ordained visible sign of their salvation; despair turns away the eye from our deliverer, and fixes it upon misery as remediless and final.

[4.] How comes it to pass, that men are not always under the actual fear of death, but subject to the revolutions of it all their lives ?

The seeds of this fear are hid in the guilty breasts of men, and at times especially in their calamities, break forth and kindle upon them. In their leisure and retirement, intercurrent thoughts of death and judgment sting them by fits, and make them uneasy. The flashes of conscience, like moments of lightning, startle them; but they relapse into their habitual stupidity : And the account of it will be clear, by considering the following particulars.

1. Men are apt to flatter themselves with the hopes of long life, and look upon death at a great distance : though there be a dying disposition in the youngest and strongest persons, though we live in a world of casualties, and death lie in ambush to surprize us every day, yet we are secure ; because evils affect us according to their apprehended nearness. A petty constable that is troublesome and vexatious, is more feared by his neighbors, than the Grand Signior with all his executioners. As remote objects though of vast bigness, are lessened to our sight ; so through the supposed interval of many years, death is looked on with a diminution of its terror. But when death presents itself before men, ready to dispatch them, how formidable is its appearance ! Saul, though renowned for his valor, yet when he understood by revelation, that to-morrow he and his sons should be in the state of the dead, there was no strength in him, but he fell straitway all along on the earth ; 1 Sam. 28. struck through with fear, before he was wounded by the arrows of the Philistines. Belshazzar, in the midst of his luxury and jollity, attended with a thousand lords, and his herd of concubines, Dan. 5. 1. 2. 3. 4. inflamed with wine, and therefore less capable of fear ; yet upon the sight of the fatal hand writing on the wall, a few unknown characters, which his guilty conscience (before the prophet Daniel came) interpreted to be the sentence of the present death, how fearfully was his countenance changed pale as a carcass ? How suddenly did his blood congeal, and his warmest, quickest, spirits die in his heart ? His whole body was seized by such a vehement trembling, that his joints were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. This is a representation of those who bid defiance to death at a distance : But when the fatal hour is come, and they hear the sentence decreed against them, God had numbered thy days, and finished them ; thou art weighed in the balance, (all thy words and actions, thy thoughts and affections) and art found wanting : and thy soul shall be divided from thy body ; the one sent to hell, to suffer the undying worm of conscience ; the other to the grave, to be a prey to the worms of corruption ; how are they overcome with horror !

2. The continual succession of the pleasures and business of the world divert the mind from the attentive strong contempla-

tion of death, and the consequences of it. Pensive thoughts are unwelcome, and we studiously endeavor to cancel the memory of such things as afflict us. It is said of the wicked, that God is not in all their thoughts. The consideration of the holy inspector and judge of their actions is tormenting, therefore they fill their minds with earthly imaginations, to exclude the divine presence. We read of those, who to put far away the evil day, chanted to the sound of the viol, and drank wine in bowls, Amos 6. 3. 4. They are rocked asleep with the motion of fantastic vanities. And sleep takes away fear, but gives no safety. It is recorded of Marius, by Ælian, that after his overthrow by Sylla, he was always in consternation, as if he heard the sound of the trumpets, and the noise of the victorious army pursuing him: And his fears were no longer quiet than whilst charmed with wine and sleep; he therefore was continually drunk, that he might forget himself, his enemy, and his danger. Thus men make a pitiful shift to forget their latter end; and whilst they are following either secular affairs, or sensual pleasures, are unconcerned for what is to be hereafter. But this diversion will shortly be at an end; for in their languishing hours, when the wasted body fails the carnal mind, and sensual desire fails the man, then conscience that spoke with a loud voice before, is loud and terrible, and like the rigid exactor in the parable that took his debtor by the throat, requires them to pay what they owe.

4. Some are so hardened in infidelity, that the powers of the world to come make no impression on their hearts. They mind but little, and are less affected with invisible things. They fortify themselves with gross thoughts, that the spirit of man vanishes with his breath, the death is the end of this life, and not the beginning of another, and feed without fear. Place one in the midst of destructive evils, but unseen or not believed, and he is as fearless as a blind person walking on the brink of a deep pit. Indeed there are none less disturbed with the terrors of death, than the eminently good, or the extremely bad: For the one sort have a blessed hope that death will be to them an entrance into life, and live like the angels, with a joy unspeakable and glorious. The others are as sensual and secure as the beasts that perish, having extinguished the fear of eternal future evils, which is the proper passion of reason. The apostle declares, that knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men to be reconciled to him, before the season of mercy be expired, 2 Cor. 5. 11. But those who have suppressed the natural notions of eternal judgment, as they think it beneath their wisdom to be persuaded by the promises of heaven, so beneath their courage to be terrified with the threatenings of hell, and triumph over the ruins of conscience. But though wicked infidels slight the threatenings, they shall not escape the vengeance of God.

We have read of Noah, that being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house, Heb. 11. His fear was the native issue of his faith. But the profane world, in whom sense was predominant, that despised the Oracle, and trembled at no judgments but what were acting on the visible stage, they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage, till swept away by the unfeared inundation. We read that Lot being certified by an embassy of angels, that a deluge of fire would in a few hours pour down from heaven upon Sodom, he most earnestly solicited his sons in law, "Arise, depart out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city:" But they entertained his compassionate advice with derision, he seemed to them as one that mocked, and were surprised by those fearful flames that dispatched them from a temporal hell to that which is eternal. Thus it was prophesied, "that in the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?" But let them blaspheme and scorn the most sacred and terrible truths, let them perpetuate their excess of riot, and wild mirth while they live; death will come, and judgment as sure as death.

### CHAPTER III.

How the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting fear of death. By dying he paid our ransom to the injured justice of God, and deprives Satan of the legal power he had over us. His death is our redemption from the curse of death. It makes death a blessed advantage to believers. The happiness obtained by death unfolded. It frees the saints from afflicting evils, and sin the cause of them. The highest positive good obtained by death.

III. I now come to show how the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting fear of death.

For the clearing this, we are to consider, that sin, Satan and death, are enemies in combination against man in his mortal state; and the destructive power of Satan and death, is from sin. When man renounced his Creator and natural Lord, he was judicially given up to Satan as the executioner of vengeance, and to the power of death. Such is the order, rather the confusion in the world by sin. The empire of Satan and death is built on the ruins of our innocence.

Now the Son of God came from his throne in heaven to de-

liver us : And whereas there are two ways of obtaining freedom from captivity, either by ransom, or by power and rescue ; in both respects our deliverance from bondage to these capital enemies, is ascribed to the death of Christ.

It is called our ransom, and that in its strict notion has a respect to captivity : There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus ; who gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. 2. 6. His life was the full price of our liberty and salvation. God does not pardon sin, and release from punishment by a pure absolute act of his will and authority, as a creditor forgives a debtor ; but in such a way as to preserve the rights of justice inviolate. Therefore when man was devoted to death, our Redeemer exchanged conditions with him, and offered up his precious blood, 1 Pet. 1. 18. as our ransom to God in the quality of the king and judge of all. Such was the dignity of his person, that the entire world, the heavens and the earth, with all their inhabitants, are of less value to him, than the basest dross to refined gold. Such was the greatness of his sufferings, Phil. 2. 8. in which the highest degree of obedience, and the lowest degree of humility were conspicuous, as to be a valuable compensation, to obtain eternal redemption for us.

Now when God the supreme Judge is satisfied, Satan forfeits the right he had to torment us, and is divested of his dominion over our wills ; which though justly permitted, was an usurpation upon God's right in man that can never be extinguished. It is said by the apostle, that our Saviour blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, Col. 2. He abolished the use of the ceremonial law, that was an evidence and indictment of their guilt who performed it, and the curse of the moral law : It follows, and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Our Saviour died victoriously ; the tree of infamy on which he suffered, was the trophy of his conquest. His death disarmed Satan of his weapons, whereby he subdued us, sin, the law and death ; for though his actual triumph was in his resurrection and ascension to glory, yet it is justly ascribed to his death ; for that meritoriously opened the grave at his resurrection, and heaven at his ascension.

And here by the way it is most worthy of observation, that our deliverance from our spiritual and most deadly enemies is equally righteous, as admirable and glorious : For our suffering Saviour appeased the wrath of God, and broke the powers of darkness. The wisdom and love of God had their designs in his death, as well as the malice and rage of Satan ; as lines that are opposite in the circumference, meet in the centre.

And as from the tyranny of Satan, so the death of our Redeemer is our redemption from death, as to the curse and final dominion of it ; nay, has made it a blessed advantage to us.

1. The curse is removed. Death considered as the wages of sin, is all sting and poison, the consequent of the spiritual death, and the introduction to eternal death. The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law, 1 Cor 15. Death hath its wounding power from sin, and sin from the law, that forbids it, that discovers its nature, and enhances the measure of its guilt, and denounces condemnation for it. Now our Saviour, having in our stead subjected himself to death, the penalty of the law for sin, there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. 3. Death inflicted on the saints, has not that relation to the guilt of sin, as to be properly satisfaction to revenging justice. There are no petty payments to be made by our sufferings after his complete satisfaction to God. The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all, Isa. 53.

It is indeed still a declaration of God's holy displeasure against sin, for that originally opened the way of its coming into the world; and sometimes by the immaturity or manner of it, it is a chastisement upon good men for sin; that is, to make them renew their repentance, and mortify their carnal affections that fasten them to the world. For though after the last act of expiration there is no place for repentance; yet in the approaches of death, the soul is strongly excited by the call of God to review its state and make solemn preparation to be found of him in peace. But it is not in a strict sense the malediction and vengeance of the law executed upon them. The serpent is turned into a rod of correction in the hands of our heavenly Father for their good, Heb. 12. As the Apostle, speaking of some that for their profaning the Lord's table were fallen asleep, adds, that when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. 10. 33. A believer shall not be hurt of the second death, Rev. 2.

From hence it is, that in the book of life, the scriptures, the death of the saints is called a sleep. Saint Paul argues, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him, 1 Thess. 4. 14. It is observable how the apostle varies the expression, Jesus died, and the saints sleep in him: for he sustained death with all its terrors, that it might be a calm sleep to his people. \*They enjoy as perfect a rest in the beds of dust, as even in the softest down. Stephen, in the midst of a shower of stones, fell asleep. Believers die in peace. The righteous is taker from the evil to come, he enters into peace, Isa. 57. 1, 2. Being reconciled

\*Annon longe gloriosius fuit, quandoquidem totum pro nobis agebatur, ut non modo passio corporis, sed etiam cordis affectio pro nobis faceret? Et quos vivificabat mors, nihilominus et trepidatio robustos, et mœstia lætos, et tedium alacres, et turbatio quietos faceret, et desolatio consolatos? *Bern.* Serm. 1. de S. *Andr.*

to God through the blood of Christ, they are not terrified at his call ; but with sweet tranquillity resign their souls unto him. Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation, Luke 2. There is a vast difference in God's account, between the death of the righteous and the wicked. As the tabernacle in the wilderness was taken down with care upon their change of station, and delivered to the Levites' charge, in order to the raising of it again with honor ; but the house incurably infected with the leprosy, was plucked down with violence, and thrown into an unclean place with execration : Thus the death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord, their bodies are kept in the bosom of the earth, to be raised in glory ; and the death of the wicked is accursed. In short, as the wood that Moses cast into the waters of Marah, by a miraculous virtue sweetened them ; so the cross of Christ has taken away the malignity and bitterness of death.

2. Death is a blessed advantage, and enriching gain to a believer : It brings him to the possession of that good that incomparably exceeds the evil that remains in it. For the death of a saint is not total ; but as in the ceremony of purification from leprosy, one bird was killed, and the other was let fly in the open air, the mysterious shadow of the lepers being restored to a state of liberty : Thus when the body dies and returns to the earth, the spirit returns to God, the father of spirits, and fountain of life. Our Saviour told the Jews, I am the living bread that came down from heaven : If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever ; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, that I will give for the life of the world, John 6. 48. The heavenly divine life, that is communicated by the spirit of Christ to believers, remains entire when the sensitive life is lost. The natural order is, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die : " The supernatural is, there is a time to die, and a time to be born. The death of a saint is a \*new birth ; the pains of the dying body are as throes, whereby the ripened soul is delivered into the land of the living. The happiness of a saint after death, more particularly will appear by considering,

The freedom he obtains from all afflicting evils that are numberless here, and from sin the worst in its nature, and the cause of all the rest. The present world is a labyrinth of thorns, in every state we meet with something to vex us. You may as well count the waves of the sea when enraged by a tempest, as the troubles to which in this mortal open state we are exposed. Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble, Job. 14. 1. A short life, and many miseries. O our unhappy

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\*Dies iste quem tu tanquam supremum reformidas, æterni natalis est. Senec.



capacity ! \* the body is liable to as many diseases, as there are members ; and the soul to as many perplexities as passions. How often are the scenes and habits changed in the time of one man ? He that lives in pleasures, must act the mourner's part, our sweetest comforts have hidden stings : And whatever is most pleasing, may occasion bitter grief. And usually holy men have a greater portion of afflictions here : Sometimes by the malignity and violence of the Wicked ; as under the law, the lamb and the dove were sacrifices, the emblems of innocence, and purity, and meekness, whilst the vulture and the lion, the greedy devourers, escaped. The Apostle declares of the elect, they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's son, who traced out the way to heaven in his own blood, and by the cross ascended to the throne. Sometimes more immediately divine Providence afflicts them to preserve their spirits from the tainted pleasures of the world, and for other holy ends : But there is a rest for the people of God in heaven. Besides there are relicks of sin in the best of saints here. Indeed sin is deposed from sovereignty and rule ; the imperious lusts are crucified, but not quite expired. As those that were nailed to the cross in their hands and feet, the parts least vital and most sensible, died a painful lingering death. Still the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. As there is a complexion of humors in human bodies, always jarring when they are in the soundest health ; and where there is not this active contrariety, either the body is without a soul, a mere carcass, or a glorified body in heaven : So where there is not this internal combat between grace and sin, either the man is wholly † carnal, dead in sins and trespasses ; or wholly spiritual, reigning in heaven. And there is nothing more works on the tender affections of a saint, than to find in himself what is displeasing to God ; that still he is under a sad necessity of sinning. What is said concerning an old man wasted and decayed in his drooping years, that the grasshopper is a burden to him, is true of the new man in a christian ; the sins that are counted light in the valuation of the world, are a heavy weight to him. Vain thoughts, idle words, irregular passions, unprofitable actions are motives of heart-breaking sorrow. Now death is to a believer an universal remedy against all the evils of this life : It frees him from all injuries and sufferings, and from sin in all its degrees, from all inclinations and temptations to it. He that is dead ceaseth from sin. Death is the passage

\* *Tempus angustatur ad vitam, dilatatur ad miseriam.*

† *Omnes homines aut sunt penitus caro et nihil habent spiritus. Ii sunt infideles sine regeneratione. Aut sunt tantum spiritus sine carne. Ii sunt sancti ; qui jam in cælo æterna fruuntur pace sine pugna. Aut sunt partim spiritus, partim caro. Ii sunt omnes renati per spiritum sanctum in Christo.*  
*Aug. cont. Jul.*

from this wilderness to the true Canaan, the rest above, that flows with better milk and honey, with innocence and happiness forever. There is nothing can disturb the peace, or corrupt the purity of the blessed.

3. Besides the privative advantage, the freedom from all the effects of God's displeasure, and the resentments of it, there is the highest positive good obtained by death; the spirits of just men are made perfect in heaven. The soul is the glory of man, and grace is the glory of the soul, and both are then in their exaltation. All the faculties of the soul are raised to the highest degrees of natural and divine perfection. In this life grace renews the faculties, but does not elevate them to their highest pitch: It does not make a mean understanding pregnant, nor a frail memory strong, nor a slow tongue eloquent, but sanctifies them as they are. But when the soul is released from this dark body of earth, the understanding is clear and quick, the memory firm, the will and affections ardent and vigorous. And they are enriched with divine light and love, and power, that makes them fit for the most noble and heavenly operations. The lineaments of God's image on the soul are first drawn here, but then it receives his last hand. All the celestial colours are added, to give the utmost life and lustre to it. Here we are advancing, but by death we arrive at perfection.

We shall in heaven be joined to the assembly of saints and angels, our best friends. Love is the law of that kingdom, and perfectly obeyed there. Now how charming is the conversation of one that is wise and holy, especially if the sweetness of affability be in his temper? How pleasantly does time slide away, in the company of our beloved friends? We are not sensible of its flight. But what dear satisfaction is it to be united to that chosen consecrated society above, who love one another as themselves? Though the angels and saints have different degrees of glory, yet every one is perfectly happy and pleased. As the strings of an instrument differ in the size and sound: Some are sharp and high, some grave and deep, others a mean; and from that variety results the harmony of musick, so that if every string had judgment and election, it would choose to be what it is: So from the different degrees of glory in heaven, the most amiable and equal order of the divine wisdom appears, that satisfies every one.

We shall be in the glorious presence of God and Christ, "where is fulness of joy, and infinite pleasures forever." It is said of Abraham, "he rejoiced to see the day of Christ," two thousand years before his coming. When by faith he saw the incarnation of the Son of God, in order to the redemption of men, it put him into an extacy. Yet then our Saviour was born to sorrows and miseries. But how ravishing is the sight of our Redeemer, "set down on the right hand of the majesty on high, having purged

our sins by himself," and accomplished our salvation? Now we are absent from God, yet in believing his infallible promises, we "rejoice with a joy unspeakable and glorious:" But how much more joyful is the fruition of them? Here the divine goodness is derived to us through secondary means, that weaken its efficacy; but in Heaven the consolations of the creator are most purely dispensed, and his immediate excellencies are made known.

This blessedness exceeds all our thoughts, and explicate desires, and requires the eloquence and experience of an angel to set it forth. The bright sum of it is this, we shall see God in his glory face to face, 1 Cor. 13. in the most perfect manner: The sight of his glory shall transform us into his likeness; we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, 1 John 3. This shall produce in us the most pure and ardent love; and love shall be attended with inexpressible joy, and that with the highest praises of the blessed God, whose influxive presence is the heaven of heavens.

And that which crowns all is, that the life above is eternal. This satisfies all our desires, and excludes all our fears: For unchangeableness is an inseparable attribute of perfect felicity. The blessed are in full communion with God, the fountain of life, and Christ the prince of life. "Because I live," saith our Saviour, "ye shall live also." What can interrupt, much less put an end to the happiness of the saints? The love of God is immutably fixed upon them, and their love upon him. Here their love is subject to decays, and gradual alienations; as the needle in the compass, though it always has a tendency to the North-pole, yet sometimes it declines, and has its variations. But in heaven the love of the saints is directly and constantly set upon God. The light of his countenance governs all their affections. It is as impossible to divert their desires from him, as to cause one that is inflamed with thirst, to leave a clear flowing spring for a noisome puddle. In short, heaven is filled with eternal hallelujahs: for there is no appearance of sin, no shadow of death there: all miseries are vanished, and all that is desirable is possessed by the saints: the circle of their employment is to enjoy and praise the divine goodness forever.

Now is not the blessed exchange a christian makes of the present life, for that which is infinitely better, sufficient to make death not fearful, nay desirable to him? The regular well-grounded hope of this will compose the thoughts in the nearest approach and apprehension of death: no other principles or resolutions are able to vanquish the terrors of our last enemy. And this happiness was purchased for us by the everlasting treasure of our saviour's blood. The satisfaction of his sufferings was meritorious, as the merit of his active obedience was satisfying.

## CHAPTER IV.

The reasons why believers die, and are in a state of death for a time, notwithstanding the sting of death is taken away. Sin is abolished by death. The graces are eminently exercised in the encounter with the last enemy. The natural body is not capable of the celestial life. The resurrection of the saints is delayed till the coming of Christ. The resurrection proved from revelation; and the possibility of it by reason. How the resurrection of Christ is an assurance of the happy resurrection of the saints.

Before I proceed to the third head, I shall resolve a question, how it comes to pass, since believers are freed from the sting of death, that they die, and remain in a state of death for a time? For there are several reasons.

1. By this means all the sinful frailties that cleave to the saints in this life, are abolished. The body is dead because of sin, Rom. 8. And what is more becoming the wise and holy providence of God, than that as by sin man was at first made subject to death, so by death sin dies entirely forever. Thus, as in Sampson's riddle, out of the devourer comes meat; and our worst enemy is conquered by his own weapons.

2. Death is continued to the saints, for the more eminent exercise and illustration of their graces, for the glory of God, and in order to their future reward. \*Faith, and love, and patience, are declared in their most powerful operations in our encounter with death. If every saint were visibly and entirely translated to heaven, after a short course of holy obedience; if the wicked did visibly drop down quick into hell, faith would be resigned to sight here. This would confound the militant state of the church with the triumphant. Therefore now death happens to the good as well as to the wicked. In the next state they shall be separated by a vast gulf, and an amazing difference. Now faith, whatever the kind of death be that a christian suffers, sees through the thickest clouds of disgrace and misery, the glorious issue. As the illustrious confessor, who was crucified with our Saviour, proclaimed his eternal kingdom in the midst of insulting infidels. And our love to God then appears in its radiancy

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\*Poterat autem Christus etiam hoc donare credentibus, ut nec istius experirentur corporis mortem: sed si hoc fecisset carni quædam felicitas adderetur, minueretur fidei fortitudo. Quid enim magnum erat vivendo eos non mori qui crederint se non morituros? Quanto est majus, quanto fortius, quanto laudibilibus ita credere, ut se speret moriturus sine fine victurum? Aug. de pecc. Mort. Lib. 2.

and vigor, when we are ready for the testimony of his truth, and advancing his glory, to suffer a violent death: Or when it comes in a gentler manner, for it is even then terrible to nature, we are willingly subject to dissolution, that we may be united to God in heaven. And our patience has never its *perfect work*, and is truly victorious, until this last enemy be subdued. *Death* is the seal of our *constancy* \*and *perseverance*. Now the righteous rewarder will crown none but those that strive lawfully, and are complete conquerors. And how wise and sweet is the economy of the divine providence in this, that the frailty of our nature should afford us a means of glorifying God, and of entitling ourselves by his most gracious promises to a blessed reward?

3. Our Saviour, by his unvaluable obedience and sufferings, has procured for believers a celestial divine life, of which the natural body is not capable. The apostle saith, "Flesh and blood cannot enter into the the kingdom of heaven." The Exigencies and decays of the sensitive nature require a continual relief by food and sleep, and other material supplies: But the life above is wholly spiritual; and equal to that of the angels. Therefore until this earthly animal body be reformed and purified, it is not capable of the glory reserved in heaven. This is so absolutely requisite, that those believers, who are found alive at the last day, shall "in the twinkling of an eye be changed," that they may be qualified for it. Now herein the wisdom of God is wonderful, that death, which by the covenant of works, was the deserved penalty of sin, by the covenant of grace should be the instrument of immortality: That as Joseph by a surprising circuit was brought from the prison to the principality; so a believer by the grave ascends to heaven. This the apostle, in his divine disputation against infidels, proves in a most convincing manner; "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." As the rotting of the corn in the earth is necessary to the reviving and springing of it up: So we must die, and the image of the earthly Adam be abolished, that we may be transformed into the image of the heavenly one.

And to the other part of the question, Why the saints remain in the state of death for a time? There is a clear answer. The resurrection of the saints is delayed till Christ's coming to judgment, partly for the glory of his appearance: For what an admirable sight will it be, that the saints of all ages shall at once arise glorified and immortalized, to attend upon our Saviour in the last act of his regal office, and then to make a triumphant entry with him into heaven? And partly, that the established order of providence may not be disturbed: For the changing of

\* *Exercitia nobis sunt non funera, dant animo fortitudinis gloriam: contemptu mortis præparant ad coronam. Cypr. de mortal.*

our nature into glory, in a sudden and inexplicable manner, cannot be without miraculous power; and if every believer, presently after death, were in his glorified body translated to heaven, the world would be always filled with miracles, which were to cease after the sufficient confirmation of the gospel by them. But how long soever the interval be to the resurrection, it shall be with "them that sleep in Jesus," as it is with those that awake out of a quiet natural sleep, to whom the longest night seems but as a moment: So when the saints first awake from death, in the great morning of the world, a thousand years will seem no more to them than to God himself, but as one day.

I now come to prove the third thing, that our Saviour will abolish the dominion of death over the saints. Whilst the bodies of the saints remain in the grave, they seem to be absolutely under the power of death. The world is a Golgotha, filled with the monuments of its victories. And it may be said to this our last enemy, in the words of the prophet to the bloody king, "Hast thou killed, and taken possession?" But we are assured by an infallible word, that the power of death shall be abolished, and the bodies of the saints be revived incorruptible and immortal.

The resurrection is a terra incognita to the wisest heathens; a doctrine peculiar to the gospel: Some glimmerings they had of the soul's immortality, without which all virtue had been extinguished in the world, but no conjecture of the reviving of the body. But reason assists faith in this point, both as to the will of God, and his power for the performing it. I will glance upon the natural reasons that induce the considering mind to receive this doctrine, and more largely shew how the resurrection of the just is assured by our Redeemer.

The divine laws are the rule of duty to the entire man, and not to the soul only: And they are obeyed or violated by the soul and body in conjunction. Therefore there must be a resurrection of the body, that the entire person may be capable of recompences in judgment. The soul designs, the body executes: The senses are the open ports to admit temptations. Carnal affections deprave the soul, corrupt the mind, and mislead it. The love of sin is founded *in bono jucundo*, in sensible pleasures: "And the members are the servants of iniquity." The heart is the fountain of profaneness, and the tongue expresses it. And the body is obsequious to the holy soul in doing or suffering for God; and denies its sensual appetites and satisfactions in compliance with reason and grace. The "members are the instruments of righteousness." It follows then there will be an universal resurrection, that the rewarding goodness of God may appear in making the bodies of his servants gloriously happy with their souls, and their souls completely happy in union with their bodies, to which they have a natural inclination, and his reveng-

ing justice be manifest in punishing the bodies of the wicked with eternal torments answerable to their guilt.

And of the possibility of the resurrection, the circular and continual production of things in the world, is a clear demonstration of the power of God for that effect. There is a pregnant instance that our Saviour and the apostle made use of as an image of the resurrection: A grain of corn sowed in the earth, corrupts and dies, and after springs up entire; its death is a disposition to life. The essays of God's power in the works of returning nature, flowers and fruits in their season, instruct us how easily he can make those that are in the dust to awake to life. If the art of man, whose power and skill are very narrow and limited, can refine gold and silver to such a lustre, as if their matter were not \* earth digged out of the mines: If from black cinders it can form crystal glasses so clear and shining, how much more can omnipotency recompact our dust, and reanimate it with a glorious life? Death that dissolves our vital frame, does not abolish the matter of our bodies: And though it is corrupted and changed by a thousand accidents, yet it is unperishing; and under whatsoever colors and figures it appears, God perfectly discerns, and will separate it for its proper use.

More particularly, I will show how the resurrection of Christ is an assurance of the resurrection of believers to glory. As our surety he was under the arrest of death; it becoming the holy majesty of God, and conducing to the ends of his government, not to derogate from the dignity of his law, but to lay the penalty upon his son, who interposed for us. Now having finished the work of our redemption by his sufferings, his resurrection was the just consequent of his passion. And it is observable that his resurrection, though one entire act, is ascribed as to himself, so to his father, Rom. 1. 11. by whose consent and concurrence he rose again. Therefore it is said, Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, since it was impossible he should be holden by it, Acts. 2. 24. It was naturally impossible upon the account of the divine power inherent in his person; and legally impossible, because divine justice required that he should be raised to life; partly to vindicate his innocence, for he was reputed and suffered as a malefactor, and principally because he had fully satisfied God. Accordingly the apostle declares, he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, Rom. 4. Having paid our debt, he was released from the grave, and the discharge was most solemnly published to the world. It is therefore said, the God of peace raised him from the dead: Heb. 13. the act is most congruously ascribed unto God invested with that title, because his power was exerted in that glorious work, after he was "reconciled by the blood of the cove-

\* Nomen terre in igni reliquit. *Tertul.*

nant." Briefly, our Saviour's victory over death was obtained by dying, his triumph by rising again. He foiled our common enemy in his own territories the grave. His death was a counterpoison to death itself: As a bruised scorpion is a \* noble antidote against its venom.

Indeed his death is incomparably a greater wonder than his resurrection. For it is apparently more difficult that the son of God, who originally possesses immortality, should die, than that the human body united to him, should be raised to a glorious life. It is more conceivable that God should communicate to the human nature some of his divine perfections, impassibility, and immortality, than that he should submit to our lowest infirmities, sufferings and death.

Now the resurrection of Christ is the argument and claim of our happy resurrection: For God chose and appointed him to be the example and principle from whom all divine blessings should be derived to us. Accordingly he tells his disciples, in a forecited scripture, "because I live, ye shall live also." Our nature was raised in his person, and in our nature all believers: Therefore he is called "the first-fruits of them that sleep;" because as the first-fruits were a pledge and assurance of the following harvest, and as from the condition of the first-fruits being offered to God, the whole harvest was entitled to a consecration, so our Saviour's resurrection to the life of glory is the earnest and assurance of ours. He is called "the first-born among the dead;" and owns the race of departed believers as his brethren, who shall be restored to life according to his pattern. He is the head; believers are his members, and therefore shall have communion with him in his life. The effect is so infallible, that now they are said to be raised up together, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Ephes. 2. 6. If his victory over our enemies had been imperfect, and he had saved himself with difficulty and hazard, [as it were by fire] in the apostle's expression, our redemption had not been accomplished: But his passion was triumphant; and is it conceivable that he should leave the saints, his own by so many dear titles, under the power of death? If Moses, the deliverer of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh, Exod. 10. 26. would not suffer any thing of theirs, not an hoof, to remain in the house of bondage; will our great Redeemer be less perfect in his work? Shall our last enemy always detain his spoils, our bodies, in the grave? This would reflect upon his love and power. It is recorded, to confirm our hopes, how early his power was displayed in forcing the grave to release its chained captives: And many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many; Mat. 27.

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\* Qui sibi ipse pulcherrimum medicamentum. *Celsus.*



52, 53. What better earnest can we have that the strength of death is broken? From what he has done to what he is able to do, the consequence is clear. The apostle tells us, He will raise our vile bodies, and change them like unto his glorious body, by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself; Phil. 3. 21. Our redemption will then be complete, Rom. 8. 23. and all the bitterness of death past. The redemption of the soul is accomplished from sin and misery immediately after death; but the redemption of the body is the last in order, and reserved to crown our felicity at the great day: Then death shall be swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. 15. abolished forever.

And O the joyful reunion of those dear relatives after such a divorce! when the body that was so long detained in that loathsome grave, 1 Cor. 15. shall be reformed with all glorious perfections, and be a fit instrument for the soul, and partaker with it in consummate blessedness and immortality. It is said, that those that wear rich clothing are in Kings houses: But what are all the robes of costly folly, wherein earthly courtiers appear, to the brightness and beauty of the spiritual body wherewith the saints shall be clothed, to qualify them for the presence of the king of kings, and to be in his house forever? But O the miserable condition of the wicked in that day! Death now breaks their bodies and souls into an irreconcilable enmity; and how sad will their conjunction be! The soul will accuse the body to have been sin's solicitor, continually tempting to sensualities; and the body will upbraid more than ever it allured the soul, for its wicked compliance: Then the sinner shall be an entire sacrifice, burning, but never consumed; Mark 9. Now from the assurance of a blessed resurrection by Christ, the forementioned fear of death is conquered in believers. If the doctrine of the \* transmigration of souls into bodies, the invention of Pythagoras, inspired his disciples with that fiery vigor, as to encounter the most present and apparent dangers; being fearless to part with the life that should be restored; how much more should a christian with a holy confidence receive death, knowing that the life of his body shall not be finally lost, but renewed in a blessed eternity?

\* Fælices errore suo quos ille timorum  
 Maximus, haud urget leti metus, indè ruendi  
 In ferrum mens prona viris, animæq; capaces,  
 Mortis, et ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ. *Lucan.*

## CHAPTER V.

The qualifications of persons considered, that have a right to this privilege. Union with Christ, the fountain of eternal life, is absolutely requisite. The vital bond of that union is the sanctifying spirit. The eminent operations of the spirit considered as the spirit of truth, and of holiness, and the comforter. He illuminates the understanding, to see the reality and excellency of supernatural things. He inspires the ardent love of God. Divine love is the principle of universal holiness. The spirit communicates a divine power to do the will of God.

The fourth general to be considered, is, the persons that have an interest in this blessed privilege.

This inquiry is of infinite moment, both for the awakening of the secure, who vainly presume upon their interest in the salvation of the gospel, for the confirming and encouraging the saints. And we have an infallible rule of trial declared by St. John: He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 John 5. 12. All the excellent and comfortable benefits procured by our Saviour, are communicated only to those who are united to him. Particularly with respect to the present subject: Justification, that great blessing of the gospel, the complete pardon of sins, that disarms death of its sting, is not common to all that are christians in title, but is a privilege with a limitation: There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8. 1. vitally as their head, from whom are derived spiritual influences, and judicially as their advocate in judgment: And such are described by this infallible character, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The blessedness after death that is assured by a voice from heaven, is with this precise restriction exclusive of all others; Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works follow them; Rev. 14. 13. The glorious resurrection at the last day, when the bodies of the saints that now rest in hope shall be incorruptible and immortal, is the consequence of union with him. Thus the apostle declares; as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive; 1 Cor. 15. 22. As all that are naturally in and from Adam, the corrupt fountain of mankind, are under the sentence of death; so all that are in Christ, the head of the regenerate, shall partake of his blessed life. Others shall be raised by his power, as their judge, but not as their head: raised to be more miserable than death can make them, not to be transformed into his glorious re-

semblance ; made capable of suffering an ever-dying death, not revived to eternal life.

Now the bond of our union to Christ, is the Holy Spirit derived from him, as the head of the church, and is the inward, powerful, and lasting principle of holiness and new obedience in believers. He that is joined to the Lord, is *one Spirit*, 1 Cor. 6. 17. that is, by the spirit of holiness has a real participation of his life, is both *quickened and united to him* ; John 6. 36. When the prophet Elisha, by the outward applying the parts of his body to the dead child, 2 Kings 4. 34. inspired life into him, there was no real union between them ; but Christ is, by his spirit, so intimately united to believers, that he lives in them, and they in him, Gal. 2. 20. The sanctifying spirit renews the directing and commanding faculties, the fountains of moral actions, enlightens the understandings with saving knowledge, rectifies the obliquity of the will, purifies the affection, and reforms the life : So that *the same mind* is in christians as *was in Christ* ; and as *his conversation was*, such *is theirs in the world*. This divine change is not wrought by natural reason, though assisted by the most powerful arguments. The breath of a man may as easy dispel a mist, or thaw a frost, as human directions and motives to virtue can renew the mind and heart, and produce a holy frame of soul towards God. Renewed christians are said to be in the spirit, illuminated, inclined, and enabled by the spirit to do God's will ; and the spirit of God to dwell in them, by his peculiar and eminent operations : "*They live in the spirit, and walk in the spirit.*" An angel may assume a body, and act by it : but the human soul enlivens it, and performs sensible operations by it : And such a principle is the Holy Spirit to the soul, gives it *spiritual life*, activity and power for good works. By what application of the Spirit's power this is produced, is *mysterious and inexplicable* ; but as the apostle speaks of his rapture into the third heavens, that he knew it was real, and heard "*unutterable things* ;" though how it was performed, "*whether in the body, or out of the body*," he could not tell. Thus when a natural man, the current of whose thoughts and affections was to the things of this world, becomes spiritual, when the carnal appetite is subdued, and sanctified reason has the throne, when he feels such strong and sweet impulsives to holiness as engage the will ; when the stream of his desires ascend to the things above, and his life becomes holy and heavenly, he feels and knows this wonderful change, though the manner how it was wrought he cannot tell. I will shew more fully this sanctifying work of the Spirit, that we may the better understand our state.

The Spirit of God is denominated by various titles ; the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Comforter, John 15. 26. and represented by various types ; by an ointment that clarifies the

eye to see things aright, by cleansing refreshing water, by purifying refining fire, Rom. 1. 4. correspondent to his sacred operations in the soul. As the Spirit of truth, he illuminates the understanding to see the reason and excellency of supernatural and heavenly things, of the great mysteries of godliness, of eternal glory; so that a christian, in his most deliberate, solemn and composed thoughts, in his exactest valuation, infinitely prefers them before the gaudy vanities of this transient world. When the eyes of the mind are truly enlightened, present things appear, or rather disappear, as shadows. As the Spirit of holiness, he renews the will and affections, inspires the soul with divine and unutterable desires after the favor and grace of God, and communicates spiritual power for the prosecuting and obtaining those desires. The Holy Spirit raises such a love to God, that habitually and strongly inclines the soul to obey his commands. This is the most clear and essential character of a christian, the special and most excellent property of a saint, upon which all other holy qualifications depend. As reason is the first and chief excellence of man, from whence his other perfections are derived, that distinguish him from the brutes, and give him a natural and regular preeminence and dominion over them, so that a man is most properly defined a reasonable creature: Thus the love of God is the most divine grace, the true form of holiness, the root from whence all other virtues spring and flourish, and most peculiarly distinguish a saint from unregenerate men, however adorned and accomplished; so that a saint is most properly defined to be a lover of God.

This is the principle of true holiness inherent in the soul, and shining in the conversation, that distinguishes the sincerity of a saint from the art of hypocrisy, an affected appearance of religion for carnal sordid respects; and from civil virtue, that restrains from what is ignominious and disgraceful to our reputation, and makes obnoxious to penalties of the laws, and excites to praiseworthy actions, upon worldly motives; and from philosophical morality, that forbids vice as contrary to reason, and commends virtue as the chief ornament and perfection of human nature, without a regard to please and glorify God.

And divine love is the principle of universal holiness. Love is called "*the fulfilling of the law,*" as it is a comprehensive grace, and as it draws forth all the active powers of the soul to do God's will in an exact manner. Universal obedience is the exercise of love in various instances. As the spouse in the *Song of Solomon* is transformed in divers representations; sometimes as a sister, sometimes a warrior, sometimes as the keeper of a vineyard, but she always acted as a lover, and her chief business was to please her beloved. This allegorical description of the church, signifies that when the soul is inflamed with the love of God, that affection will be active, and discover itself in all it does.

or suffers in the service of God. This will make a christian very desirous and diligent to please God in all things, and careful not to displease him in any thing; for that is the inseparable effect of love. The felicity of the natural temper, and the force of education, may cause a loathing of some evils, and dispose to some good works, but with a reserved delight in other sins, and a secret exception against other duties. Servile fear is a partial principle, and causes an unequal respect to the divine precepts: it restrains from sins of greater guilt, at which conscience takes fire: it urges to some duties, the neglect of which causes disquiet; but the love of God causes the hatred of sin; and therefore it is against all sin, not only to prevent the exercise of it, but to eradicate it out of the soul. All the fearful consequences of sin do not render it so odious to a gracious spirit, as its own proper *idea* and intrinsic evil, as it is contrary to the holy nature and law of God. Love unites the soul to God, and turns the thoughts continually to him: and the lively sense of his majesty and presence, who is so pure that he cannot behold iniquity, causes an aversion from all that is displeasing to his divine eyes. And from hence it is that a zealous lover of God is frequent and strict in reviewing his heart and ways; and upon the discovery of sinful failings, renews his repentance, which is the exercise of grief and love, and renews his purposes of more care and circumspection for the future. Love aspires to be like God in all possible degrees of purity; for it inflames our desire after his favor, as that which is better than life, and all the sweetest enjoyments of it: and holiness is the powerful attractive of God's delightful love to us.

Love is the principle of free, ingenuous, and joyful obedience. It was our Saviour's meat and drink to do the will of his Father. For love is the fountain of pleasure, it moves the soul with election and liberty, and makes every thing grateful that proceeds from it. Therefore the apostle declares, "*that the law is not made for a righteous man*;" that is, as it is enforced by terrible penalties, to constrain rebellious sinners to obedience: for love is an internal living law in the heart, and has an imperial power over his actions. And this also distinguishes the renovation of one sanctified by the Spirit from the imperfect change that is made in the unregenerate. They may stop the eruption of corrupt nature, but are swine, that being washed, have an inclination to wallow in the mire: they may by strong impressions of fear be urged to do many good things; but in this they are like a bowl that is thrown with such violence, as controls the drawing of the bias, and makes it run contrary to it. But love inclines the soul to obey the holy motions of the Spirit with facility: as the wheels in Ezekiel's vision turned every way with readiness as the Spirit moved them.

And with holy love there is a spiritual power communicated,

that both the natural averseness and impotence to what is good may be healed. By the virtue of the sanctifying Spirit, the soul that was dead, absolutely unable to perform spiritual and supernatural acts, is revived to a kind of omnipotence, it can do all things, required by the evangelical covenant, by the new law that is in the hands of our merciful Mediator for salvation. It is true, there are relics of sin in the best, and the flesh and spirit are repugnant principles warring against one another: but the renewed spirit will make no capitulation or composition with sin, but is so predominant, that sin is gradually subdued, and does not so freely and frequently break forth as it does from the unrenewed. By the grace of the Spirit "we are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, to crucify the flesh with all the affections and lusts thereof;" and to perform holy duties with freedom, alacrity and zeal, in such a manner as is acceptable to God. In short, saving grace is distinguished from that which is common to the unregenerate by its prevalency and constancy. There may be a declination in the saints tending to a downfall; but *the seed of God*, that supernatural grace that *remains in them*, will by the power of the Holy Spirit recover the supremacy. Others may be enlightened, and feel some good motions, and transient touches; as Saul had his rapture among the prophets: but they are not truly, entirely and perseveringly converted to God; they are not proof against the allurements or terrors of the world. They make a fair profession till they are tried by temptations. Congealed drops of water appear like solid crystal, till the warm beams of the sun dissolve them, and discover the hypocrisy of the crystal. False jewels may seem to have the lustre of diamonds, till they are broke by a fall, and discovered to be glass. Thus the riches, the honors and pleasures of the flesh melt some, and evils break the resolution of others, and make it evident they were not sincere converts. But where the holy Spirit savingly works, he is said *to dwell*: He is not like a passenger, or a tenant at will, that neglects the house, and suffers it to fall into ruin, but as the proprietary and owner he keeps perpetual residence in true christians, and by his continual influence preserves them from final apostacy.

Now from hence we may judge whether we have an interest in Christ and his benefits. For the apostle clearly tells us, that if any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his, Rom. 8. 9. By his sacred signature we are appropriated to Christ, and visibly distinguished from the world. For though the secret and pure influences of the spirit in the soul are only known to the person that feels them, yet his active inspirations are declarative of his presence and power in the outward conversation. As the wind that is of so thin and subtile a nature that it is invisible in itself, but we certainly know from what point it blows by the course and way that the ship makes: Thus

the spirit of God, who is compared to the wind, is discovered by an infallible indication, his fruits and effects in a holy life. And those who have communion with Christ by his spirit, have a share in his victories, and may with confidence meet the last enemy, death: For we are assured, if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by the spirit that dwelleth in us, Rom. 8. 11.

A preparative conformity to Christ in Grace, will be followed with a consummate in glory. But those who never felt the sanctifying efficacy of the spirit in their hearts and lives, though they are christians in profession, yet they have no other union with Christ, than a dead branch with a tree that receives no sap and virtue from it; or an artificial member joined to the body, that may have the outward cloathing and ornaments proper to that part, but derives no life and sense from it. Whoever is in Christ is a new creature, 2 Cor. 5. 17. And only those who partake in the first resurrection from sin, shall be exempted from the power of the second death, and upon just grounds are freed from the terrors of the first.

## CHAPTER VI.

Our dear obligations to our Redeemer considered, who frees us from the sting, and fear, and dominion of death. His love was equal to the height of his glory from whence he descended, and the depth of his sufferings for oursake. An excitation to make it the great design of our lives to overcome the fear of death. Reconciliation with God requisite to our being freed from the powers of death. Repentance is necessary to obtain the favor of God. The infinite danger of delaying it, unfolded. The presumption of long life is vain. The hope of a future repentance is very deceitful. It is very hazardous whether God will accept the repentance that flows merely from bitter constraint at last. The continuance in sin upon the presumption of pardon, renders man most unworthy of it.

To apply this point let us, (1.) Consider our dear obligations to our blessed Saviour, who to free us from the sting and enslaving fear of death, submitted to it with all its terrors from God and wicked men. He felt a sadness to an agony in his soul, and suffered the equal extremities of ignominy and torment in his body. The favor of God was intercepted from him, that it may shine upon us in that gloomy hour. And all his terrible sufferings, though foreknown by his enlightened mind, could not weaken his determined will to undergo them for us: But when

Peter regarded with a more tender eye his life than our salvation, he was repelled with indignation. Unparalleled love! no less than divine, transcending all the instances of human affection. The highest kind and excess of love among men is to die for another, and the highest degree in that kind is to die to save an enemy; and of this our Saviour is the singular example: Love incomprehensible! It passes knowledge, and all understanding but his who expressed it. His love was equal to the height of his glory from whence he descended, and the depth of his sufferings that he sustained in our stead. By washing us from our sins in his blood, he makes us kings, Rev. 1. dignifies us with spiritual sovereignty over, not only defiling, but disturbing passions. The freest and most confident sinner in the world, that rebels against the divine laws without restraint, is a slave, not only under the chains of his imperious lusts, but in that he is liable to the scourgings of conscience whenever awakened, and to the servile fear of death every day. But the sincere christian has a clear and sweet peace, a blessed tranquility from the tormenting apprehensions and fears of death, that are the just consequences of guilt.

One of the ancient \* Romans highly celebrates the Astronomers, who discovered the true causes of the eclipses of the sun and moon, and freed the world from the double darkness of ignorance and fear; for before that discovery, men believed the obscuring of those great lights were the fainting fits of nature, and mortal symptoms threatening an universal calamity. But what praise and blessing is due to our Saviour, who hath given us infallible assurance that the death of the righteous is not, as the heathen world imagined, an irreparable loss of life, but a short eclipsing of the low and mean light that is common to sensitive creatures, to be restored more excellent and permanent in heaven, where those stars shine in the divine presence forever. "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This should render him infinitely precious, to us, and inflame our hearts with desires equal to our obligations to serve him.

(2.) Let us make it the great design and main business of our lives to remove from our souls the just fears of death. It is one of the solemn follies of the world to fear where there is no cause: As if a sentinel should mistake glow-worms in the night for lighted matches, and give a false alarm: But it is a worse folly, though pleasing, not to fear when there is the greatest reason to excite it. And it is so in the present case; for the most are without the fear of death, that should make them serious in preparing for it: Nay, to maintain their security, are as unwilling to hear

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\* *Macti ingenio esse Cœli interpretes, rerumque naturæ capaces, argumenti repertoꝛes, quo Deos hominesque vinxistis. Plin. lib. 2.*



conscience declare the wretchedness of their condition with respect to eternity, as Ahab was the prophet Micaiah, who always foretold evil things to him.

It was the chief design of the philosophers, by principles of reason, to fortify themselves against all frightful accidents, and with a masculine mind, with an ardent and generous spirit, to \* encounter this inevitable evil. When one of them was threatened by the emperor Antigonus with present death, he boldly replied, Threaten this to your dissolute courtiers that are softened and melted by sensual pleasures, and easily receptive of terrible impressions, not to a philosopher to whom death is contemptible in any appearance. This was a piece of affected bravery; for pagan philosophy could never furnish them with armor of proof against the dart of our last enemy. But the gospel assuring us that death is an entrance into immortality, makes that to be the reality of a christian, that was a vain boast of the philosophers.

Now that we may be established in that blessed tranquility that death cannot discompose, the following directions are infinitely useful.

[1.] We must give all diligence to be in a state of reconciliation with God. The things requisite to that are, as the apostle declares, Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 20. 21. Repentance includes a godly sorrow for sins past, without partiality in the heart and conversation. It is called repentance from dead works, Heb. 6. 1. the proper name of our sins, that deserve eternal death. By repentance we return to obedience that is due to God our maker and lawgiver. Faith respects the Redeemer, who by his blood shed on the cross, and pleaded in heaven, reconciles God to penitent sinners. The belief of his merciful and powerful mediation for our acceptance and pardon, works by love, 2 Cor. 3. 14. and constrains us to dedicate ourselves in a devoted propriety to his glory and service, and to live according to that dedication. These two are absolutely necessary to the vital and salvific state of a christian. And as soon as a person sincerely repents and believes, he is justified before God; and if he dies, will certainly obtain eternal glory. This should be the early and most speedy work of our lives: For the delay of repentance, and neglect of securing the favor of God, arms death with more stings and terrors.

The infinite danger of this I will unfold, to awaken the careless and secure. The devil is a sophister in perfection; and his ordinary and successful artifice to elude the force of present conviction, and wrap men in sin and damnation, is to induce them to

\* *Fœlix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas:  
Atque metus mortis et inexorabile fatum  
Subjecit pedibus.* *Virgil.*

delay the great work of the soul till afterward. He is not so foolish to tell them, as he did our first parents, *Ye shall not die*; for the temptation is so palpable, that it could deceive none. Though the evidence and certainty of supernatural truths, that disturb the security of sinners, is sometimes obscured by affected doubts; yet there is no artifice that can resist the full and strong conviction in men, that death is inevitable. Though nature recoils from it with abhorrence, yet this sad truth is so visible that it forces an assent from all. Those who are titular Gods, the greatest princes, are not so vain as to pretend to an exemption by privilege from that fatal necessity; they cannot fancy to be embalmed alive, and that nature may be made incorruptible by art. The palace is as near the grave as the cottage: Therefore the devil cherishes in men fond hopes of a long life. As some optic glasses deceive the sight, and make a superficial representation in colors on a wall, but two or three steps distance appears a long deep gallery: Thus the tempter by a dangerous deceit, presents to the imagination the fatal term at a great distance; and since he cannot lessen the certainty of death in men's belief, he removes the image of it out of their memories, to weaken the impression that it is capable to make on their affections. They dare not venture to die as they live, careless of salvation, and unprepared for their accounts with God; therefore they suspend the workings of conscience by a seeming compliance; they resolve at random to convert and reform hereafter, but will not determine at present to forsake their sins. The tempter insinuates there will be a long interval between the present time and the last hour, that shall decide their state forever; that it will be a convenient season to prepare for the other world when they have done with this; as if repentance were best at last, when there are no temptations, and therefore no danger of retracting it. And the heart of man is a great flatterer, very subtle to deceive and ruin him with vain resolutions of a devout retirement, and becoming seriously religious hereafter; And thus by an easy permission, he gratifies the present desires of the flesh, and goes in a circuit from one vanity to another, till death surprize the presumer. It is very applicable to this purpose, what is related of Alcæus the poet, who from every season of the year, took arguments to give a new title to his intemperance: The Spring, he said, required liberal drinking, in sign, of joy for the renovation of nature; the Summer to temper our heat, and refresh our thirst; it was due to Autumn that is dedicated to the vintage; and Winter required it to expel the cold, that would congeal the blood and spirits: Thus he pleaded for the allowance of his excess. And so men in the several ages of life (that are correspondent to the seasons of the year) frame some excuses to delay repentance, and give some color to their rebellion against God, who commands us to hear his voice to

day, obediently and immediately, upon no less penalty than being excluded from his blessed rest forever: Heb. 2. 7. 8. Yet the self-deceiving sinner preaches another gospel to himself, and thinks the vanities of childhood, the pleasures of youth, the business of middle age, and the infirmity of old age, are plausible pretences to put off the serious work of repentance: O that such would duly consider the desperate uncertainty upon which men build their hopes of future repentance, and divine acceptance!

(1.) Men delay repentance upon the presumption of a long life: But what is more uncertain? It is the wisdom and goodness of God to conceal in his impenetrable counsels, the time of our sojourning here: For if men, though liable to death every hour, and therefore should be under just fear, lest it surprse them unprepared, yet against so strong a curb, run with that exorbitant vehemence after the present world; how much more licentious would they be, if secured from sudden death? But none can promise to himself one day. Death comes not according to the order of nature, but the decree of God. How many in the flower of their youth and strength thought themselves at as great distance from death as the East is from the West, when there was not the space of an hour between them and death, between them and hell? The lamp suddenly expires by a blast of wind, when there is plenty of oil to feed it. The rich man pleased himself with designs of sensual enjoyments for many years, yet did not see the dawning of the next morning; "thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." This sentence is pronounced in heaven against thousands that are now alive, conversant in the vanities and business of the world, eating and drinking, playing and trading, and all unconcerned as to dying, yet shall breath their last before to-morrow, and their unwilling souls be rent from the embraces of their bodies. In various manners men die from inward and outward causes; an apoplexy, an imposthume, a flux of rheum stopping respiration, kills the body, without any presaging signs of death: as if the roof and all the chambers should fall within the house, while the walls are standing entire. And how many unforeseen accidents, and therefore inevitable, put a sudden period to life? Is it not our truest wisdom, by an early repentance, to prepare for death, when the season is certainly short, and but uncertainly continued, and the omission is irreparable?

(2.) Suppose life be continued, yet sinners that delay repentance, can have no rational hopes that they shall sincerely repent in time to come. For,

1. Saving repentance is the gift of God: And is it likely that those who have been insensible of the loud and earnest calls of the Word, inflexible to the gracious methods of his providence leading them to repentance, should at last obtain converting grace?

The gales of the Spirit are very transient, and blow where he pleases ; and can it be expected that those who have wilfully and often resisted him, should by an exuberant favour receive afterwards more powerful grace, to overrule their stubborn wills, and make them obedient ? To expect divine grace, and the powerful workings of the Spirit, after long resisting his holy excitations, is both unreasonable and unrevealed. It is written as with a sun-beam, that God will graciously pardon repenting sinners that reform their lives ; but it is no where promised, that he will give saving\* repentance to those who securely continue in sin, upon a corrupt confidence they will repent at last. Our Saviour threatens to him that neglects the improving the grace that is offered, “ that which he hath shall be taken away :” yet men unwilling at present to forsake their sins of pleasure and profit, vainly hope they shall obtain grace hereafter, without any promise from God, and against the tenor of his threatenings. God has threatened that his Spirit “ shall not always strive with rebellious sinners,” and then their state is remediless. This may be the case of many in this life, who are insensible of their misery. As consumptive persons decline by degrees, lose their appetite, color and strength, till at last they are hopeless : so the withdrawals of the Spirit are gradual, his motions are not so strong nor frequent ; and upon the continued provocations of the disobedient, finally leaves them under that most fearful doom, “ he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ; he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still :” and thus punishes them on this side hell, as he does the damned, by giving them over to sin. It is a bloody adventure for men to indulge their carnal appetites, as if they had infallible assurance that they should not die in an impenitent state. The delayer does not regularly trust, but tempt God.

2. Suppose the holy Spirit be not totally withdrawn, yet by every day’s continuance in sin, the heart is more hardened against the impressions of grace, more averse from returning to God, and repentance more difficult and hazardous. The last guilty disposition that seals up the damnation of sinners, is impenitence. Now he that delays the returning to his duty, shall have more cause to repent hereafter, but less will and power ; for sin repeated, makes him more incapable of repentance, and that which is indisposition, will become averseness and obstinacy. The heart with difficulty changes its last end. Actions may be suddenly changed, when there is a disability to perform them ; but the inward inclinations to sin, without supernatural renewing grace, remain. It is therefore the subtilty of the old serpent to make the entrance of sin easy : for he knows that custom is a second nature, and has a mighty power in us : “ can an Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard change his spots ? then may you who are

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\*Nemo ergo sibi promittat, quod evangelium non promittit. *Aug.*

accustomed to do evil, do good." If sin in its infancy can make such resistance, that the spirit of grace is foiled in his motions to rescue the soul from its bondage, how much more when it is grown into a confirmed habit? Therefore the apostle urges so zealously; "to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

(3.) How uncertain is it whether God will accept the addresses of such at last? We are commanded, "seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." The limitation implies, if the season be neglected, he will hide his face forever. Now in cases of great moment and hazard, what diligence, what caution should be used?

1. Consider how derogatory it is to his majesty, to offer to him the dregs of our age, the relics of a licentious careless life, spent in the works of vanity. Is this to give glory to God? Jer. 13. 16. Contempt provokes superiors as much as actual injuries: how villifying is it of his eternal greatness, that men lavishly waste the best of their time and strength upon their lusts; and when through weakness of age, or the violence of a disease, they can no more do the acts of sin, nor relish the pleasures of sin, to presume that God will upon their prayers forgive their sins so long indulged, and of such violent provocations, and receive them into his kingdom, as if he could not be happy without them, and it were his interest to receive them? God has laid his exceptions against such addresses: he may justly stand upon his greatness and honor: "if ye offer the blind for a sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleased with it, to accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts?" As the Lord upbraids the Jews for their black ingratitude in bargaining for thirty pieces of silver, to have him betrayed to their malice; "a goodly price that I was prized at of them:" so when there is an universal prostration of all the powers and faculties, when the spirits are damped, the vital heat is checked, and the function of the senses is obstructed, then to seek to God for mercy, and to make fair promises of obedience, he may justly reproach the presumer, a goodly time you have allotted for me? Your youth and strength, the golden age of life, has been wasted on your lusts, and in the business of the world; and the wretched remains you think worthy of my acceptance.

2. Consider what sincerity or moral value is in religion that merely proceeds from bitter constraint. It is a rule in law, *Falsum est eam peperisse, cui mortuæ filius extractus est*: It is not a natural birth when the child is extracted from the dead mother: it is not genuine piety that is extorted by the rack, whilst the heart full of reluctance does not truly consent. Pure religion flows uncompelled from love to God; it is the dregs that come

forth with pressing. It is observed of the Israelites, that\* when "God slew them, they sought him, and returned and inquired early after God." But it is added, "nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouths, and they lied to him with their tongues: for their hearts were not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." How often does experience convince us of the inefficacy of a sick-bed repentance? How many that were devout and mournful, with one foot as it were in the grave, and another in hell, and were as a brand plucked out of the fire; yet when the fear of death is removed, all the terrors of conscience, the religious affections that were felt and expressed by them, vanish as the morning dew? Now converting grace is distinguished by its radication and efficacy, not only from the mere pretences of those who know their own insincerity, but from the real workings of conscience, and the imperfect dispositions to good that are in the unrenewed. And those persons who with the return of health, have returned to their sins, if they had died with their religious resolutions, would have presumed that their repentance was unto life, and of their interest in the divine mercy. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and above all things deceitful to itself. Besides, when sinners are plunged in deep distress, when the shadow of death sits upon their eye-lids, they may with plentiful effusions of tears desire God to receive them to heaven, not to see and praise his adorable excellencies, not to please and glorify him forever, but as a sanctuary from revenging justice, a refuge from hell. And will such prayers prevail? What swells the confidence of sinners, but unworthy notions of God, as if a forced and formal confession of their sins could deceive his all-discerning eye; and desires merely terminated on themselves, were sufficient to reconcile his offended majesty?

(3.) There is nothing renders men more unworthy of mercy, than a continuance in sin, upon presumption of an easy pardon at last. This is a most provoking abuse of his goodness and long suffering, that should lead them unto repentance, Rom. 2. He can in the twinkling of an eye, in the beating of a pulse, cut off the sinner: It is as easy to his power as to will it. And there is no consideration so melting and moving as his Clemency. We read of David, that he had more than once in his power Saul, his unjust and cruel enemy, yet spared him: The effect of it was, that Saul was softened, and under such consumption of spirit, that he wept, confessed his guilt, and persecuted him no more, overcome by that unexampled love: If a man find his enemy, will he let him go? 1 Sam. 26. 21. Yet men take advantage from the goodness of God, securely to despise his laws. The habitual sinner thinks that God is so gracious, such a lover

\*Psal. 78. 3, 36.

of souls, so easy to be intreated, that upon his dying prayer, "Lord remember me in thy kingdom," the answer will be, "to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." This is the deceitful principle upon which men usually build their hopes, as actions that bear the image of their minds clearly manifest. Now this presumptuous indulgence gives the deepest grain to their sins, and makes them more incapable of pardon. Chrysostom observes, that Judas was encouraged to betray his master, presuming on his lenity, goodness, benignity; which considerations intolerably aggravated his treason, and confounded his hopes. There is a dreadful threatening against those who reject the invitations of grace in their prosperity, and when the righteous judge comes to sentence and execution, are earnest suppliants for mercy. Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes: When your fear comes as a desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me: For they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord, Prov. 1. A doleful case, beyond all possible expression! when the sinful creature, forsaken of all comforts below, addresses to heaven for relief, and meets with derision and fury, scorn and indignation. The foolish virgins, careless to prepare for the bridegroom's coming, in vain at last discovered their want of oil, in vain solicited the wise virgin's for supply, in vain knocked at the door, crying, Lord, Lord, open to us, Matth. 25. The answer was severe and peremptory, I know you not; and they were forever excluded from the joys of heaven.

## CHAPTER VII.

It is most incongruous to delay our reconciliation with God till the time of sickness. It is very uncomfortable to delay it till our declining time. The vanity of men's presuming to delay repentance, because some have been converted in their last hours. The instances of such are rare, and not to be drawn into example. Innumerable have died in their sins, deceived with hopes of repenting hereafter. Those who have delayed their repentance, are not utterly destitute of hopes, if they earnestly seek God at last.

(4.) How incongruous is it to delay the solemn work of reconciliation with God till the time of sickness. This is an affair wherein our transcendent interest is concerned, and should be performed in our most calm and sensible condition, when we are most capable of reflecting upon our ways, and making an exact trial of ourselves, in order to our returning to God by a holy change of our lives. Now that the time of sickness is not a convenient season for this work, is sadly evident; for some diseases are stupifying, and all the powers of the soul are benumbed in a dull captivity; so that the sick man only perceives with his animal faculties. Some diseases are tormenting, and cause a great disorder in the soul, and distract the thoughts from considering his spiritual state. When the storm is at the highest, and the pilot so sick, that he can give no directions, the ship is left to the fury of the winds, and escapes by miracle. When there is a tempest in the humors of the body, and the soul by sympathy is so discomposed, that it cannot apply to itself to prepare for its appearance before the divine tribunal, what danger of being lost, and passing from a short agony to everlasting torment?

Besides; suppose the sickness more tolerable, yet how unfit is a person weak and languishing, when sense and conscience are both afflicted, to encounter with the cruel enemy of souls? All that sincerely seek peace with God, must expect fierce anger and war from Satan: Therefore it is a point of necessary wisdom, whilst our bodies and minds are in the best order, to be preparing against his assaults.

(5.) Consider how uncomfortable it is to delay repentance till age and sickness, when the fruits of it are not so evident nor acceptable: In evil days, and the approaches of death, it is very hard to discover the sincerity of the heart; whether repentance proceeds from holy principles; whether the sorrow then ex-



pressed be *Godly*, for sin, or merely *natural*, for punishment; whether the good resolutions be the effects of permanent fidelity, or of violent fear, that will vanish, the cause being removed. When the invitations to sin cease, there may remain a secret undiscerned love to it in the heart, which is the centre of corruption, and root of apostacy. The snake that seemed dead in the frost, revived by the fire. The inordinate affections, that seemed mortified when the sensitive faculties were disabled to carnal enjoyments, may have inward life, and will soon be active and vigorous in the presence of temptations. And that a death-bed repentance is usually deceitful, appears from hence, that not one of a thousand that recover from dangerous diseases, are faithful in performing their most sacred and solemn vows. How many having the sentence of death in themselves, and under the terrors of the Lord, have expressed the greatest detestations of their sins, and resolved, as they thought sincerely, if God would spare them, to reform their ways, to become new creatures, exemplary in all holy conversation; yet the danger being over, their heats of devotion expire as they revive, and their lusts recover strength with their bodies, and being suppressed only by fear, are more fierce in their return. Their hearts were as marble, that in rainy weather seems dissolved into water; but it is only from the moisture of the air, and remains as hard as ever. When the fear of death is removed, all their promises of reformation are ineffective, as violent and void; all their religious affections vanish as the morning dew. Now if these persons had died before this visible trial and discovery, they had passed into the other world with the reputation of true penitents; deceiving others with their prayers and tears, and liberal promises, (the outward signs of repentance) and deceived themselves by the inward workings of an alarmed conscience. Therefore ministers should be very circumspect in applying the promises of mercy to persons in such a state; for an error in that kind has fearful consequences. A little opiate divinity may quiet the mind for a time, but the virtue of it will be soon spent, and the presumer perishes forever. But suppose a dying person with true tears, and unfeigned persevering affections, returns to God; can he have a comfortable assurance of his sincerity? Indeed, the searcher and judge of hearts will accept him; but how doubtful and wavering are his hopes? What anxious fears are in his breast, lest he builds upon a sandy foundation? And how dreadful is it to appear before the tribunal of God, and expect an uncertain sentence?

But sinners still please themselves in this, that God has effectually called some at the last hour, and they may find the same favor with others. To this I answer:

1. It is true, we have some rare admirable instances of God's mercy and grace, the dying thief, and some others; which shew,

it is possible with God to abolish the most confirmed habits in a short time, and by a swift conversion to prepare a sinner for heaven : but these miraculous examples are not to be drawn into consequence for the encouragement of any in their sins. A\* prince will not endure, that his free favors should be made a law to him, and the special privilege of some be extended to all. As Thales said, an old mariner, that has escaped the various dangers by rocks and storms at sea, was a new miracle : so that for one who has lived an obstinate sinner, to die a penitent believer, is very rare and extraordinary. What our Saviour said concerning the salvation of rich men, is justly applicable to this case ; “ that it was as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” This so astonished the apostles, that they cried, “ who then can be saved ?” To mitigate the difficulty, he remembers them of the divine omnipotence : “ all things are possible with God.” Thus, for one who has been hardened in a long course of sin, and making himself meet for the company of damned spirits in hell, to be at last suddenly prepared and received into the pure and glorious society above, is possible ; but possible only as miracles are, by the efficacy of infinite power ; and we cannot reasonably expect such miracles. And are heaven and hell such trivial things as to be left to an uncertainty ? Are not men concerned in another manner in the affairs of this world ? How careful to prevent the sentence of death, of imprisonment, of banishment ? How diligent to obtain some temporal advantage ; yet how neglectful in things of highest importance ? It may be, says the secure wretch, God will give me repentance at last, as he did to others. Remember you speak of that that most nearly concerns your soul ; and dare you venture the salvation of an immortal soul upon a naked possibility of receiving grace : what reasonable person would neglect a disease that may prove deadly, and rely on extreme remedies ? And can you be guilty of such cruel indifference, such a desperate carelessness, as to leave eternal salvation and eternal damnation to a peradventure ?

2. Consider how many thousands have died in their sins, and of them great numbers cherished † fallacious hopes of repenting at last. Diagoras the atheist, that denied a governing providence of things in this lower world, the sphere of mutability, when one for his conviction shewed him in the ‡ temple of Neptune many votive tables, containing the grateful acknowledgments of those who by addresses to the Gods in dangerous storms, had arrived safe at their ports ; and asked him, whether he had ob-

\*Quod alicui gratiose conceditur, trahi non debet ab aliis in exemplum.

† Vix dici potest, quantos hæc inanis spei umbra deceperit. *Aug.*

‡ Tull.

served those numerous testimonies for divine providence? he replied, "I see them; but how many having invocated Neptune, yet perished in the ocean, and never came to pay their vows for deliverance? It was impiety in him to argue so against God's disposing providence; but it may be justly said to those who neglect their present duty, presuming upon some examples of his glorious goodness to those who were converted and saved in their approaches to death. How many have finally miscarried in shooting that gulph, to one that has arrived safe at heaven? How many that presume upon their youth and strength to delay repentance, are suddenly cut off? The first symptom of their sickness is death: and what the angel with such solemnity declared, that time should be no more, is verified concerning them by an unexpected dissolution. How many, when sick, hope either by the vigor of nature, or the virtue of medicines, to overcome the disease? And this hope is cherished by the mortal kindness, the cruel deceit of friends, who are unwilling to discover their danger, lest their spirits should sink under the apprehension of it: and thus deluded, may never see death till they feel it, and perish forever in their impenitence. How many that are guilty and graceless, when distant from death and hell but a few hours; yet from atheism, are as secure as Jonah, who slept in the midst of a tempest at sea? The tenor of their lives discovers this to be divine vengeance; they are seized by a spirit of slumber, and pass without fear into the state of everlasting desperation. How many are deceived with the appearance of repentance, and mistake a false peace for a true, and assuage the anguish of conscience by palliating remedies? Their sorrow for sin, their prayers, their resolutions of reformation, are the product of servile fear, that is ineffectual to salvation: and as it is with crafty tradesmen, that take up much upon trust when near breaking; so they are very liberal of the promises of amendment when they are near dying. From hence they vainly presume that God is reconciled to them, whose all-discerning eye sees the inward spring of their sorrows; and the principle of all their religious resolutions is the guilty fear of eternal judgment. Now a false tranquility is more terrible than the storms of a troubled spirit; for those who hope upon deceitful grounds, are in the most hopeless state, neglecting what is requisite in order to salvation. Thus innumerable pass in a cloud of delusion to the kingdom of darkness. And how many who have lived in careless security, as if they had made a covenant with death, when conscience is awakened, and looks into the depth of their guilt, when they see death before them attended with judgment, and judgment with an everlasting hell; as we read of Sisera, who from extreme fear passed to extreme security; so, on the contrary, these self-deceivers, from security, have fallen into despair. Then truth and conscience, that were so long under unrighteous

restraints, break the fetters, and terribly charge the sinners: then innumerable acts, which they thought to be innocent, appear to be sins; and sin, that they made light of, to be infinitely evil, and in the highest degree hateful to God. And sometimes, by the suggestions of the enemy of souls, they are overwhelmed with despair, and their last error is worse than the first. The devil makes his advantage of the timorous conscience, as well as of the seared: solitude is his scene, as well as the noisy theatre; and by contrary ways, either presumption or despair, brings sinners to the same end. He changes his methods according to their dispositions; the tempter turns accuser; and then such who had but a dim sight of sin before, have an over-quick sight of it, and are swallowed up in an abyss of confusion. The condition of such is extremely miserable. It is observed by those who are bitten with a mad dog, that their cure is extreme \* difficult, if not impossible; for being tormented with thirst, yet are so fearful of water, that the sight of it sometimes causes sudden convulsions and death. This is a significant emblem of a despairing soul: for when enraged conscience bites to the quick, the guilty person filled with estimations and terrors, ardently thirsts for pardon, yet fearfully forsakes his own mercies: whatever is propounded to encourage faith in the divine promises, he turns to justify his infidelity. Represent to him the infinite mercies of God, the unvaluable merits of Christ sufficient to redeem the lost world; it increases his despair, because he has perversely abused those mercies, and neglected those merits. The most precious promises of the gospel are killing terrors to him; as the sweet title of friend, wherewith our Saviour received Judas when he came to betray him, was the most stinging reproach of his perfidious villany. Thus it appears, how dangerous it is to delay repentance and reconciliation with God till sickness and a death-bed, when the remembrance or forgetfulness of sin, the sense or security of conscience, may be equally destructive.

The sum of what has been amplified in this part, is this: A vain hope of living long, and being reconciled to God when men please, is the fatal foundation of their sins and misery. They apply the word of God against the mind of God, and securely provoke him, as if they could take heaven by violence, in contradiction to the gospel: But they usually dispose of that time they shall never enjoy, and presume upon that mercy and grace they shall never obtain. We are commanded to "seek the Lord while he may be found;" a sad intimation, that it is not in our power to find him to our comfort when we please. He spares long; but abused patience will deliver sinners to revenging justice. Sampson was three times in the chamber of his lust ex-

\* Miserrimum morbi genus, in quo æger et siti, et aquæ metu cruciatur, quorum spes in angusto est. *Cels.*

posed to treachery, and escaped ; but the fourth time he said, " I will arise," but was surprized by his enemies, and lost his strength, and sight, and liberty. How justly will the wilful neglect of salvation so long, and so compassionately offered to sinners, render the divine mercy inexorable to their prayers and tears at last ? When a Roman gentleman that was wont to revel in the night, and sleep in the day, had wasted a great estate by luxury, he petitioned the emperor Tiberius to relieve his poverty, and was dismissed with this upbraided answer, *Sero expectus es*, you are risen too late. He never opened his eyes to see his condition, till it was past remedy. This is the sad case of many that waste the seasons of grace, and are careless of their duty, till upon the point of perishing, and then address themselves to God for his favor and pardon, but are justly rejected with the reproaches of their obstinate neglect of salvation in the time of their lives. I doubt not that some are wonderfully converted and saved at last ; but these special mercies are like our Saviour's miraculous healing the two blind persons, as he was passing in the way, when great numbers of the blind remained uncured. We read a prodigious story in the Book of *Kings*, that a captain, and his fifty men, commanded Elias to come to the King, and immediately a tempest of lightning destroyed them. Now who would think that another captain with his fifty should be so desperate, having the ashes and relics of those miserable carcasses before their eyes, as to make the same citation to the prophet ? Yet they did, and provoked the justice of heaven to consume them. And this madness is exemplified in thousands every day ; for notwithstanding they see sinners like themselves, cut off in their evil ways, they continue unreformed, as if they were fearless of hell, as if resolved to secure their own damnation.

I would not from what has been represented in this matter so universally useful, discourage any that have lived in a course of sin, from earnest seeking to God in their last hours : For even then they are not utterly destitute of hope. The gospel sets forth the mercy of God to returning sinners, in various representations and expressions of admirable tenderness. When the lost sheep was recovered, there was joy as if a treasure had been found. The prodigal had wasted his estate in lasciviousness and luxury, and by a harsh reduction came to himself, reflecting with shame upon his folly and rebellion ; and the sense of his misery (not a more ingenuous or noble principle at first) compelled him to go to his father, to try what his affection would do. And it was not a vain presumption, for he found the effects of fatherly and compassionate love : " When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said, father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called

thy son. But the father said to his servants, 'bring out the best robes, and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; let us eat and be merry, for this my son, was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.' The design of Christ was to represent his heavenly father in that parable: And to wounded spirits that feel the intolerable weight of sin, the mercy and mildness of the gospel is to be exhibited. God is rich in mercy to all that call upon him in truth. But to tell sinners who securely proceed in their sinful ways, that they may be saved at last, and notwithstanding their presumptuous repulses of God's calls to his service, yet think they may come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and be rewarded, is to give countenance and protection to sin, and to harden them to destruction. Poison is not cured by giving food, but antidotes, that put nature into a passion till it be expelled. The terrors of the Lord can only prove medicinal to such depraved souls.

To conclude this argument, let us seriously consider the revelation God has afforded of himself in the gospel. He is a father and a judge; justice and holiness as well as mercy are essential to his nature, that our affections may be accordingly moved towards him. "If ye call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Presumption and despair are very dishonorable to God, and pernicious to the soul: The one destroys the fear, the other the love of God. But hope tempered with fear, has an excellent influence in the christian life, as the ballast and the wind are both necessary that the ship may sail safely; without the wind the ship can make no way; and without ballast, it is in danger of oversetting by every gust. Thus hope and fear are necessary to bring us safely to heaven. Fear without hope, chills and stupifies the vigor and alacrity of the soul, that it cannot come to God: and hope without fear, makes it vain and careless of its duty, and liable to be overthrown by every pleasing temptation. Briefly, let us rightly understand the tenor of the evangelical promises of pardon and grace; they are conditional, and applicable only to penitent believers. And unfeigned faith purifies the heart, works by love, and is the living principle of universal obedience. And repentance unto life, is productive of all good fruits in their season. Without faith and repentance we can neither be justified in this world, nor glorified in the next. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: as a man sows, so shall he reap. He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: he that sows to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

## CHAPTER VIII.

The preserving ourselves from presumptuous sins, a means to render death comfortable. The zealous discharge of the duties of our callings, and endeavors to glorify God, and do good according to our abilities, will sweeten the thoughts of death. An indifference of mind and affections to earthly things makes death less fearful. Frequent converse with God in holy duties, makes death desirable. A steadfast belief of future happiness makes death desirable. An excitation to the saints to die with courage and cheerfulness. It is our duty to die with resignation and with patience, and earnest desires to be with Christ. It is very becoming a christian to die with joy and thanksgiving.

[2.] The careful preserving ourselves from wilful presumptuous sins, is a happy means to render death comfortable to us. Sins of ignorance and infirmity, of sudden surreption and surprise, the best men are not freed from in the present state: And being the daily motive of our grief, and serious circumspection to prevent them, are consistent with the regular peace of conscience, and the friendship and favor of God. But great sins in their matter being so contrary to natural conscience, and supernatural grace, or sins presumptuous in the manner of their commission, such as proceed from the choice of the perverse will against the enlightened mind, whatever the matter or kind of them be, are direct rebellion against God, a despising of his command, and provoke his pure eyes, and make the aspect of death fearful. The Spirit seals our pardon and title to heaven as the holy Spirit; his testimony, that we are the children of God, and heirs of glory, is concurrent with the renewed conscience, and distinguished from the ignorant presumptions, blind conjectures, and carnal security of the unholy. As the sanctifying Spirit he distinguishes true christians from the lost world, appropriates them to God, confirms their present interest in the promises of the gospel, and their future hopes. Briefly, grace is the most sensible effect and design of God's special favor, the fruit of election, and the earnest of glory: And the truth of grace is most clearly and certainly made evident by the continual efficacy of it in the conversation. The observation of our hearts to suppress unholy affections, and of our senses to prevent them, a constant course of holiness in our lives (though many frailties will cleave to the best) is usually rewarded with great peace here.

God has established a connexion between our obedience and his comforts. Those that keep themselves pure from the de-

filements of the world, have the white stone promised, the bright jewel of assurance of God's pardoning and rewarding mercy. We read of Enoch, *that he walked with God*, was a star shining in a corrupt age; the tenor of his life was holy, and he was translated to heaven without seeing death. Though this was an extraordinary dispensation, yet there is a peculiar reward analogical to it; for those who walk circumspectly, they shall not see death with its terrors, but usually have a holy cheerfulness, a peaceful joy in their passage through the dark valley to heaven. But presumptuous sins against external and internal restraints, the convincing law of God, and the directions of conscience, (to which even the saints of God are liable here, as appears by David's earnest prayer to be preserved from them) such sins grieve the Holy Spirit, and wound our spirits, and, if continued, sequester us from the comfortable privileges of the gospel, and render us unfit for the kingdom of heaven. And when they are retracted by repentance, yet there often remains a bitter remembrance of them; as deep wounds, though cured, yet are felt in change of weather. And sometimes a spring-tide of doubts and fears breaks into humble penitent souls, in the last hours: though death brings them safely, yet not comfortably to heaven.

[3.] The zealous discharge of the duties of our place and calling, the conjunction of our resolutions and endeavors to glorify God; and do good according to our abilities and opportunities of service, sweetens the thoughts of death to us. For the true end and perfection of life is the glory of God, and when with fidelity it is employed in order to it, death brings us to the blessed rest from our labors. Our Saviour when he was to leave the world, addressed himself to his Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. And now, Father, glorify me with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, John 17. A christian that imitates and honors Christ, and with diligence perseveres in well-doing, may with a humble confidence in the divine mercy expect the promised reward. The reflection upon a well-spent life is joined with a joyful prospect of God's favor and acceptance above. But for the careless and remiss, to those who are wilfully negligent of their duty, how fearful is death that summonses them to give an account of their talents to the righteous Lord?

[4.] A holy indifference of affection to present things, makes it easy to part with them, and death less fearful to us. David, though a king, declares he was a stranger on earth not only with respect to his transient condition, but his inward disposition; and that he was as a weaned child from the admired vanities of the world. Chrysostom in a letter to Ciriacus, who was tenderly sensible of his banishment, wrote to him, "You now begin to lament my banishment, but I have done so for a long time:



“For since I knew that heaven was my country, I have esteemed the whole earth a place of exilement. Constantinople, from whence I am expelled, is as distant from Paradise as the desert to which they send me.” But when our affections are set upon external things, and we are irregular in our aims, intemperate in our use, and immoderate in our delights, how sensible and cutting is the division from them? How bitter is death that deprives a carnal wretch of all the materials of his frail felicity? What a storm of passions is raised, to lose all his good things at once? For it is a rule in nature, what is possessed with transporting joy, is lost with excessive sorrow. As the ivy that twines so closely about the tree, and is intimately fastened by so many roots as there are branches, cannot be plucked away without rending the bark with it; so when the world, that was as it were incarnated with the heart, is taken away, the heart itself is grievously rent by the violent separation. \*And the infelicity of carnal and worldly persons is heavily aggravated, in that the guilt in procuring or abusing those treasures and delights that they leave here with so great sorrow, will cleave to them, and give testimony against them before their judge. But when the affections are loose to the world, and set upon heaven, our leaving the earth is no loss but gain, and our separation from the body of flesh is with that alacrity, as the putting off a vile garment to be clothed with a royal robe. It was the wise counsel of †Tertullian to the women of the first ages of the church, not to value and love the jewels and ornaments of gold, that they might be more ready and resolved to obtain by death, martyrdom, and by martyrdom, eternal glory. And that we may disentangle our souls from those voluntary bands that fasten us to present things, we must have a sincere uncorrupted judgment of their meanness. The apostle exhorts christians to moderation in their temper and conversation, with respect to the business and enjoyments here; that “they who have wives, be as though they had none; that those that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not abusing it: For the fashion of the world passeth away.” To a wise and pondering observer, what comparison is there between shadows and dreams, and substantial everlasting blessedness? If men had the same opinion of this world whilst they live, as they will have when they are to die, they would not inordinately seek it. They who have magnified temporal honors and riches, and lived in pleasures without remorse, yet in their dying hours, when men speak

\*Hæc enim est infelicitas hominum, propter quæ peccant. Morientes hic dimittunt, et ipsa peccata secum portant. *Aug.*

†Stemus expeditæ ad omnem vim, nihil habentes quod relinquere timeamus; Retinacula ista sunt nostræ. *De Cult. Fœm.*

with most feeling and least affection, how have they villified those empty appearances of happiness? With what moving expressions declared the vanity and brevity of worldly things? As when the Israelites were to go through the river Jordan, that opened itself to make a free and dry passage for them; the lower part of its waters ran into the Dead Sea, and utterly failed, Josh. 3. 16. \*but the waters that came from abroad, rose up and appeared like a mountain. Thus when men come to the universal passage from this to the next life, inferior things absolutely fail and are lost in the Dead Sea; but the things above, that are eternal, then appear in their true greatness, exceeding all human comprehension: from hence is the change of mind and language concerning the one and other.

[5.] Solemn, affectionate, and frequent converse with God in religious duties, will render death not fearful to us. The whole life of a christian, as such, is a continual communion with the Father, and with Jesus Christ, 1 John 1. 3. For he performs all good works by divine grace communicated from above, and refers all to the divine honor. As in a pair of compasses, one foot is fixed in the centre, while the other moves in the circumference; so the heart of a christian is in heaven, his aims are for God, whilst he is active here in the world. His natural and civil actions are heightened to a supernatural end: and thus his conversation is in heaven. But this was spoken of before: and that which is now specified, is the more immediate service of God in holy meditation, prayer, and the ordinances of the gospel, which is the noblest part of the spiritual life.

Our blessed Saviour who was a comprehensor upon earth, always saw the face of God, and invariably sought his glory in all things, yet had his special times of prayer and heavenly communion with God, and the most glorious testimonies of his favor in those times. Our communion with God here is as true as in heaven, but the influence and fruition is different according to our capacity. When the soul feels the vigorous exercise of the thoughts and affections upon God, and the raised operations of grace in holy duties, it is as certain a sign of God's favor and acceptance, as when fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifice. And often our affectionate duties are rewarded with sensible consolations, and holy souls are dismissed from the throne of grace, as they shall be received at the throne of glory, with the reviving testimonies of God's approbation. Now the assurance of God's love conquers the fear of death.

This communion must be frequent. As love and respects between friends are maintained by constant visits and letters, and mutual confidence arises from acquaintance: so by the interchange of holy duties and divine favors, we preserve a lively sense of God's love, and a humble familiarity with his majesty

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\*Ad instar montis intumescens, apparebant procul.

that his presence is not a terror to us. A christian that walks with God here, when he leaves the world, (to use the words of a dying saint) changes his room but not his company. God was always with him on earth, and he shall be ever with God in heaven.

But cold and seldom converse begets strangeness, and that makes us shy of God. When religious duties are performed as a complimentary visit without zealous affections, or used only in times of affliction and exigency, as cordial waters in swooning fits, the divine presence is uncomfortable to us. They who prefer carnal sweets before acquaintance with God, cannot with peace and joy think of appearing before him. O how unwelcome is death to such! "for then the spirit returns to the God that gave it."

[6.] Let us strengthen our belief of the blessed state after death. Divine truths lose their influence and efficacy, when they are not steadfastly believed. Faith is the substance of things not seen, and the evidence or conviction of things hoped for, Heb. 11. 1. The Spirit confirms our faith, not by a pure physical act, but by convincing reason of the truth of the gospel. The life of Christ so glorious in holiness, his doctrine so becoming the wisdom and other excellent attributes of the Deity; his miracles so great and numerous, open and beneficial, not merely to surprize the spectators with astonishment, but to touch their hearts; his death foretold by the prophets, and exactly agreeing in all the circumstances of the predictions; his resurrection the most noble operation of the divine power, are the strongest proofs that what he has revealed as the counsel of God for our redemption, and the preparations of glory for the saints in heaven, are divine truths. And the efficacy of the spirit of Christ in sanctifying his disciples in all ages, is a continual and as satisfying an argument that the gospel is derived from God the fountain of truth, as extraordinary miracles. For holiness is as inseparable a property of the divine nature as omnipotence, and the sanctification of the soul as divine an effect as the resurrection of the body. Now in the gospel God enters into covenant with obedient believers, "to be their God," a title and relation, that supposing them the most happy here, all the enjoyments of this world cannot fulfil. This covenant is not dissolved by death, for he uses this style after the death of his faithful servants: and from hence it follows they are partakers of his glory and joys in the next life. For the honor of his veracity is most dear to him. The Psalmist declares that he has "magnified his word above all his name." No perfections of his nature are more sacred and inviolable than his truth. The foundations of nature shall be overturned, and the most solid parts of the creation destroyed, but his promises shall be completely accomplished. We are assured by his infallible authority, that "there remains a

rest for the people of God." And "he that receives this testimony sets to his seal that God is true;" honors the truth of God's word, and binds himself more firmly to his service, and is encouraged to leave this sensible world for that which is infinitely better. Our confidence and patience in well-doing, and in suffering the utmost evil to nature, is from the pregnant apprehensions of the reality of eternal things. We know, saith the Apostle, if our earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, 2 Cor. 5. 1. This fortified him against the terrors of death. When "Stephen saw the heavens open, and the Son of God ready to receive him," with what courage and constancy did he encounter the bloody rage of his murderers? Faith supplies the want of vision, it pierces the clouds, opens a window in heaven, sees the crowns of righteousness prepared for the saints, and sweetens the bitterest passage to it. But if our faith be weak and wavering, our courage will decline in the needful hour. It is with christians in their last passage from earth to heaven, as with St. Peter walking upon the waters to Christ: whilst his faith was firm in Christ, he went upon the waves, as on the firm land; but upon the rising of a storm, his faith sunk into fear, and he sunk in the waters; till our Saviour upon his earnest prayer, "Lord save me," took hold of him, and raised him with that compassionate reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt."

The last use is, to excite the saints to die with that courage and cheerfulness "as becomes the gospel of Christ." The encouragement of Joshua to the Israelites against the giants that terrified them from entering into the land of Canaan, the type of heaven, "be not afraid of them, they are bread for us," we shall obtain an easy conquest over them, is applicable to this purpose: do not fear death, the enemy that interposes between us and the true Canaan; for our conflict shall be the means of our victory, and triumphant possession of the holy and blessed land above. This is very honorable to our Redeemer, and recommends godliness to the judgment, affections and practice of others. St. Basil \* tells of a custom to anoint the tops of doves wings with some fragrant liquors, that mixing in company with other doves, they might by the scent allure them to follow to the dove-houses. Thus when holy persons live and die with peaceful joy, those that converse with them are drawn by that fragrance of Paradise to apply themselves to serious religion.

It is the Apostle's consolatory advice to believers, not to be sorrowful for those that sleep in Jesus, as those that are without hope, 1 Thes. 4.

When Jacob saw his beloved son's coat rent and stained with blood, he abandoned himself to desperate sorrow, and continued

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\* Epist. Jul.

mourning for his death, when Joseph was advanced in authority and dignity next to Pharaoh, in the kingdom of Egypt. Thus when we see the garment of mortality rent by diseases, we mourn for departed saints, as if death had absolutely destroyed them, when their souls are reigning in glory. This immoderate sorrow is a heathenish passion, suitable to their ignorance of the future happy state, but very unbecoming the plenary assurance the gospel affords us of it. Indeed for the wicked to die with fears and palpitations of heart, to be surrounded with impendent horrors, when such a precipice and depth of misery is before them, is very just and reasonable; but for the saints to die uncomfortably under inordinate fears, is a disparagement to the blessed hope established upon the revelation of life and immortality by the gospel.

Now in three things I shall propound the duty of dying christians.

1. To submit to the divine pleasure with resigned spirits, as to the means, the manner, and time of death. God has a sovereign right and dominion over us. The present life is his most free favor, and he may justly resume it when he pleases. His will should be the first and last rule of ours. Whether he gently untwines the band of life, or violently breaks it, we must placidly without reluctance yield up ourselves. By what means soever death comes, all second causes are moved by an impression from above, in what age of life soever; all our times are appointed by the divine counsel: and a saint ought with that readiness and meek submission to receive it, as if he heard an express voice from heaven calling him to God, and say in his heart with Samuel, "here I am, thou didst call me." This is the last act of our obedience, and very pleasing to God. We read of the marvellous \*consent of Abraham, and his son Isaac, the father to offer up his son, and the son his life, (that were both the gifts of God) in compliance with the divine command, and from heaven he declared his high approbation of it. This is to make a virtue of necessity, and turn nature into grace. But discontent and reluctance, as if our lives were our own, and taken from us unjustly or unseasonably, is rebellious unthankfulness, unbecoming a creature, much more a true christian, who exchanges a perishing life for that which is eternal.

2. To receive death not only with patience, but earnest desires to be with Christ. I know death is naturally unwelcome. Our Saviour tells St. Peter, when thou art old, another shall bind thee, and lead thee where thou wouldst not, John 21. 41. signifying his martyrdom. The circumstance (when thou art

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\*Ille exerit gladium, ille cervicem, uno voto unâ devotione: sub tanto non dicam humanitatis, sed potius naturæ ipsius metu, læti sunt.

old) is \*remarkable, and intimates the natural unwillingness to die, when there was little time to live. But this rational sanctified will was superior and prevalent. The universal desire of the saints is to be happy in the presence of God: for the divine nature communicated to them is intelligent, and inclining towards its chief good: and if the obtaining it were not by "being unclothed, but clothed upon" by an immediate translation to heaven, how willingly would they leave this world? But there is a bitterness in death that makes it unpleasant; and many holy souls that desire the glorious liberty in heaven, yet are loth to leave their prison. Now there are so many arguments to make the saints desirous of dying, that methinks since life is chiefly valued and dear to them, as it is the way to heaven, when they are come to that blessed end, it should not be longer desirable. What is this lower world that chains us so fast? It is the devil's circuit wherein he ranges, seeking "whom he may devour." It is the theatre of contentions. The low aspire to rise; the exalted fear to fall: the poor envy the rich, and the rich despise the poor. It is a foreign country to the saints, and as pilgrims and strangers, they are liable to reproaches, injuries and hard dealings from the wicked, the natives of the earth. What is the present momentary life that so enamors us? It is surrounded with temptations, oppressed with fears, ardent with irregular desires, and continually spent in vanity or vexation. In adversity it is depressed and melancholy; in prosperity foolish and proud. It is a real infelicity under the deceitful appearance of felicity. But above all other motives, the evil of sin from which we cannot be clearly exempted here, should render death desirable. The best suffer internal divisions between "the law of the flesh, and the law of the mind;" as Rebecca felt the twins, Esau and Jacob, repugnant in her womb. How hard is it to be continually watching the heart that corruptions do not break out, and the senses that temptations do not break in? How difficult to order the affections, to raise what is drooping, and suppress what is rebellious? For they are like the people of whom the historian speaks, *qui nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec totam libertatem*. How many enemies of our salvation are lodged in our own bosoms? The falls of the saints give sad evidence of this. If the body were unspotted from the world, as in the creation of man, there might be a just plea of our unwillingness to part with it; but since it is the incentive and instrument of sin, we should desire to be dissolved, that we might be perfectly holy. Death is the final remedy of all the temporal and spiritual evils to which we are liable here. And the love of Christ should make us willing to part with all the endearments of this

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\*Secutus à corpore volebat esse cum Christo, sed si fieri posset præter mortis molestiam. Nolens ad eam venit, sed volens eam vicit. *Aug. Tract. 123. in Joan.*

life, nay, desirous to enter into the celestial Paradise, though we must pass under the angel's sword, the stroke of death, to come into his presence. He infinitely deserves our love, for we owe our salvation and eternal glory to the merit of his humiliation, and the power of his exaltation. With what earnest affections did St. Paul desire "to be dissolved and to be with Christ?" Phil. 1. Love gave wings of fire to his soul, ardent desires mounting to heaven. How valiant were the martyrs in expressing acts of love to Christ? How boldly did they encounter death, that interposed between them and the sight of his glory? Their love was hotter than the flames that consumed them. They as willingly left their bodies, as Elias let fall his mantle to ascend to heaven. And how does it upbraid the coldness of our love, that we are so contented to be here, absent from our Saviour. That the moles of the earth, who never saw the light of the sun, and feed on bitter roots, are pleased in their dark receptacles, is no wonder; but if birds that are refreshed with his cheerful beams, and feed on sweet fruits, should willingly be confined in caverns of the earth, it were naturally strange. Thus for Pagans, (and those who are so in heart, though different in profession) that are so short-sighted and depraved, that they only perceive and affect present sensible things, for them to be unwilling to die is no wonder; for then all that is valuable and delightful to them, is lost forever; but for those who are enlightened by the revelation of God so clearly concerning the state of glory, and have tasted the goodness of the Lord, and know the incomparable difference between the mean and frail felicity here, and the inestimable immutable felicity hereafter, for them to be unwilling to leave this world for that which is infinitely better, is astonishing. Such was the love of our Saviour, that his personal glory in heaven did not fully content him, without the saints partaking of it with him: father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, John 17. If our hearts do not answer his, it is a sad indication that we have not an interest in him: for the application of his merits is always joined with the imitation of his virtues, and the reflection of his love. The lovers of Christ will join with the inflamed spouse, draw us, and we will run after thee, Cant. 1. O loosen our affections from this world, that we may ascend to thee: they will renew the sighs of holy David in his banishment, "O when shall we come and appear before God!"

Lastly, to die with thanksgiving and joy. It is usual to compare this life to a voyage: the scripture is the chart that describes the coasts we must pass, and the rocks we must avoid: faith is the compass that directs the course we must steer: love is the rudder that governs the motion of the ship: hope fills the sails. Now what passenger does not rejoice at the discovery of

his country where his estate and heart is, and more at the near approach to the port where he is to land? Is not heaven the country of the saints? Is not their birth from above, and their tendency to their original? And is not the blessed bosom of Christ their port? O what joyful thanksgivings are due to God, when by his Spirit and providence, they have happily finished their voyage through such dangerous \* seas, and are coming into the land of the living? How joyful was to Noah the coming of the dove with an olive-branch, to shew him the deluge was assuaged, and the time was come of his freedom from the troublesome company of animals, and from the straitness and darkness of the ark, to go forth and possess the world? How joyful should death be to a saint, that comes like the dove in the evening, to assure him the deluge of misery is ceased, and the time is come of his enlargement from the body, his deliverance from the wretched sinful society here, and his possessing the divine world? Holy souls are immediately transported by the angels to Christ, and by him presented to his Father, "without spot or wrinkle," complete in holiness, and prepared for communion with him in glory. How joyfully are they received into heaven by our Saviour and the blessed spirits? They are the reward of his sufferings, the precious and dear purchase of his blood. The angels that rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, do much more at the glorification of a saint: and the "church of the first born," who have before us entered into glory, have a new accession of joy, when their younger brethren arrive to the undefiled immortal inheritance. And is it not very becoming believers, joyfully to ascend to the seat of blessedness, to the happy society that inspires mutual joys forever? For our encouragement, there are numerous instances of believers that have with peace and joy, though in various degrees, passed through the dark valley, to the inheritance of light. Some have died with more † joy than they lived, and triumphed over the last enemy with the vocal praises of God: others with silent affections have quietly commended their spirits into his hand. Some have inward refreshings and support; others exuberent joys and ravishments, as if the light of glory shined into them, or the veil of flesh were drawn, and their spirits were present with the invisible world. Some of the martyrs in their cruelest sufferings felt such impressions of confidence and alacrity, that as in the house of Lamech there were accorded at the same time two discordant callings by the two brothers; Jubal the inventor of the harp and organ, and Tubal-Cain the first artificer in brass and iron, Gen. 4. the one practised on

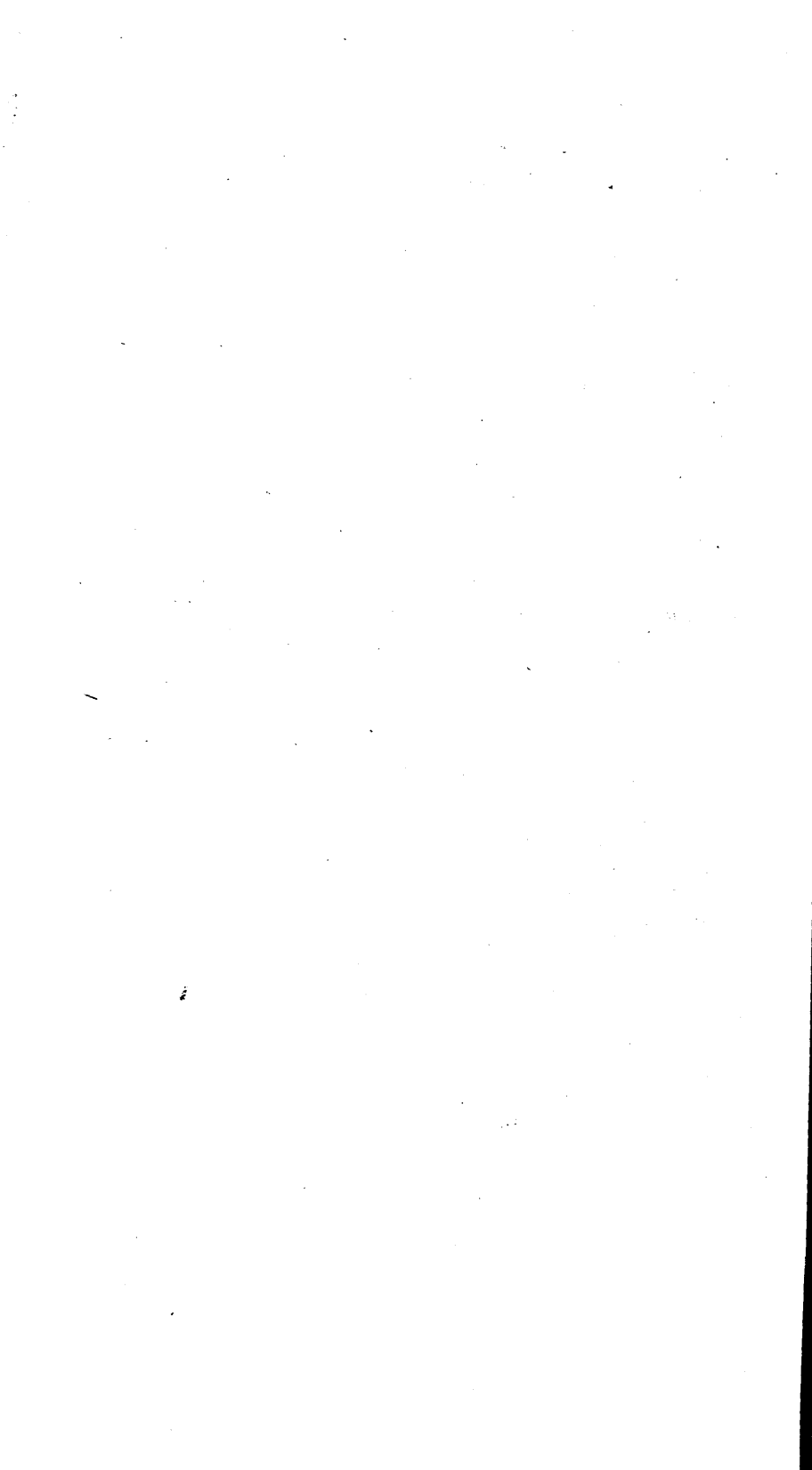
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\* *Quamdiu in Salo isto, tamdiu inter naufragia.*

† *Accitus sum ad id miraculi, videre exultantem in morte hominem, et insultantem morti. Bern. 26. Serm. in Cant.*



instruments of music, breathing harmonious sounds and melodies; the other used hammers and anvils, making noise and tumult : so in some persons, whilst the heaviest strokes fell on their bodies, their souls were ravished with the sweetest joy and exultation. Indeed it is not thus always with the saints : for though sin be pardoned, yet the apprehensions of guilt may remain. When a stream is disturbed, it does not truly represent the object : when the affections are disordered, the mind does not judge aright of a christian's state. A serpent may hiss when it has lost its sting. Death may terrify when it cannot hurt us. I doubt not but some excellent saints have been in anxieties to the last, till their fears were dispelled by the actual fruition of blessedness. As the sun sometimes sets in dark clouds, and rises in a glorious horizon. We read our evidences for heaven by the light of God's countenance : his image is made visible in our souls by the illustration of his Spirit : and he exercises prerogative in the dispensation of his comforts. It is his pleasure to bestow extraordinary favors on some, and deny them to others that are as holy. But every penitent believer has just cause of joy in death : for Jesus Christ has reconciled God, destroyed satan, and conquered death : and the last day of his life is the first of his glory.



OF

## ETERNAL JUDGMENT.

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ACTS XVII. 31.

*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

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### CHAPTER I.

The coherence of the text opened. The determining a time, and the designation of the person to judge the world, are expressed. God is king of the world by creation. The two principal parts of his sovereignty, are giving laws to rule his subjects, and to pass final judgment according to those laws. His essential attributes qualify him for the exercise of government. The Son of God united to the human nature, is wisely appointed to judge men. The quality of this office requires no less person, upon the account of its superlative dignity, and immense difficulty. It is the reward of his sufferings. The Day of Judgment is styled the great day in several respects. To define the particular time, is beyond the knowledge of any mere creature.

Saint Paul had this title of honor eminently conferred upon him, the "Apostle of the Gentiles : " this office he performed with persevering diligence, diffusing "the light of life to those that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death." In this chapter, we have recorded the substance of his sermon to the Athenians ; wherein his admirable zeal and prudence are remarkable, in the matter and order of his discourse, to convince and persuade them to receive the saving truth of the gospel. He first lays down the principles of natural religion, to prepare them for the more easy belief of supernatural revealed religion. The depravation of the minds of men was in no instance more prodigious, than in their villifying conceits of the Deity : they attributed his name and

honor to various idols, and ascribed to him their own figure, and, which was infinitely more unworthy and dishonorable, their own passions and vices. They adored their own vain imaginations: the idols of their hearts were erected on their altars. Venus was a goddess, because impure love reigned in their breast. Bacchus had religious rites, because sensual pleasures, as sweet as wine, intoxicated their spirits. These errors, as gross as impious, were universal; the philosophers themselves were not exempted from the contagion. The apostle therefore makes use of the clearest arguments, to give authority to the plain conspiring voice of nature, that had so long in vain recalled them from idolatry to the worship of the only true God. He therefore declares, that the divine maker of all things, the Father of Spirits, could not be represented by corporeal and corruptible things, verse 29. but was to be acknowledged and adored in a manner becoming his spiritual and infinite perfections. That he made all nations of one blood, ver. 26. though distinguished in their habitations and times, that they might seek and serve one universal creator. And though the Pagan world for many ages had lived in an unnatural oblivion of God, and he seemed unconcerned for their violation of his laws; yet it was not from the defect of justice, but the direction of his wisdom, that his patience was so long extended to them. And this he proves by the new and most express declaration of his will: "but now he commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead."

In the words, the eternal counsels of God are revealed, in two great things:

1. The determining a time wherein he will righteously judge the world: he hath appointed a day.

2. The designation of the person by whom he will perform that eminent part of sovereignty; by Jesus Christ, whom he hath raised from the dead.

In order to the handling of the main point, it is requisite to premise briefly some propositions.

[1.] That God is the universal monarch of the world, and has supreme authority to govern reasonable creatures, antecedent to their election and consent. The Psalmist calls to the heathen, know ye that the Lord is God, Psal. 100. 3. that is, the most glorious being, and absolute sovereign; "For it is he that made us, and not we ourselves." He formed all things by his almighty goodness, and is king by creation.

[2.] The two principal and necessary parts of his sovereignty are, to give laws for the ruling of his subjects, and to pass final judgment upon them for their obedience or disconformity to his precepts. Mere natural agents are regulated by a wise establishment, that is the law of their creation: the sun and stars

are moved according to the just points of their compass: the angels are under a law in heaven, "and obey his commandments." The human nature of Christ, though advanced to the highest capacity of a creature, yet received a law: and his whole work upon earth for our salvation, was an act of obedience to the will of God. If a prince, out of affection to his friend, will leave his own dominions, and live privately with him in a foreign country, he must be subject to the laws of that place. Indeed, it is not conceivable, that a creature should be without a law; for this is to make it supreme and independent: supreme, in not being liable to a superior power to confine and order it; independent, as to its being and operations; for dependence necessarily infers subjection. There is a visible connexion between those titles; the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king; Isa. 33. 22. And sometimes in scripture his sovereignty is intimated in the title of a judge: Thus in that humble expostulation of Abraham for Sodom; "Shall not the judge of all the world do right"? He addresses his request to God under that title, to soften his power, and incline his clemency to save the wicked for their sakes who were comparatively righteous, that is, innocent of their crying sins.

[3.] As his right to govern and judge the world is natural, so are his attributes, his wisdom, holiness, justice and power, that qualify and render him most worthy to exercise this government. These are finite separable qualities in angels or men, but essential perfections to the Deity. It is more rational to conceive, that things may be congealed by the heat of fire, or turned black by whiteness, than that the least act of injustice can be done by the righteous Lord. The Apostle rejects, with extreme detestation, the blasphemous charge of unrighteousness in God's proceedings: is God unrighteous, that taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? Rom. 3. 5. 6. He may as soon renounce his nature, and cease to be God, (for as such he is necessarily judge of the world) as violate his own perfections in his judicial proceedings with us.

[4.] God being invisible in his own nature, hath most wisely ordained the last judgment of the world to be transacted by a visible person; because men are to be judged and the whole process of judgment with them will be for things done in the body. The person appointed for this great work, is Jesus Christ the Son of God, united to the human nature. The Father judgeth no man, John 5. 22. not as if he descended from the throne, and divested himself of his supremacy, but not immediately; but hath committed all judgment to the Son. And it follows, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man; ver. 26. 27. that is, in the quality of mediator, for the reward of his sufferings. The quality of this office re-

quires no less person for the discharge of it, than the Son of God.

1. Upon the account of its superlative dignity. No mere creature is capable of such a glorious commission : to pass a sovereign sentence upon angels and men, is a royalty reserved for God himself. We read, that no man in heaven or earth was able to open the sealed book of his eternal counsels, as unsearchable as deep, Rev. 5. only Jesus Christ, who was in the bosom of the father, the seat of his counsels and compassions, and was acquainted with all his glorious secrets, could unfold the order of the Divine decrees about the church. And if no creature was worthy to be admitted into God's counsel, much less to be taken into his throne : the eternal Son, "the express image of his person," is alone fit to be his authorized representative in judgment. Our Saviour declares, that the Father invested the Son with this regal power, that all men should honor the Son, John 5. 23. with the same religious reverence, and supreme adoration, as they honor the Father.

2. Upon the account of the immense difficulty, no mere creature is able to discharge it. To judge the world, includes two things : 1. To pass a righteous and irrevocable judgment upon men for all things done in this life. 2. The actual execution of the sentence. And for this no less than infinite wisdom and infinite power are necessary. If a select number of angels of the highest order were deputed, yet they could not manage the judicial trial of one man : for besides the innumerable acts and omissions in one life, the secrets of the heart, from whence the guilt or goodness of moral actions is principally derived, are not open to them. He alone that discerns all things, can require an account of all.

3. The son of man is invested with this high office, as the reward of his sufferings. We must distinguish between the essential and economical power of Christ. The Son of God, considered in his divine nature, has an original power of judgment equal with the Father ; but considered as Mediator, has a power of delegation. In the quality of the Son of Man, he is inferior in dignity to the Father. The Apostle declares this in that scale of subordination of the creatures to believers, and of believers to Christ, and of Christ to God ; "all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And observing the beautiful order that arises from the superiority and dependance between things, he saith, the "head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." Now this power by commission was conferred upon him, as the reward of his sufferings. The Apostle expressly declares it, that Christ being in the form of God, and without any usurpation truly equal to him in divine perfections and majesty, "humiliated himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross.

Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." His victorious sufferings are the titles to his triumphs; his being so ignominiously depressed and condemned by men, is the just reason of his advancement to judge the world.

[5.] There is a day appointed wherein the Son of man will appear in sensible glory, and exercise his judicial power upon angels and men. He is now "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High," and the celestial spheres are under his feet: universal nature feels the power of his sceptre: he reigns in the hearts of the saints by his Word and Spirit, and restrains the fury of his enemies in what degrees he pleases: but still his servants are in distress, and his rebellious enemies insolently break his laws; and the curtains of heaven conceal his glory from us: therefore a time is prefixed when in the face of the world he will make an eternal difference by rewards and punishments, between the righteous and the wicked, and his government shall have its complete and glorious issue. This is styled the "Judgment of the great day."

1. With respect to the appearance of the judge. When the law was given from mount Sinai, the mountain was covered with fire, and the voice of God as loud as thunder proclaimed it from the midst of the flames, so that the whole army of the Israelites was prostrate on the plain, struck with the sacred horror, and almost dead at the amazing sights and sounds. From hence it is said, that "in his right hand was a fiery law." And if the law-giver appeared in such terrible majesty at the proclaiming the law, how much more when he shall come to revenge the transgressions of it? It is set forth in Scripture in the most lofty and magnificent expressions: he shall come in his Father's glory, and his own glory, and the glory of the angels, Luke 9. 26. A devouring fire shall go before him, to consume all the works of the universe. He shall descend from the highest heavens, glorious in the attendance of innumerable angels, but more in his own majesty, and sit on a radiant throne high above all.

2. It is great with respect to the appearance of those who are to be judged: all the apostate angels, and the universal progeny of Adam. The bowels of the earth, and the bottom of the sea, and all the elements shall give up the dead. The mighty angels, the winged ministers of justice, shall fly to all parts, and attack the wicked to bring them as miserable prisoners before that high tribunal. And those blessed powerful spirits shall congregate the righteous, to present them at his right hand.

3. It is great with respect to what shall be then done: he shall perform the most glorious and consummate act of his regal

office ; after a righteous trial, pronounce judgment, upon which the eternal destiny of the world depends. And immediately the saints shall ascend with him to the everlasting mansions of glory, and the wicked shall be swallowed up in the fiery gulf forever.

To define the particular time when this shall be accomplished, is beyond the knowledge of the angels of highest dignity, it is *inter arcana imperii*, among the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. It is observable, that God has revealed the times precisely wherein some great events should come to pass ; after how many years the Israelites should be freed from Egyptian bondage ; after what space of time they should be restored from the captivity of Babylon ; when the Messiah should die for the expiation of sin ; but there is no designation by certain characters of the particular day, nor year, nor age in any prophecy, of our Saviour's coming to judgment. And of this an account may be given. The special end of those predictions was, that those who lived to see their accomplishment, notwithstanding the seeming impossibilities, might believe the truth and power of God to fulfil the revelation of his purposes for the time to come. But at the last day, all the promises and threatenings will be fulfilled, nothing will remain to be the object of faith ; and consequently it was superfluous to declare the certain time, since the exact accomplishment of it according to the prediction, will neither be useful to confirm believers, or convert infidels.

Lastly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most convincing and commanding evidence of this doctrine, that he shall judge the world. For he was charged with blasphemy deserving of death for this testimony : I say unto you, hereafter shall you see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven, Matth. 26. 64. He dedicated martyrdom in his own sufferings. Now God in raising him from the dead, confirmed the truth of his testimony by that visible miracle, and the belief of it converted the world to Christianity.



## CHAPTER II.

God will righteously judge the world by Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God's judicial proceedings will appear by considering the equity of the law, the rule of judgment: the law of nature considered in its precepts and penalties. The precepts are such as becomes the creator to give, and the reasonable creature to receive. An answer to the objection, that the law being pure and perfect, and man in a frail state, it seems hard to require perfect obedience from him, and condemn him for failings. The law of faith considered. Our innocence being lost, repentance is allowed. Sincere obedience is accepted, where perfection is wanting. Unfeigned faith in the redeemer is the condition of our justification and glorification. The not complying with the gospel terms of salvation, proceeds from the perverse wills of men.

I will now proceed to illustrate and prove the main point, which is this.

*That God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.*

The Mediator, who shall be judge in the union of both natures, considered as the Son of God, is essentially holy and righteous; and considered as the Son of man, was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In him all virtues shined in their absolute purity: and who is so worthy and qualified to reward holiness and punish wickedness as "the holy one of God?" It is said of him, thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore thy God hath anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy fellows, Heb. 1. 9. consecrated him to the regal office, and enriched his human nature with endowments suitable to it. It was prophesied of him the spirit of the lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, Isa. 11. 2. 3, 4. Human judgments are often unrighteous, from vicious respects and affections that pervert the will, or fair appearances that deceive the understanding: by gifts or guile, innocence is cast, and guilt acquitted; but the judge of the world is inflexible to partiality, and all things "are entirely open to his sight." In the act of judgment he is represented sitting on a white throne, Rev. 20. 11. the emblem of unspotted holiness.

The righteousness of God's judicial proceedings will appear, by considering three things.

I. The equity of his law, the rule of the great and final judgment.

II. The evidence of the facts and matter, which shall be produced as the reason of the judgment.

III. The impartiality of the sentence.

I. The equity of the law which shall be the rule of the last judgment. This will appear by considering the law of nature, and the law of faith, in their precepts and penalties, annexed to enforce the observation of them.

[I.] The law of nature, which is the rule of man's duty, will be the rule of judgment: for without the law there is no transgression; and consequently a person is unaccountable for his actions. This law is composed of such rules as are most becoming the wise and gracious Creator to give, and the reasonable creature to receive and obey: for they entirely agree and centre in his glory, and the good of his subjects. The Apostle adorns the law with the most excellent eulogy; it is holy, just, and good, Rom. 7. 12. Holy, as it enjoins all acts of piety to God: the adoration of his majesty resulting from his inexpressible divine perfections, the imitation of his purity, a reliance on his goodness, a resignation to his most wise providence, and a dutiful obedience to his will. Such a sense of our dependance and subjection to God, is the proper character of the reasonable creature, as dignified above inanimate and mere sensitive beings. "The law is just," as it directs us how to demean ourselves in our various relations. Justice is the cement of societies, without which they disband and fall into confusion. And the sum of the law is virtually comprised in one rule, "to do to others as we would they should do to us," than which nothing is more equal. It is good to man that keeps it, commanding nothing but what is influential upon his well-being here and forever. It does not infringe his true freedom, but allows him unstained delights, and enjoins what is proper to advance and secure his dignity, felicity and perfection. It forbids every thing that defiles and debases him, and causes a degeneration from his native excellency. If we prescind in our thoughts the sacred authority of the lawgiver, all the precepts of the law for their moral goodness deserve our esteem and choice, and entire observation. The sanctified mind approves them universally. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, saith holy David, Psal. 119. 128. Nay, in the wicked there is an intellectual assent to the goodness of the law, though the corrupt will doth not embrace it: there are some inclinations and wishes to obey it, but controlled by vicious desires. It is said of the convinced sinner, Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, Rom. 2. 18.

It may be objected, that the law being pure, and man in a frail state, surrounded with innumerable temptations, to require perfect obedience from him, and condemn him for his failings, seems

hard. The law lays a restraint upon all the senses, and forbids all fleshly lusts : this may be easy to separate souls, but for men to live in the body, as if they were out of it, to be always vigilant against the insinuations or attacks of sin, is impossible. Thus the carnal mind is apt with some color, to traduce the righteousness of God's government. But it will be clearly vindicated, by considering,

1. The law supposes man in a state of integrity, furnished with sufficient power to comply with every precept, though free to fall from his duty and happiness. To command absolute impossibilities is tyrannical, and utterly inconsistent with the nature of the blessed God.

2. The first man wilfully transgressed the law, and lost his holiness : and nature being poisoned in the fountain, is corrupt in all the descendants from him. Mankind was justly degraded in rebellious Adam, and is destitute of spiritual strength to perform all that the law requires.

3. This disability is vicious and culpable, and can be no pretence against the rights of the lawgiver. A natural disability from the want of requisite faculties is a just excuse. It is no fault that a man cannot stop the sun, as Joshua did ; nor calm a tempest, as our Saviour did by his word. But the disability that arises from a depraved disposition, renders a person more guilty. And this is the present case. The will of man is disobedient and perverse, and as soon as it can exercise election, chooses evil ; and by custom in sin becomes more hardened and obstinate. And from hence the prophet charges the contumacious Jews ; Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken, Jer. 6. 10. Were they incapable of hearing the divine commands ? No ; but the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, they had no delight in it. And our Saviour upbraids the Pharisees, How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only ? John 5. 44. They were in high reputation for their holiness, which made it impossible for them in a humble penitent manner to submit to our Saviour. In short, the primary end of the law was the happiness of man in the performance of his duty ; and his first sin, and consequent impotence to fulfil it, was by his own fault. As the obliquity of a line cannot be ascribed to the straight rule, but to the error of the hand that draws it. And from hence it is clear, that if God should with a terrible exactness require of men unerring obedience upon the pain of damnation, he could not be taxed with unrighteousness.

[2.] But God has been pleased to mitigate and allay the severity of the law by the gospel ; so that although the least breach of it makes a person an offender and obnoxious to judgment, yet the law of faith propounds such merciful conditions to the guilty, that upon the performance of them, they may plead their pardon

sealed with the blood of their Redeemer, and shall be saved and crowned in the day of judgment. We are commanded so to speak and do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty, James 2. 12. Thus the gospel is styled, in that it frees the conscience, though not from the obedience, yet from the terrors and condemnation of the law ; for there was not the least signification of mercy by it. But in the gospel, the grace of God most illustriously appears.

1. In that when our innocence was lost, there may be a renovation of the sinner by repentance, to which the plenary pardon of sin is assured : Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes : cease to do evil, and learn to do well, saith the Lord : and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white like wool, Isa. 1. 16, 17, 18. God will not pardon those who forgive and flatter themselves in their sins ; but those who confess and forsake them, shall find mercy.

2. Sincerity of obedience is accepted where perfection is wanting. When a person with consent of heart and serious endeavours strives to obey the holy will of God, without the exception of any known duty, or the indulgence of any sin, God will spare him, as a father spares his son that serves him, Mal. 3. 17. It is not so much the matter as the allowance that makes sin deadly. Where there is guile in the heart, it will be severely imputed. It is not according to some particular acts of sin, but the tenor of the life, that the state of man will be decided.

3. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus, that is, such a belief of the truth and goodness of his promises, as induces us "to receive him as our Prince and Saviour," as purifies the conscience, the heart and life, will free us from hell, and entitle us to heaven, according to the covenant of grace. In short, the final resolution of a man's trial and case will be this ; either he has performed the gracious conditions of the gospel, and he shall be saved ; or rejected them, and he shall be damned.

If it be objected, that the terms of evangelical justification, though in themselves comparatively easy, yet are of impossible performance to men in their natural sinful state, the answer is clear :

(1.) That although the natural man be dead in sin, without spiritual strength to resolve and perform his duty, and holy heat of desires to it ; and nothing is alive in him but his corrupt passions, that are like worms generated in a carcass ; yet by the grace that is offered in the gospel, he may be enabled to perform the conditions of it : for in this the gospel excels the law, the law discovers sin, but affords no degrees of supernatural power to subdue it, and directs to no means for the expiation of its guilt. As the fire in the bush discovered the thorns without consuming them. But the sanctifying Spirit the true spring of

life and power, 2 Tim. 1. 7. is the concomitant of the gospel, as St. Peter declares, With the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, 1 Pet. 1. 12. And the Spirit by illuminating, preventing and exciting grace assists men to repent and believe ; and is promised in rich and liberal supplies to all that humbly and ardently pray for it. This our Saviour assures to us, by a most tender and endearing comparison : If ye that are evil, know how to give good things to your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask it ? Luke 11. 13.

(2.) From hence it follows, that it is from the perverseness of the will, and the love of sin, that men do not obey the gospel. For the Holy Spirit never withdraws his gracious assistance, till resisted, grieved, and quenched by them. It will be no excuse, that divine grace is not conferred in the same eminent degree upon some as upon others that are converted , for the impenitent shall not be condemned for want of that singular powerful grace that was the privilege of the elect, but for receiving in vain that measure of common grace that they had. If he that received one talent had faithfully improved it, he had been rewarded with more ; but upon the slothful and ingrateful neglect of his duty, he was justly deprived of it, and cast into a dungeon of horror, the emblem of hell. The sentence of the law has its full force upon impenitent sinners, with intolerable aggravations for neglecting the salvation of the gospel.

Concerning the heathens, the scripture declares,

1. That although the law published by Moses was not communicated to them, yet there was a silent, though less perfect impression of it in their hearts. The law of nature in the fundamental precepts of religion, and society, and temperance, was better known than obeyed by them. Therefore the apostle indicts them for atrocious crimes, Rom. 1. 26, 27. such as natural conscience, consenting with the law of God, severely forbids upon the pain of damnation. Thus it is said of the heathens, Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death ; not only commit the same, but have pleasure in them that do them, Rom. 1. 32. And at the last day, As many as have sinned without the law, as delivered to the Jews, shall be judged and perish, not according to the law of Moses, Rom. 2. but the law of nature that obliged them to do good, and restrain themselves from evil ; of which the counterpart was not totally deleted in their hearts.

2. Although the revelation of Christ in his person, office and benefits, is not by the preaching of the gospel (that is necessary for the begetting of faith) extended to all nations ; yet the grace of the redeemer is so far universal, that upon his account the indulgent providence of God invited the heathens to repentance. His renewed benefits that sweetened their lives, Rom. 2.

4. and his powerful patience in forbearing so long to cut them off, when their impurities and impieties were so provoking, was a testimony of his inclination to clemency upon their reformation, Acts 14. 17. And for their abusing his favors, and resisting the methods of his goodness; they will be inexcusable to themselves, and their condemnation righteous to their own conscience.

### CHAPTER III.

Eternal Death is wisely and justly ordained to be the punishment of sin. It is the wisdom of the Lawgiver to appoint such a punishment as might overpoise all temptations to break the law. It is just to make a proportion between the quality of the offence, and the degrees of punishment. Sin is a contempt of God's Majesty that is truly infinite. The obligations of reasonable creatures to the Creator, extremely increase the guilt of Sin. The meanness of the motives that induce men to sin, aggravates the offence. The despising of eternal life, and the choosing the pleasures of sin, with hell in its retinue, makes the punishment to be justly inflicted on them. The obstinate and incurable lusts of men, justly make them the Objects of revenging justice forever.

We are next to consider the sanction of the law that enforces obedience; and it will appear that God is not extreme, but wisely and justly ordained eternal death to be the punishment of sin.

This will appear by considering;

[1.] The end of the sanction is to preserve the authority of the law in its full vigor, to render it most solemn and awful; and consequently it is the wisdom of the lawgiver to ordain a punishment so heavy, as to overpoise all temptations that might otherwise induce the subjects to transgress its precepts.

Therefore to Adam, the first and second death was threatened upon his disobedience; and fear, as a sentinel, was planted in his breast, that no guilty thought, no irregular desire, no deceitful suggestion should enter to break the tables of the law deposited therein. Now since, notwithstanding the threatening, man was so easily seduced by the insinuations of the tempter to break the law, and disorder the government of God in the world, it is evident that such a restraint was not over-vigorous to secure his obedience. I shall not insist on what is sadly visible since the first apostacy, that there is in mankind such a prodigious propensity to sensual things, that without the fear of hell; no arguments are strong enough to prevent the bold violation of the divine law.

[2.] It is consented to by common reason, that there ought to

be a proportion between the quality of the offence, and the degrees of the punishment. Justice \* takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. Now sin against God is of such an immense guilt, that an eternal punishment is but equivalent to it. This will appear by considering,

(1.) The perfections of the lawgiver who is infinitely above us. One act of sin is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, before whom the highest angels cover their faces with reverence and adoration, as unworthy to behold his glory; and cover their feet, as unworthy that he should behold them, Isa. 6. 2, 3. the contradiction of his holiness that is his peculiar glory; the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the superior world, Job. 22. 14. and busy in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not discern and observe what is done below; the defiance of his eternal power "provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he."

(2.) If we consider the obligations of the reasonable creatures to obey his commands, the guilt of sin rises prodigiously. They were made by his power, with his special character of excellency, according to his image: they were happy in his love: they were endowed with intellectual faculties capable to understand and consider their obligations to their bountiful Lord. From hence it appears that sin is the most unnatural rebellion against God, and in it there is a concurrence of impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and whatever may inhanse a crime to an excess of wickedness.

(3.) The meanness of the motives that induce men to prefer the pleasing their depraved appetites before obedience to his sacred will, extremely aggravates the offence. Of this we have a convincing instance of the first sin committed upon earth. Deceitful curiosity, flattering pride, a secret pleasure of acting according to his will, joined with the low attractives of sense, blinded and transported Adam to eat the mortal fruit, against the express command of God. And ever since, the vanishing shadows of honor, or gain, or pleasure, are the only persuasives to sin, and what can be more provoking, than for a trifle to transgress the law of God, and equally despise his favor and displeasure? Can any punishment less than eternal, expiate such impieties? The rules of human justice may discover to us the equity of the divine justice. It is ordained by the wisest states, that many crimes which may be done in a few minutes, shall be punished with death, and the offender be deprived of his natural life forever. And is it not most just that treason against the great and immortal king, should be revenged with everlasting death?

\* — Adsit Regula peccatis, quæ pœnas irroget æquas. *Horat.*

(4.) That which further clears the divine justice in punishing sin with hell, is this, that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely and uniformly obey him, shall be rewarded with heaven forever: a blessedness most worthy the greatness and love of the eternal God to bestow on his servants: a blessedness that surpasses our most comprehensive thoughts. Now if everlasting glory be despised, what remains but endless misery to be the sinners portion? The consequence is remediless. If sin with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, is it not equal that the rational creature would inherit his own choice? How just is it that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here, should have their recompense with him forever? That those who now "say to the Almighty, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," should hear the dreadful "depart from me into everlasting fire?" As there will be no vain boasting in heaven, where the reward is the gift of pure bounty; so there will be no righteous complaint against God in hell, where the punishment is inflicted by powerful justice. He that voluntarily sins, by consequence chooses the punishment due to it.

(5.) The estimation of an offence is taken from the disposition of him that does it. When it is done with pleasure and obstinacy, there is no place for favor. Now final impenitence alone makes sin actually and eternally damning to the sinner. Those that, notwithstanding all gracious means, live continually in rebellion against God; those that impenitently die in their sins; those that desire to live here forever, that they might enjoy their sweet sins; those that are so hardened and naturalized in their vices, that if they were revived and brought again into this world of temptations, would certainly return to the pleasures of sin; is it not righteous that their incorrigible obstinacy should be\* punished forever? Is it not just that those who would continue under the "dominion of sin," should forfeit all their claim to the divine mercy? For if we consider them as unrepentant and irreclaimable from their wickedness, there are in them the just provocations and true causes of God's final rejection and hatred: and if we consider God as revealed in his word and works, his essential properties, wisdom, purity, justice, necessary work upon such objects in such a manner. How zealous an indignation did the Son of God express against the obdurate Pharisees? You serpents, you generation of vipers, how should you escape the damnation of hell? Mat. 23 33. They in despite of all his miracles, the equal expressions of his goodness and power, resisted his authority, blasphemed his person, and slighted his salvation. Now though other sins are of an inferior nature, and

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\* *Pœnæ æqualitas non nude spectanda ut in ponderibus et mensuris, sed expenso proposito, et voto ejus qui deliquit. Grot.*



weaker evidence, yet obstinacy added to them, makes a person unworthy and incapable of mercy. From hence the misery of the damned is without redemption, without hope, without allay forever.

## CHAPTER IV.

The evidence of facts produced as the reason of judgment. All sins, whether secrets or openly visible, shall be brought to judgment. Sins of omission and commission. All the aggravations and circumstances of sin. The manner of this judicial proceeding is by opening the books. The books of the law and gospel shall be unfolded in all their precepts, and men's lives compared with them. The omniscience of God will give convincing evidence of men's works. The book of conscience shall be opened, and accuse or excuse men. Satan will be a principal accuser. The wicked will accuse one another. The saints of God will give testimony against the wicked. The impartiality of the sentence will make the Divine justice conspicuous. There will be no distinction of persons in that judgment. There will be a distinction of causes. Every man shall be judged according to the tenor of his good works, and the desert of his bad. The harvest shall be answerable to the sowing of the seed, both in kind and measure.

II. I shall now proceed to consider the evidence of the facts that is produced as the reason of that judgment.

The temper of divine justice is very observable in the particular judgments recorded in scripture. In the first process of justice on earth, we read that God made the enquiry of Adam, Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? Gen. 3. 11. and by palpable evidence convinced him before he condemned him. Thus before the fiery vengeance upon the wicked cities, the memory of which will never be extinguished, the Lord said to Abraham, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin is grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done according to the cry of it that is come up unto me, Gen. 18. 20. 21. viz. whether they were so numerous and excessively wicked; if not, I will know. God is pleased to incarnate himself in man's expression, to declare more sensibly to us, that he never punishes with precipitation, but after an equal trial of the cause. Thus we read of that profane king of Babylon, Belshazzar, that he was weighed in the balance, and found wanting, Dan. 5. 27. before he was sentenced to be deprived of his kingdom and life. And the destruction of the antichristian state, is attended with solemn hallelujahs for the righteousness of that judgment, Rev. 19. 2. 3. And in the last day the righteousness of God's proceedings

shall be universally manifest and magnified. It is therefore called the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. 2. 5. Now in order to this, the scripture informs us, that all the works of men shall be brought into judgment, even every secret thing, whether good or evil, Eccles. 12. ult. And the Apostle saith, That we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. 5. 10.

All sins, whether secret, or open and visible, shall be accounted for. Those sins that have been acted in the most secret retirement, so that no eye of man could take cognizance of them; sins concealed from the eye of day, the light of the sun, and from the eye of the night, the light of a candle, shall then be made manifest. Nay, the sins of the thoughts and affections, of which Satan could not accuse men, when the inward fire of lust or malice is not discovered by the least smoke or sparkles, by no expressions, all those shall be brought to judgment: God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, Rom. 2. 16.

The sins of omission of our duty that are so numerous, from carelessness and diversions, from slothfulness and delays, and that now so little affect us; for we are more sensible of what we do, than of what we have not done; the guilt of all these shall then be heavily charged on the conscience of the sinner. "I was an hungry, and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink;" was the accusation of the reprobates from the judge himself. To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is a sin; Jam. 4. The neglect of improving all the means, advantages, and opportunities of doing or receiving good, will be a great part of that judgment. The lord called his servants to an account for the talents committed to their trust, and required profit in proportion to their number and worth.

All sins of commission in youth and age, whether gross sensuality, as lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, and all excess of riot, shall be accounted for to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead, 1 Pet. 4. 5. Or acts of unrighteousness to others: He that doth wrong, shall receive according to the wrong he has done, Col. 3. 25. And sins of a lesser guilt, for which the most are not touched with grief or shame, shall then be produced in judgment. All the sins of our words, so easily committed, and not so easily observed, shall then be called to a heavy remembrance: the judge himself tells us, I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; Mat. 12. And if vain words, the signs and immediate effects of a vain mind, shall sadly increase our accounts; how much more all the contentious, fierce, and revengeful words; the detracting, false, contumelious, and injuri-

ous words; the impure, filthy, and contagious words; the profane, blasphemous, and impious words, that "flow from the evil treasure of the heart?" O their dreadful number, and oppressing weight!

And all the aggravations and circumstances of men's sins, that raise their guilt to such fearful heights, enumerated in order to judgment: for thus it was foretold, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him; Jude 14. 15. And all the good works of the saints shall then be remembered, even to the least work of piety, the giving of two mites to the treasury of the temple, Luke 21. 3. 4. and the least works of charity, the giving a cup of cold water to a disciple, Mat. 10. 42. upon the account of his relation to Christ. All their secret graces and duties shall then be rewarded.

The manner of this judicial evidence is set forth to us in scripture, by the "opening the books;" congruously to proceedings in human judgment, wherein the information and charge is produced from writings, for the conviction of the accused. Thus it was represented to St. John in a vision; I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, according to their works, Rev. 20. 12.

[1.] The books of the law and gospel shall then be opened in all the injunctions and prohibitions, and our lives compared with them. Our Saviour told the Jews, Do not think that I will accuse you to my Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust: not the person, but the law of Moses; John 5. 45. And he denounced against those that reject the gospel; The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge them in the last day, John 12. 48. The law is the exact transcript of God's sacred will, the natural and immutable rule of righteousness: it is *pure*, forbids all sin, and enjoins universal holiness; it is *spiritual*, requires not only a conformity in words and actions, but inward sanctity in mind and heart: for the soul is the principal part of man, entirely open to God's eye, the maker and judge of it; and the most enlightened saints have but an imperfect knowledge of it here. This made holy David, after his meditation upon its purity and perfection, to cry out in an agony, Who can understand his errors! cleanse thou me from secret sins; Psal. 19. This, when opened in its spiritual and comprehensive nature, by a wise and zealous preacher, darts a light into the conscience, and discovers many secret sins, that like so many serpents were still and quiet in the dark; but upon the sudden breaking in of the light, fly upon the sinner, and torment him with their mortal stings. But when the Lawgiver himself

shall expound the law in its full extent and perfection, with respect to all the duties it commands, and sins it forbids, how guilty will men appear? how unable to answer one article of a thousand charged upon them?

[2.] The omniscience of God will give most convincing evidence of all his works: All things are naked and open to his eyes, with whom we have to do in judgment, Heb. 4. 13. The Psalmist declares the infinite perspicacity of his sight; The darkness hides not from thee, but the night shines as the day; Psal. 139. As his light and transcendent brightness is invisible to us, 1. Tim. 6. 16. so our thickest darkness is visible to him. We cannot see things in the night, because it hinders the reception of the rays, that insinuate into the eyes, and causes sight; but the eyes of our judge are like a flame of fire, Rev. 1. 14. dispelling all darkness. From his throne in heaven, his piercing eye sees through all the concealments of men's sins. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance, Psal. 90. 8. He discovered the sacrilege of Achan, the lie of Gehazi, the deceit of Ananias. Saul's disobedience in sparing the Amalekites devoted to destruction, 1 Sam. 15. 21. had the colorable pretence of piety, and, as a sacrifice, was laid on the altar. And David's murder of Uriah was imputed to the chance of war, as a sufficient excuse, 2 Sam. 11. 25. But though they might have deceived others, they could not deceive God: he is intimately present with the souls of men, that are unsearchable to the most discerning angels of light, and knows all their most secret designs and desires, the deepest seeds of their actions. He alone has exact scales to "weigh the spirits of men," all the principles, aims and affections, that are inseparable from their works. The Pharisees, in whom pride was the first property, and hypocrisy a second nature, could not with all their saintly shews impose on our Saviour; for he knew what was in man, Matth. 23. 14. He discovered their alms to be, not the effect of charity, but ostentation, Matth. 6. 2. and their specious acts of devotion, to be a train to surprise some rich prey, Matth. 23. 14.

And this divine knowledge of men and their actions, is in order to judgment. Thus the wise king declares, doth not he that ponders the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works? Prov. 24. 12. And God himself testifies, I the Lord search the heart, even to give to every man according to his works, Jer. 17. 10. For this reason, he is said to keep a register of mens sins. Thus he speaks of the impure idolatries of the Jews; Behold, it is written before me, Isa. 65. 6. to signify his exact and actual knowledge; "I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms. And at the day of judgment, he will declare his knowledge of

their sins before all ; and the most secret shall be made evident, as if written in their foreheads in the most plain and legible characters.

And all the goodness of the saints shall then be revealed by the judge. Their \* greatest excellencies are invisible to the eyes of men ; the sanctity of their aims and affections which gives life and value to all the acts of obedience ; their secret duties, wherein the sincerity and ardency of their souls is most expressed, are only known to God. And such is the excellent humility of the saints, that the more they are enriched, and abound with the gracious influences of the spirit, the less they discover to the world ; as the celestial bodies, when in nearest conjunction with the sun, and most filled with his light, are least in appearance to the inhabitants of the earth. But there is a book of remembrance before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him ; Mal. 3. 16. 17.

[3.] The conscience of every man shall then be opened, and give an accusing or excusing testimony of all things ; Rom. 2. 15. 16. For these acts of conscience, in the present life, have a final respect to God's tribunal : and though the accounts are so vast, there shall be an exact agreement between the books of God's omniscience and of conscience in the day of judgment. Now indeed the conscience of man, though never so inquisitive and diligent in examining and revising his ways, is unable to take a just account of his sins. As one that would tell the first-appearing stars in the evening, before he can reckon them, others appear, and confound his memory with their number ; so when conscience is seriously intent in reflecting upon itself, before it can reckon up the sins committed against one command, innumerable others appear. This made the Psalmist, upon the survey of his actions, break forth in amazement and perplexity ; Mine iniquities are more than the hairs upon my head, therefore my heart fails me ; Psal. 40. 12. But it will be one of the miracles of that day, to enlarge the view of conscience to all their sins. Now the records of conscience are often obliterated, and the sins written therein are forgotten ; but then they shall appear in so clear an impression, that the wicked shall be inexcusable to themselves, and conscience subscribes their condemnation. And O the formidable spectacle, when conscience, enlightened by a beam from heaven, shall present to a sinner in one view the sins of his whole life ! Now conscience is a notary in every man's bosom ; and though it is not always vocal, yet

\* O si nobis animam boni viri liceret inspicere, quam pulchram faciem, quam sanctam, quam ex magnifico, placidoque fulgentem videremus ?  
Senec.

writes down their actions : The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with a point of a diamond it is graven upon the tables of the heart, Jer. 17. 1. But then it shall be compelled to give a full charge against the guilty : of this we have an infallible presage in this world, when conscience turns the point against the breast of a sinner, and enforces the tongue, by a secret instigation, to accuse the person. And this information of conscience at the last will make the sinner speechless : for the book of accounts with Divine justice, was always in his own keeping ; and whatever is recorded there, was written with his own hand. And how will those hardened sinners, that now kick against the pricks of conscience, be able to repel its strong and quick accusations before that terrible tribunal ?

[4.] Other numerous witnesses will appear to finish the process of that day. Not as if God that knows all things, wants information, but for the public conviction of the wicked.

Satan will then bring in a bloody charge against them. Such is his malignity, that he is a complainer of God to man, and by calumniating the blessed Creator, seduced our first parents ; and he is the accuser of men to God. He is styled the accuser of the brethren before God day and night, Rev. Sometimes falsely, as when he taxed Job, that his piety was mercenary ; and often truly, to provoke the divine displeasure. But though his charge be just against them as sinners, yet as penitent sinners they are absolved by the judge upon the throne of grace. This we have represented to the prophet Zechary, Joshua the high priest, a type of the church, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him, Zech. 3. 1, 2, 3. for that was the place of accusers. But Christ, the blessed Reconciler, interposed : " and the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee." But he will principally act the part of an accuser at the last judgment. This is intimated in that fearful imprecation, Let Satan stand at his right hand : when he is judged, let him be condemned, Psal. 109. 6, 7. He is now an active watchful spirit, whose diligence is equal to his malice, and by glittering snares, or violent temptations, draws men to sin. But then he will be their most bitter accuser, not from zeal of justice, but pure malignity. Then he will aggravate their crimes by the most killing circumstances ; though in accusing them he indicts himself, their sins being usually done by his solicitations.

And the wicked themselves will accuse one another. In this world fellow-sinners usually conceal one another's wickedness, restrained by their own obnoxiousness. But then all that have been jointly engaged in the commission of sin, will impeach each other. The voluptuous sinners that have excited one another to lust or luxury ; Come, let us take our fill of love till the morning, Prov. 7. 18. Come, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves

with strong drink; for to-morrow shall be as to day, and much more abundant, Isa. 56. 12. All the charming companions and associates will with fierceness charge one another. And the malicious cruel sinners that say, Come, let us lay wait for blood, let us swallow them up quick as the grave, Prov. 1. will then, like enraged furies, fly upon one another. In all sins of combination, the inferior instruments will accuse their directors for their pernicious counsel, and the directors will accuse the instruments for their wicked compliance.

And all the holy servants of God, who by their instructions, counsels, admonitions, examples, have endeavored to make the world better; especially those who by their place and relation were more concerned, and more zealously and compassionately urged and persuaded those under their care to reform their lives, and save their souls, will give a heavy testimony against them. Indeed the very presence of the saints will upbraid the wicked, for their resisting all the warming, melting intreaties, all the grave and serious reproofs, all the tender earnest expostulations, that were ineffectual by the hardness of their hearts.

Briefly, the scripture attributes to the signs and circumstances of men's sins, a vocal evidence against them. Thus the prophet speaking of the house built by rapine and extortion, The stones of the wall cry, and the beams answer them, Hab. 2. 11. and with concurrent testimony accuse the unrighteous builder. And St. James declares, That the wages of the hireling, kept back by fraud, cry against the oppressor. And the rust of gold and silver treasured up, is a witness against the covetous, Jam. 5. 3, 4. And this by the recognition of conscience will be a memorial against them hereafter.

To what the scripture speaks of this kind of evidence of men's sins, I shall add a useful representation framed by a heathen to signify that wickedness, how secretly soever committed, shall be brought to light in judgment. He tells us, "That the soul of a very guilty wretch was, after death, arraigned before one of the severe judges below. And at his trial, because his atrocious crimes were done in secret, he stood upon his defence, denying all. The judge commanding his lamp to be produced, that was an eye-witness of his wickedness, the lamp appeared, and being demanded what it knew of him? answered with a sigh, would I had been conscious of nothing, for even now the remembrance of his villanies makes me to tremble: I wish my light had been extinguished, that the oil that maintained it had quenched it. But I burnt with disdain, and cast about some sparks to fire his impure bed; and was grieved that my little flame was so weak as not to consume it. I said within myself, if the sun saw these villanies; it would be eclipsed, and leave the world in darkness. But I now perceive why I was constrained to give light to him, that being a secret spy of his uncleanness, his thefts and cruel-

ties, I might reveal them." But we that are enlightened by faith, and know that God is omnipresent, and that whatever sin is done, though in the deepest and darkest recess, is manifest to him,\* have no need of Lucian's lamp to make our judge to be feared by us.

[5.] The impartiality of the sentence will make the justice of God conspicuous before the whole world. This consists in two things.

1. There will be no distinction of persons.

2. There will be a distinction of causes in that judgment; and according to their nature, the sentence will pass upon all.

(1.) There will be no distinction of persons. In human courts the judges sometimes extend and amplify, sometimes contract or smother the evidence, and are more rigorous or favorable in their sentence, as they are biased towards the persons before them. But the righteous judge of the world is incapable of being inclined to favor or severity upon such base motives. This is frequently declared in scripture, to possess us with his fear. If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, 1 Pet. 1. 17. No spiritual privileges upon which men are so apt to presume, viz. that they are members of the reformed church, that they are enriched with excellent gifts, that they enjoy the ordinances in their purest administration, will avail them without real holiness in their hearts and lives. The being united to societies of the most glorious profession, of strictest purity, and sublime devotion, does no more prove one to be a real saint, than the being of an eminent company of merchants proves one to be a rich citizen. Those that bow the knee and not the heart in faithful reverence, that give the empty title of Lord to Christ, without the tribute of obedience, will be rejected by him. Many shall say at the day of judgment, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and done many wondrous works, Matth. 7. 22. Then will the judge say, I know you not; depart from me ye workers of iniquity. No degrees of civil greatness will be of any moment and advantage in that day. St. John testifies, "I saw the dead, small and great stand before God," in an equal line, to receive their trial. Kings shall then be divested of their imperial titles, of their crowns and sceptres, and their robes of state, and only be accompanied with their works. Of this we have an undoubted proof, in that they are no more exempted from the common law of dying than the meanest slave. Death, that rugged officer, arrests them without ceremony, and summons them to appear before that tribunal.

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\* Ipse timendus est in publico, ipse in secreto. Lucerna ardet? videt te. Lucerna extincta est? videt te. In cubile intras? videt te. In corde versaris? videt te. Ipsum time.



The royal purple could not protect Herod from being devoured by worms. The Apostle speaks indefinitely in the fore-cited place; he that does wrong, shall receive for the wrong he has done; and there is no respect of persons, Col. 3. ult. No circumstantial accidents can derive pure worth, or truly debase persons, but inherent qualities, and the actions that flow from them: and accordingly, the high and holy God will accept or disapprove them. What St. Paul observes of the saving grace of the gospel being indifferently offered to all, is applicable in this case. He tells us, There is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, Col. 3. 11. that are preferred or excluded upon a carnal account, but all may equally partake of spiritual blessings. Thus the difference of nations will be no privilege or prejudice to any in the day of judgment. The most rude and contemptible shall have as fair and equal a trial, as the most polite and civilized: the ignorant Barbarians as the learned Grecians, that so much boasted of their vain excellencies above them: the Negroes in Africa as the people of Europe; for they have the same relation to God their maker, and as truly bear the impression of God stamped upon the human nature in the creation, and therefore common to the whole species of mankind. An image may be fashioned in ebony as well as in ivory. Briefly, all men are equally subject to his laws, and shall be equally accountable for their actions. "The rich and the poor shall then meet together, without distinction, before God the maker and judge of them all."

(2.) There shall be a distinction of causes, and every man be judged "*according to his works,*" the tenor of good works, and the desert of bad. The Apostle assures us, That whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap: he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6. 7. 8. The harvest shall be according to the seed both in kind and measure.

1. Those who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, shall obtain eternal life, Rom. 2. 7. Indeed, eternal life is the gift of infinite bounty, Rom. 6. ult. nay of pure mercy, Jude 21. and mercy excludes merit. It is said of the blessed martyrs, who contended for the truth and purity of the gospel to the death, that their robes were washed white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7. 14. not in their own blood. Their right to heaven was from the application of his merits to them. But the reward is dispensed from God according to the evangelical law; not only as a magnificent prince, but as a *righteous judge*. All those to whom the gospel promises eternal life, shall infallibly obtain it, and none that the gospel excludes. Those who are sensible of their sins, and cordially forsaking them, did humbly and entirely depend upon the grace of God, through the blessed Reconciler and Saviour, shall

be justified and glorified. Then the judge will discern between unfeigned faith and vain presumption, and will justify the faith of the saints by the genuine fruits of it, "the godliness, righteousness, and sobriety of their lives," and a victorious perseverance in their duty, notwithstanding all the pleasing temptations or tortures to withdraw them from it. Thus the Apostle expresses his humble confidence; I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous judge will give me at that day, and not only to me, but to all that love his appearance, 2 Tim. 4. 5. 8. We read in the description of the last judgment, that the book of life was opened: the names of all that were written in heaven, Rev. 20. 12. shall then be declared, that it may appear they are *saved by grace*. For it was his most free pleasure to select some from the common mass of perdition, who were naturally as guilty and corrupted as others, and to predestinate them to eternal glory, and effectual persevering grace to prepare them for it. "The saints are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them." And the new creation is as undeserved and entire an effect of God's love as the first was. But it is said, "That every man was judged according to his works." For eternal election does not entitle a person immediately to heaven, but according to the order established in the gospel. Thus the king at the last day speaks to the elect; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye fed me; naked, and ye clothed me, Mat. 25. 34. 35.

And according as the saints have excelled in fidelity and zeal in God's service, they shall be rewarded with a more excellent glory. The stars of the supreme heaven are of a different brightness and greatness, as the stars of the visible firmament. Indeed all are perfectly happy, without \*jealousy that any is equal or superior to them in that kingdom. But God will crown his own graces as the saints have improved them. Our Saviour valued the widow's two mites, as transcending all the magnificent gifts of others, because of the degrees of love in the giver. There was a richer mine of affection in her heart, gold of a more noble vein, more pure and precious than all their riches. This was of greater price in God's account, who weighs the spirits in his balance. God will accept and reward according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, 2 Cor. 8. 12. He that improves but two talents, with his best skill and diligence, shall have a greater reward than another that had ten talents, and was remiss and less careful to employ them for his master's profit. The rule will be exactly observed, "he that

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\*Plus amant illud regnum in quo non timent habere consortes. *Aug. de civit Dei.*

sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully; and he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly."

2. And if God will be thus impartial in rewarding the saints, much more in punishing the wicked. For the remuneration of our duty is the effect of his most free favor; but the recompenses of sin are due, and decreed by justice, in number, weight, and measure. The severity of the sentence will be in proportion, as men's sins have been more numerous and heinous. Although all the damned shall be equally miserable in despair, all broken on an endless wheel, yet the degrees of their torment are different. Sins of ignorance are extenuated in comparison of rebellious sins against knowledge. The first are like a servant's dashing against his master in the dark, the other like the insolent striking him in the light: and as they incur great guilt, will expose to great punishment. Accordingly our Saviour predicts, That the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes, Luke 12. 47. 48. Unactive knowledge is worse than ignorance. For this reason the case of heathens will be more tolerable than of the Jews: for though some natural principles were strong and quick in their minds, that made them sensible of their duty and danger, yet they were not so clear and perfect as the law delivered by Moses. Those sins that were infirmities in a Pagan, were presumptuous in a Jew. And the case of the Jews will be more tolerable than of disobedient christians, who enjoy the gospel less charged with ceremonies, and more abundant in grace than the Mosaical dispensation. Those that have set before them the life of Christ, the model of all perfection, that are excited by such loud calls "to flee from the wrath to come," and yet are deaf and regardless to the commands, nay to the melting invitations and precious promises of the gospel, shall have a more intolerable judgment than the most guilty sinners, even the Sodomites and Sidonians that were strangers to it. The precious blood of the Son of God despised, induces a crimson guilt. And as sins are committed with pride and pleasure, with eager appetite and obstinacy, the revenge of justice will be more heavy upon persons.

More particularly, sins of consequence, whereby others are drawn to sin, will heighten the guilt, and the retribution of justice will be to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings, Jer. 17. 10.

This will principally concern superiors in eminency of place, whose dignity was always a concomitant proportion of duty. Their vicious actions are examples, and their examples more powerful rules than their laws, and give countenance to others to sin licentiously. They "sin with a high hand," and involve the

ruin of innumerable persons that depend upon them: as the Dragon in Revelation, whose fall from heaven drew a train of lesser stars with him. And all inferior magistrates, who by personal commission, or partial connivance, encourage and harden others in sin, and by their power discountenance serious religion, and obstruct the progress of it, heap up damnation to themselves.

And the ministers of the word, who are obliged to watch for the souls of men; and should, like the heavens, by their light, influence and motion, their doctrine and lives, guide and quicken others in the ways of holiness; if by their neglect and wickedness others are lost forever, their account will be most heavy and undoing.

Of this number are those, who by their unholy conversation weaken the authority and efficacy of the Word, and more successfully persuade men to do evil, than by their preaching to do well: for we are apt to take deeper impression through the eye, than through the ear, to follow the physician's practice rather than his counsel. These *perish not alone in their iniquity*. And such who are unfaithful dispensers of the treasures of their Lord, and by loose doctrines corrupt the minds of men, to fancy a mercy in God derogatory to his holiness, that although they live indulgently in sin, they may obtain an easy pardon and happiness at last: and such who employ their high commission for low and base ends: those who instead of "preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified," the pure and saving truths derived from the fountain of the gospel, entertain their hearers with flashy conceits, and studied vanities, to give a relish to curiosity, and to have the applause of fools, and obscure the native majesty of the Word, enervate its force, and render it powerless to conscience.

And those who spend their zeal in things of no moment to salvation, and let fly bitter invectives against those that dissent from them in unconcerning matters, by which they harden atheistical scorers in villifying the office of the ministry as a carnal invention, set up and used for secular ends; and induce others to place religion in formalities; and slight colors of it, as if conformity to needless rites, would exclude the defects of substantial holiness.

It is observed in the Chaldee paraphrase, when God was enquiring of Cain concerning Abel, that he charges him, "The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me" as if Cain were a murderer, not of a single man only, but of a numerous race that might have descended from his brother. Thus a wicked minister will be charged, not only for murdering himself, but as many precious souls as might have been converted and saved, if he had faithfully performed his duty.

And parents that should instil the principles of godliness into

their children in their early age, and season their minds with the knowledge of the Divine laws, to regulate their lives, and make them sensible of their obligations to obey them; that should recommend religion to their affections by an holy and heavenly conversation, if by the neglect of their duty their children are exposed as a prey to the tempter, and ruined forever, it will enhance their last reckoning, and increase the score of their guilt beyond expression.

And masters of families, and all others that have authority and advantage to preserve or reform from evil those that are committed to their care, and to instruct and command them to do what is pleasing to God, and profitable to their souls, will be sadly accountable for those that perish by their neglect.

In short, we see by common experience, that company and mutual consent is a usual motive to sin; and many persons that alone would with abhorrence reject some temptations, yet are sociably sinful. Now all those who by excitation or example lead others to destruction, as they are first in sin will be chief in punishment. We read in the parable of the rich voluptuary, Luke 16. 28. that being in hell, he desired a messenger might be dispatched from the dead to warn his brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. Is there such charity in hell to the souls of others? \* No, that furnace always burns with its proper flames, there is not a spark of that divine fire there: but remembering how guilty he had been of their sins, feared that his torments would be increased by their coming thither. Society in endless sorrow does not divide, but reflect them.

Now if damnation for sin be such a misery as is expressed in the scripture by the most violent figures, and words of the heaviest signification; if all the possible tortures suffered here, are but a lenitive to the preparations of wrath in hell; how miserable shall those be, who, as if a single damnation were a light matter, do not only commit sin in their own persons, but are in combination with Satan to corrupt and destroy others, and multiply damnation against themselves? These "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath."

Briefly; The whole process of that day, the arraignment and sentence will be so ordered, the righteousness and reasonableness of the proceedings will be so manifest, as to clear the judge, and confound the guilty. "God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he judgeth."

\* Non orat pro fratrum salute quâ non tangitur reprobis, sed pro se ne ipsius tormenta ex consortio fratrum augeantur. *Brugen.*

## CHAPTER V.

An excitation to confirm our faith of the eternal judgment. Reason sees the necessity of a future judgment. Divine revelation expressly declares it. Considerations requisite to make faith effectual. The belief of a future judgment clears the honor of God's governing the world, from the imputation of unrighteousness, with respect to the prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the saints. It is a powerful support to the saints in their persecutions. The belief of this is effectual to restrain from secret sins. It is a powerful remedy against the pernicious pleasures of sin. The consideration that the Son of God clothed with our nature shall judge the world, affords great consolation to his people, and is a motive of great terror to the wicked.

I shall now come to apply this great doctrine.

[1.] Let us from what has been discoursed of judgment to come, be excited to confirm our faith in this great and useful doctrine; and by serious and frequent thoughts to apply it to ourselves. Some within the church have only a superficial belief of this, as a point of the religion wherein they were educated, but carnal affections, fear, hope, love, and desire, control their assent as to its operation upon them. They believe in the general, that God is the judge and rewarder of our actions, and in the absence of temptation resolve to obey him: but when a strong trial comes from some temporal good or evil that is present, their faith is negligent and unactive to keep them from sin. Now to make our faith powerful, we must,

1. Confirm it by convincing arguments, that it may be an undoubted assurance, a certain light, directive and persuasive in the course of our lives. Some doctrines of religion that are of an incomprehensible nature, and should be received with silent adoration for the authority of the revealer, are obstinately contradicted by some, upon a vain pretence that nothing is to be believed, that will not endure the rigorous inquisition of reason, and be comprehended by our narrow minds: but reason, though darkened, sees the necessity of a future judgment. Nature and scripture testify there is a God, and that he has a right, and power, and will to distribute the rewards of virtue, and the penalties of vice to his subjects. To deny this, is directly against the implanted notion of the Deity in the heart of man. There is a real difference between moral good and evil, not depending upon opinion, but arising from the the immutable nature of things,

and the eternal law of God. Otherwise considered in itself, it were no more faulty to murder a parent, than to kill a fly; nor to rob a traveller, than to chase a deer. But the conscience of the most profligate wretch would startle at such an assertion. The disposition and admirable order of the world in its various parts, and the vicissitude of seasons, declare to the observing mind, that a most wise, good and powerful God governs and preserves all things by his vigorous influence. And can it be that the Divine Providence, so visibly wise and good in regulating the course of nature, should be defective towards man, the most noble part of the world? And can it be extended to human affairs, if there be no other than the present state, wherein the righteous are afflicted, and wicked prosper? Where sins of the deepest stain and the loudest cry are unpunished; and the sublime and truly heroic virtues are unrewarded? Nay, where vice receives the natural reward of virtue, honor and felicity; and virtue the just wages of vice, disgrace and sufferings? It is necessary therefore that there be a future state, and a righteous distribution of rewards, according to the good and evil of mens actions here.

The heathens disguised this terrible truth, under the fictions of the infernal judges, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, and Æacus. And the furies and vultures, and fiery lake, which they thought tormented the wicked in the next \* world, discover what apprehensions they had of the desert of sin, and the punishment that certainly attended it. The guilty would fain be freed from the terrors of it, and strangle conscience, that is bound over to give testimony in the day of judgment, that they may sin without scruples. But though fear be a troublesome and involuntary passion, they cannot totally extinguish the internal sense and presages of future judgment: but as the motions of courage came upon Sampson at times; so conscience awakened by sharp afflictions, by sudden dangers, and the approaches of death, makes a sad deduction of past sins, and forecasts cruel things: it cites the offender before the enlightened tribunal of heaven, scourges with remorse, and makes him feel even here the strokes of hell. Though the sin be secret, and the guilty person powerful, not within the cognizance or reach of human justice, yet conscience has a rack within, and causes pain and anxiety, by fearful expectations of judgment to come.

And Divine revelation is most express in declaring this great truth. The light of faith is more clear and certain from the infallible Word of God, than the light of reason: before the flood, Enoch in the early age of the world foretold it: Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, Jude 14. 15. Solomon under the law repeats this

\* Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ. Tert.

doctrine, that every secret thing shall be brought unto judgment, whether good or evil, Eccl. 12. And God himself speaks in the sublimest style of majesty, and swears by himself, for our firmer belief, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God, Isa. 45. 2. 3. the glory of his justice. From whence the Apostle infers, So then every one of us shall give an account to God for himself, Rom. 14. 10. 11. In the gospel we have distinctly described the person of the Judge, the glorious attendants of his coming, and the manner of his proceedings in that day, Mat. 13. 42. 43, and 24. 30. 31. Now the many \* predictions in scripture, so visibly accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, and by him, give infallible assurance that all his promises and threatenings are equally certain, and shall be fulfilled. As sure as our Saviour is come in his humble state, and has accomplished the prophecies of his sufferings, he will come in his glory to judge the world.

2. That the belief of eternal judgment may be powerful in our hearts and lives, it must be actuated by frequent and serious thoughts. Faith gives life and efficacy to our notions of eternal things, and consideration makes our faith effectual. As the natural life is preserved by the activity of the vital principles, the circulation of the blood, the drawing of the breath, the motion of the pulse; so the spiritual life is maintained by the exercise of grace. The carnal affections dare not appear before reason and conscience, when awakened by the serious believing consideration of eternal judgment. The Evangelists relate, that when our Saviour was asleep in the ship, a sudden tempest arose, that was like to over-set it in the sea: but awakened by the cry of his disciples, "Lord, save us, we perish: he presently rebuked the wind, and a calm ensued." Thus whilst the habit of faith is asleep in the soul, there will be great danger from the concurrent violence of temptations and corruptions; but when it is awakened by lively and powerful thoughts, it does miracles in subduing the strongest lusts. It is monstrous, and beyond all belief, did not sensible experience make it evident, that notwithstanding the minds of men are convinced of the certainty of the Divine judgment, and the recompenses that immediately follow, yet their wills remain unconverted, and their affections cold and unactive in their preparations for it: that such numbers who have so much Christianity as to believe that an irrevocable doom will pass upon the wicked, and so little Christianity, that they cannot justly hope to escape from it, yet are so careless of their duty, nay joyful in their sinful courses, as if judgment were a dreadful thing. What is the cause of this prodigious security? It is the neglect of considering that "we must all appear before the

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\* An vere extriuit nobis omnia quæ promisit, et de solo die iudicii nos sefellit? *Aug.*



judgment-seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil."

The next cause of this stupidity is, that they put the evil day at a remote distance: as the scorers said, "the vision is for many days:" they study to be secure, and delay their preparations, presuming to have time enough before them. Their senses and faculties are so employed abroad in the world, that they have neither leisure nor desire to think seriously of it. Their hearts are so ravished with dreams of sensuality, and engaged in terrene affairs, that they are very averse from exercising their minds upon such displeasing objects.

Vain men! how willingly do they deceive themselves? the Judge himself declares, "behold, I come quickly: his throne is like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire;" an emblem of his swift coming to judgment. Can they be assured of life one hour? The day of death is equivalent to the Day of Judgment: for immediately after there is a final decision of men's states forever.

I have read of an excellent preacher, that in a sermon described the last judgment in all its terrors, with such ardent expressions, and those animated with such an affecting voice, such an inflamed countenance and action, that his hearers broke forth into passionate cries, as if the Judge himself had been present to pass the final sentence upon them. In the height of their commotion, the preacher bid them stop their tears and passions, for he had one thing more to add, the most afflicting and astonishing consideration of all the rest, that within less than a quarter of an hour, the memory and regard of that which so transported them would vanish, and their affections return to carnal objects in their usual manner.

The neglect of consideration makes even the doctrine of judgment to come to be without efficacy. It is necessary therefore that the belief of this be so firmly seated in the heart as its throne, that it may command the thoughts to be very attentive to it, and may have regal power over our wills and affections, that our lives may be ordered according to its rules.

[2.] The consideration of eternal judgment will vindicate the proceedings of divine providence, and the honor of God's governing this world, from the imputation of unrighteousness. God is provoked every day, yet spares the wicked, and heaps an abundance of favors on them: his patience and goodness they profanely abuse, and become more obdurate and inflexible. They are apt to blaspheme the excellency of his nature in their hearts, Psal. 14. 1. thinking that he is ignorant or careless, impotent or unjust. They implicitly deny his providence and judgment, that he does not observe their sins, and will not require an account for them: or else they interpret his permission to be an approbation of their sins: These things hast thou done and I kept si-

lence ; thou thoughtest I was such an one as thyself ; Psal. 50. Thus the heathens transplanted the vices of earth to heaven, and represented their Gods to be sensual, jealous, furious as men, and accordingly expect an easy absolution for their sins. Or else the distance of judgment to come so hardens them, that they hear God's thunder with less fear, than boys do their squibs and crackers. Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, Eccles. 8. 2. But how desperate is the madness of sinners ? God now seems to wink at their sins, Acts 17. 30. but hath appointed a day of accounts. He suffers them to live in prosperity, but they are reserved to the day of judgment to be punished, 2 Pet. 2. 4. and possibly sooner ; for sometimes they are cut off by visible vengeance, to convince the world that the supreme Judge does not bear the sword in vain. But though it is delayed for a time, yet he declares, that their sins are laid up in store with him, and sealed up among his treasures. To him belongs vengeance and recompense, Deut. 32, 34. He is a mild Judge now, and his clemency suspends their punishment ; but justice will not forget it, Amos 8. 7. He threatens the secure sinner ; I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes, Psal. 50. 21. How will the scornful obstinate sinner change complexion, and tremble, when an army of sins (more terrible than so many furies) shall be ranged in battle, and with fiery darts wound his naked soul ? How will the stubborn Atheist, that pleases himself with vain imaginations of the eternity of the world, and the mortality of the soul, be confounded when he feels the truth of scripture threatnings to his eternal sorrow ? Then all their railleries will be turned into lamentations. It is not for \* want of power that God spares the wicked, but because they are always in his hands, and he can make them as miserable as they are sinful, when he pleases. It is not through the neglect of justice, but for most wise and holy reasons, as shall appear in the last day, when a decisive irreversible judgment shall be pronounced, and immediately inflicted on them before the world. When an † actor at Athens spoke with admiration of riches, as the most valuable acquisition, and of the felicity of rich men ; the people were in an uproar at the immorality of the speech, and were ready to chase him from the stage : but the poet himself appeared, and desired them to stop their fury till the catastrophe,

\* Cum habeat in potestate vindictam, mavult diu tenere patientiam. Cyprian de bon. Patient.

† Ω χνούσε δεξιωμα κάλλιγον βοότοις, &c. Cum hi novissimi versus in Tragedia Euripidis pronuntiati essent, totus populus ad ejiciendum et Actorem et Carmen consurrexit uno impetu : Donec Euripides in medium prosiluit, petens ut expectarent, viderentque quem admirator auri exitum faceret. Senec. Epist. 115.

the wretched end of that sordid miser. Thus we are apt to accuse the ways of God, when the wicked flourish; but we should stop our tumultuous thoughts, for their end will absolve Divine Providence from all undue reflections upon the account of their temporal happiness.

And the sound belief of this will rectify all mistaking apprehensions, and clear all perplexing appearances, about the sufferings of the righteous here.

Indeed, if we consider the holiest men as they are sinners, their afflictions are so far from blemishing the justice of God, that they are the signs of his mercy: for all is a favor on this side hell to those that deserve it. David, an excellent saint, acknowledgeth the righteousness of God's judgment with respect to himself. But when the saints suffer for a righteous cause, (and, as the Psalmist expresses it, For thy sake are we killed all the day long, and are counted as sheep for the slaughter, Psal. 44) there is not a visible correspondency between the Providence of God in his governing the world, and the unchangeable rules of justice, that those who do evil should suffer evil, and those who do well should be happy. As the apostle speaks to the persecuted christians; It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, 2 Thess. 6. 7. Now there is a day coming, when the persecutors shall be punished, and the saints be rewarded for all their sufferings; and the distribution of recompenses shall be in the presence of the world, for the glory of Divine justice. For the distinction that is made between men at death, is private and particular, and not sufficient for the honor of God's government: but at the last day, all men that have lived in several successions of ages, shall appear, and justice have a solemn process and triumph before angels and men. As some excellent piece that is to be exposed to public view, is covered with a traverse, to prevent the disturbance in the working, and the discovery of the work, till brought to such perfection as will surprise with wonder those that see it; so God is pleased to cover his proceedings for a time; but in the last day, there will be such a revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. 2. 7. that those who now doubt, or complain of his justice, shall admire and adore it.

[3.] The belief of this doctrine, as it vindicates Divine Providence, so it is powerful to comfort the saints under persecutions for righteousness sake; especially when innocence is wounded with slanderous darts, and calumnies are joined with cruelties, representing them as worthy of public hatred. It was one of the subtle artifices of Julian the apostate, to mingle the images of the heathen Gods with those of the emperors, that the doing reverence (as the christians were commanded) to all together, might imply a dereliction and renouncing of their religion, and their simplicity seem impiety; or if, jealous of slipping from their pro-

fession, they refused to do it, they might seem to deny the expressions of honor due to their emperors, and be reputed to suffer not as christian martyrs, but as rebels. But the believing consideration of God's righteous judgment will make them despise the censures and reproaches of malicious adversaries: With me, saith the Apostle, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by man's judgment: he that judgeth me is the Lord; 1 Cor. 4. 5. The severest censure was of no more weight, compared with the approbation of God, than the lightest feather that flies in the air, put in the scales against the globe of the earth. The assurance of a righteous cause, and a \* righteous judge, will preserve an inward and joyful tranquility of soul in the midst of all the storms of reproach and scandalous imputations; like the calmness of a haven, when the sea is tempestuous without. And this will fortify believers, to bear with an invincible courage all the violence that is offered to them for their fidelity to God: all the wrongs and injuries they endure, shall be redressed with infinite advantage. The extremest evils to which they are exposed for Christ, are like the chariots of fire sent from God, not to consume, but conduct Elias in triumph into the highest heaven. God will give them present support, inward consolations, and a future crown. There is an appointed day, when oppressed innocence shall obtain the noblest victory, and disgraced godliness the most public and highest honor: the faith of sincere christians shall be found to praise and glory, 1 Pet. 1. 7. They may suffer under the tyranny of time, but shall reign in the kingdom of eternity. The belief of this, when firmly radicated in the heart, is so powerful as to make them glory in the sharpest tribulations, and joyfully triumph over Satan, with his perverted malignant world. *Cantando rumpitur anguis.* But alas, the sin, and a great part of the trouble of the saints, arises from their weakness of faith, and not patient waiting for the day of the Lord. When heavy persecutions and great distresses are continued by their restless adversaries, they are apt, through impatience and instability of mind, to be full of sorrowful complaints that God delays their particular deliverance: and as sometimes the clock outruns the motion of the sun, that is the true measure of time; so their hasty desires prevent the eternal counsel of his will, that has determined the period of the miseries of his people, and of the prosperity of the wicked, in the fittest time: and that he suspends his glorious coming to judge the world in righteousness, discourageth weaker christians, and makes them ready to faint in the day of adversity. But the Lord is not slack in performing his promise, as men count slackness; 2 Pet. 3. 9. There is not the least reason to question his fidelity and power, or to suspect his

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\* Inter iudicem justum et conscientiam tuam, noli timere nisi causam tuam.  
*Aug.*

love and remembrance of his people. And as the stars of heaven enlighten the earth, but the candles on earth cannot enlighten the heavens; so the wisdom of God's counsel and providence should direct us patiently to expect his appointed time, but our glimmering reason cannot direct him.

[4.] The serious belief of future Judgment is the most effectual restraint from secret sins. Men are apt to encourage themselves in evil upon the account of secrecy; it is the usual tinder of temptations. If solitude and silence, if the darkness of the night, or any disguises may conceal their wickedness from human eyes, they are bold and secure as to God. The Psalmist declares what is the inward principle that acts them, what is the language of their hearts: all the workers of iniquity boast themselves; they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it; Psal. 94. 5, 6. But O the brutish folly of men, to think that because they do not see God, that he does not see them! as if one should shut his eyes in the face of the sun, and do some foul abominable thing, thinking himself to be unseen, because he sees no person. How vain is the impure diligence of the adulterer, the crafty diligence of the deceiver, the solicitious diligence of other sinners, to hide things from the Judge of all? Shall not God search it out, for he knows the very secrets of the heart? What a confounding discovery will be made of secret wickedness at the last day? Here obscurity is the mask of shame, that conceals it from the world. Or if only children and fools, that are not capable to judge of the indecency and turpitude of actions, be spectators, men are not touched with shame for foul things: but then their wickedness shall be displayed before God, the holy angels and saints. The actual belief of this would deprive Satan of one of his greatest advantages, and be a blessed preservative from many sins, that allure the consent by the temptation of secrecy. A considering christian will reject them with indignation, saying with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The sins undiscovered and unpunished by temporal tribunals, shall then receive a just recompense.

[5.] The remembrance of that strict Judgment is the most natural and powerful remedy against sensual temptations, that so easily insinuate and engage the hearts of men. St. Peter reckoning up the heathens' sins, lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, and abominable idolatries, tells the christians, that the Gentiles thought it strange that they did not run with them to the same excess of riot, 1 Pet. 4. 3, 4. As the disciples, when our Saviour walked upon the waters, thought he had been a Spirit, judging that no real body could tread on them without sinking: thus men are apt to think it impossible to restrain their carnal appetites when allured by pleasing objects. But the be-

lief of the terrors of the Lord will damp the sensual affections when most strongly inclined to forbidden things, and extinguish delight in sin : for delight and fear are inconsistent. Therefore the wise preacher gives this counsel, Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and sight of thine eyes : but know thou for all these things God will bring thee to judgment, Eccl. 11. This will change the apprehensions of the mind, and alter the taste of the appetite, and make the most enticing and irresistible lusts the objects of our greatest detestation.

[6.] The consideration that the Son of God, clothed with our nature, shall judge the world, "affords strong consolation" to his people ; and is a motive of great terror to the wicked. How comfortable is it to his people that he who loved them above his life, and was their Redeemer on the cross, shall be their judge on the throne ? "He is the same Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and forever ;" the same indulgent Saviour in the exaltation of his glory, as when under sufferings, reproach and shame. He is described in that glorious appearance, by the conjunct titles of his majesty and power, The great God, Tit. 2. 12, 13. and of his compassion and mercy, "Our Saviour," to signify his ability and affection to make them happy. When he comes with a heavenly train of angels to judgment, he will be as tender of his servants, as when he suffered for them in his humble state. He that paid their debt, and sealed their pardon with his own blood, will certainly publish the acquittance. How is it possible he should condemn those for whom he died, and who appear with the impressions of his reconciling blood upon them ? How reviving is it, that Christ, whose glory was the end and perfection of their lives, Phil. 1. shall dispose their states forever ? That he, who esteems every act of their charity and kindness done to his servants as done to himself, shall dispense the blessed reward ? Then the King will say to them placed on his right hand ; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matt. 25. O the transports of joy to hear those words from his life-breathing lips ! The prophet breaks forth into an extacy, "How beautiful are the feet of the messengers of peace, those that bring glad tidings of salvation ! But how much more beautiful is the face of the author of our peace and salvation !" O how full of serenity, and clemency, and glory ! The expectation of this makes them languish with impatience for his coming. Though the preparations of that day are so dreadful, when the sun shall be darkened, and the moon turned into blood, Acts 2. and the stars fall like leaves in autumn, yet it is styled a day of refreshment to the saints.

But how dreadful will his coming in majesty to judgment be

to the wicked ! \* “ They shall see him whom they have pierced,” and with bitter lamentation remember the indignities offered to him. What excuses can they allege, why they did not believe and obey the gospel ? Our Saviour revealed high mysteries, but confirmed them with great miracles. He required strict holiness, but offered divine grace to enable men to do his will. “ He poured forth his Spirit upon them,” but their hearts were as hard as the rocks, and as barren as the sands. Then he will reproach them for their insolent contempt of all the perfections of his Divine nature, and the bleeding sufferings of his human nature to reconcile them to God : for their undervaluing “ neglect of the great salvation,” so dearly purchased, and so freely and earnestly offered to them : for their obstinacy, that the purple streams that flowed from his crucified body, that all the sorrows and agonies of his soul were not effectual persuasives to make them forsake their sins : for their “ preferring the bramble to reign over them,” Satan the destroyer of souls, and ungrateful rejecting the true vine, the blessed Saviour, who by so many miraculous mercies solicited their love, and deserved their service ; this will make the sentence as just as terrible, and the more terrible because just. This will exasperate the anguish, that the gospel shall be a “ savor of death to them ;” and the blessed Redeemer pronounce them “ cursed,” and despatch them “ to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels for ever.” The judgment of the Redeemer will be more heavy than that of the Creator. For all the riches of his goodness which they despised, shall be the measure of their guilt and woes. All the means of grace used for their conversion, but frustrated by their perverseness, shall be charged upon their score. What consternation will seize the wicked, when ten thousand accusers shall rise up in judgment against them, and not one advocate appear for their defence ? Satan will be ready to aggravate their sins above his own : for although the superior excellence of his nature and state did heighten his obligation, and consequently his disobedience to his Creator, and that he sinned of himself, derived a guilt upon him exceeding that of man’s original sin, who was seduced to his ruin ; yet in that justice was so quick and severe, that the angels after their sin were immediately expelled from their blessed habitation, no space of repentance was allowed ; and no mediator interposed to obtain terms of reconciliation with the incensed Deity, their doom was final and irrevocable : but after our rebellious sin, the Son of God, such was his immortal love, was willing to be mortal to redeem sinful men, and freely offered himself a sacrifice to atone the divine displeasure : and a day of grace and long sufferance was granted, and many compas-

\* Videtis vulnera quæ infixistis, agnoscitis latus quod pupugistis, quoniam et per vos, et propter vos apertum est, nec intrare voluistis, *Aug.*

sionate invitations were sent from heaven to soften their stony hearts: but they neglected and despised the grace of the gospel, and wilfully excluded themselves from mercy. In this respect they are more guilty than the fallen angels; and justice will revenge the abuse of mercy. Do they hope to soften the judge by submissions and deprecations? Alas! he will be inflexible to all their prayers and tears. The Lamb will be then a lion armed with terrors for their destruction. Or can they appeal to a higher court to mitigate or reverse the sentence? No, his authority is supreme, and confirmed by the immutable oath of God. Or, do they think to resist the execution of the sentence? Desperate folly! The angels, notwithstanding their numbers and strength, could not for a moment escape his revenging hand. The whole world of sinners is of no more force against his wrath, than the light dust against a whirlwind, or dry stubble against devouring fire. Or do they think, by a stubborn spirit, to endure it? Self-deceiving wretches! If the correction of his children here, though allayed, and for their amendment, make "their beauty and strength consume away as a moth," how insupportable will the vengeance be on his obstinate enemies? "Who knows the power of his anger?" Who can sound the depths of his displeasure?

## CHAPTER VI.

The consideration of eternal Judgment should powerfully move us to prepare for it. Rules of our acceptance in that day. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus is absolutely necessary for our acceptance. The pardon of our sins, and the rewarding our services, is upon the account of our Saviour's meritorious obedience and sufferings. Sincere and uniform obedience will be only accepted of our judge. The frequent trial of conscience prepares us for the last Judgment. This leads to repentance for past sins, and preserves from sins afterwards. The improving of our talents will make the last judgment comfortable. The zealous maintaining the truth and cause of Christ, will be rewarded in the last judgment. A beneficent love to the afflicted saints shall then be rewarded. An excitation to watch and pray that we may with comfort appear before the everlasting judge.

[7.] The consideration of eternal Judgment should be a powerful incentive to prepare ourselves for it. The affair is infinitely serious, for it concerns our salvation or damnation forever. Yet the pleasures and business of the world fasten men in security, and hinder the entire application of their minds to prepare for their last account. It is an awful caution of our Saviour to



his disciples, "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares: for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth." A dissolute voluptuous course of life is joined with a brutish neglect of God and the soul: and the indulging the carnal appetite, though not in such enormous excesses as the profane are guilty of, alienates the minds of men from due considering their spiritual state, and lessens the preventive fear that makes us serious and diligent "to be found of God in peace." And others are so involved in secular business, that they are not at leisure to regard the "one thing necessary:" their minds are so over-shaded with the cares of the present world, they cannot take a right aspect of the world to come. The flood broke in upon the old world whilst they "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling," and destroyed them all. The last fire will devour this world in the same wretched incogitancy, and stupid neglect to prepare themselves for judgment. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man." It is a divine and solemn warning, "Behold, I come as a thief in the night: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he be found naked," without the robe of holiness, and be exposed to confounding shame in that day. When secure and careless sinners shall say, "Peace and safety, sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child," as surprizingly, as irresistibly; "and they shall not escape." But the "wise foresee the evil," and esteem it their incomparable interest to secure the favor of the supreme judge. It is the inference the Apostle makes from the certainty of our appearing before the righteous judge, Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, in this or the next life, we may be accepted of him, 2 Cor. 5. 9. This was his great design, his chief care, his duty and his glory: never did any person more ardently aspire, and ambitiously endeavor for the obtaining a kingdom, than he did to secure his own acceptance with the Lord. In order to this, I will lay down the rules of our acceptance in that day, and conclude the argument.

(1.) Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus is absolutely necessary, that we may be accepted. This is such a belief of his all-sufficient merits, and his merciful inclination to save us, that the guilty and self-condemned sinner entirely consents to the terms of the gospel, as well as to the privileges of it, with a reliance upon his merits, and a resolution to obey his precepts. He is a Priest on a throne, a Prince, and a Saviour, and so must be acknowledged and received. Upon this condition his righteousness is freely imputed to us for our justification unto life, without which we must perish in our sins, For,

I. The best saints are guilty, and deeply obnoxious to the law,

and the judgment of God is invariably according to truth; so that appearing in their sins, they will be cast forever. God's tribunal, like that of the severe Roman judge, is *reorum scopulus*, a rock that dashes in pieces all the guilty that come to it. Therefore the Psalmist so earnestly deprecates; "enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." And the Apostle, though a transcendent saint, divests himself of his own righteousness, that he may be entirely covered with the righteousness of Christ; and renounces all things, that he may be found in him as his surety in that day of accounts, and obtain pardon by virtue of his satisfaction for sin. We cannot perfectly obey the commands, nor appease the displeasure of God: but the expiatory sacrifice of Christ propitiates the divine justice. This alone can make us stand in judgment before the "fiery law," and the fiery tribunal, and the judge "who is a consuming fire," to all the guilty that appear in their sins before him. The blood of the mediator has sprinkled the throne of God in heaven; and our conscience being sprinkled with it by an unfeigned faith, we may appear before God the judge of all with a humble confidence, and enter into the holy of holies, the celestial sanctuary, with joy.

2. Not only the pardon of our sins, but the acceptance and rewarding of our services with eternal glory, is upon the account of our Saviour's complete righteousness. There are defilements in the persons, and defects in the works of the saints. Their most holy and fervent prayers are perfumed by the incense of his intercession, and so become grateful to God, Rev. 8. 3. Our best virtues are mixed and shadowed with imperfections; but in him all graces were conspicuous in their consummate degrees. Our obedience, supposing it perfect, is of no desert: "When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants": but his obedience was infinitely meritorious by the union of the Deity with his human nature, and is the foundation of the excellent reward. Not that his merits derive a value to our works to make them worthy of eternal glory: as some noble mineral infused into water, that is in itself without taste or efficacy, gives it a medicinal tincture and virtue; for this is impossible, since the infinite dignity of his person, and his most perfect habitual and actual holiness, that are the fountains and reasons of his merits, are incommunicable to our persons and works. But the active and passive obedience of Christ is so satisfactory and meritorious, that God is pleased graciously to reward with the crown of life the mean services of those who are by a lively and purifying faith united to him.

(2.) Sincere obedience, that is, a uniform and entire respect to all the commands of God, will alone be accepted in that day: for his authority runs through all, and binds them on the con-

science. David had this testimony from God himself, that he "was a man after his own heart, that fulfilled all his will." And St. John refers the decision of our state to this, "If our hearts condemn us" of any allowed sin of omission or commission, much more God will, who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things, 1 John 3. 20, 21. But if the illuminated tender conscience doth not condemn us of insincerity, "we have confidence towards God," that he will spare and accept us notwithstanding our frailties, and give free and safe access into his presence. The lives of many are chequered with a strange disparity, they are restrained from some sins of apparent odiousness, but indulgent to others; they are strict in some duties, but loose and slack in others, as if they hoped by way of commutation to be accepted of God; to expiate their delinquencies in one kind, by supererogating in another. Some are painted Pharisees in the duties of the first table, very exact in the formalities of outward devotions, but gross publicans in the duties of the second; careless of justice and equity, and charity to men: others are in appearance strictly moral in the discharge of their duties to men, and negligent of their obligations to God. But partial obedience can never endure the trial of conscience, much less of God. For what is the weak light of our minds, to the pure eyes of his glory? It will make us liable to inward rebuke now, and to open confusion at the last. St. Paul's rejoicing was from the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, he had his conversation in the world, 2 Cor. 1. 12. And, as he expresses it in another place, it was his daily exercise "to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men." Though our conquest of sin be not complete, yet our resolution and endeavors must be to mortify it in every kind. Though our obedience has not the perfection of degrees, we must be equally regarding the divine law. If there be any secret-favored sin, either of omission or commission, it will render our petitions unacceptable at the throne of Grace, and our persons at the throne of judgment; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." The law requires the performance of our duty without abatement or denounceth the penalty without allay or mitigation: the gospel has not relaxed the strictness of the law as it is the rule of life, but as it was the condition of obtaining life. Sincere obedience is accepted by that gracious covenant, where the legal perfection is wanting; but that is indispensibly required of all. I may illustrate this by a passage of Alexander the great, who being desirous to learn geometry, applied himself to a skilful instructor in it. But his warlike disposition made him more capable to conquer, than to measure the earth; so that tired with the first propositions, he desired his master to make the scheme more clear and plain, and easy to

him. \* To whom the master replied, that the theorems of that science were equally difficult to all, and required the same attention of mind to understand them. Thus the gospel of mercy requires of all sincere sanctification, and serious endeavors to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and without this none shall be exempted from condemnation.

To the sincerity of obedience, I shall add a more restrained notion of it, as respecting religion. The duties of piety consist of an outward and inward part; and the one without the other, is but as a carcass without a quickening soul. Now there will be an exquisite anatomy of the heart in that judgment, a discovery of all the principles and motives by which men are acted; and then he that is a saint inwardly, "in the spirit," who with pure aims and holy affections hath served God, shall have "praise of him." And those who have used God to enjoy the world, that have assumed pretences of piety for secular ends, shall be reprobated. This will be a cause of wonder in that day, that many "who are highly esteemed by men" as excellent saints, "shall be an abomination to God." That in the broad way to hell thousands go thither, is sad beyond expression, but not strange at all: but that in the path to heaven any should descend to hell, is astonishing. That those who live without God in the world, in the profane neglect of his worship, in a dissolute disorderly course, should fall under condemnation, is believed of all: but that those who appeared zealous in religion shall be at last rejected, is contrary to universal expectation. And not only the gross hypocrite that deceives others, but he that deceives himself by the external practice of holy duties, without correspondent lively affections; that prays with that coldness, as if he had no desire to be heard, and hears with that carelessness, as if he had no desire to be sanctified by the word, and is conversant in other parts of divine service in that slight manner, as if he had no design to be saved, shall by a convincing upbraiding light see his wickedness, in dishonoring that God whom he pretended to worship, and neglecting his soul. When the upright as pure gold shall be more radiant by the fire, the insincere like reprobate silver shall not endure that severe trial.

(3.) The frequent discussion of conscience, and reviewing our ways, is necessary in order to our comfortable appearing before our judge. This is a duty of constant revolution: for while we are in flesh, the best saints, notwithstanding all their vigilance and diligence, are overtaken by surprisal, and sometimes overborn by strong temptations; and it is more necessary to beg for daily pardon, than for our daily bread. Under the law, if any one had by touching a dead body contracted uncleanness,

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\*Cui præceptor: ista, inquit, omnibus eadem sunt æque difficilia. *Sen. Ep. 51.*

he was to wash his clothes in the evening, and not to lie down in his uncleanness. This was typical of our duty, that we should wash away our sinful defilements every day in the purifying fountain of Christ's blood, "that it is set open for sin and for uncleanness." And the method of the gospel to obtain the grant of pardon, and our comfortable sense, and the blessed effects of it, is this, there must be a mournful sight, and serious acknowledgment of our daily sins, and a judging ourselves by the domestical tribunal in our breasts as worthy of condemnation. For though we cannot satisfy divine justice for the least sin, we must glorify it; and with humility and fervency desire that God would graciously forgive our renewed sins, with unfeigned resolutions and care against them for the future. Thus we are to sue out our pardon for sins committed every day. And whereas many errors in regard of our frailty, and their finesse, do slip from us, we should with contrite spirits implore the Divine majesty to cleanse us from our secret sins, Psal. 19. 12. such as through ignorance or inadvertancy escape from our observation. If we are obliged to be reconciled to an offended or offending brother before the night, and "the sun must not go down upon our wrath," much more to be reconciled to an offended God, that his displeasure may be atoned. The morning and evening sacrifice was a figure of the constant use of Christ's merits and mediation for us. The secure neglect of renewing our repentance for our renewed sins, deprives us of the comforts of the covenant, and will make the thoughts of judgment as heavy as mountains upon the conscience, when it is awakened out of its slumber. But when the soul's accounts are kept clear with heaven every day, O what a blessed rest does the penitent believer enjoy in the favor of God! O the Divine calm of conscience, when our debts are concealed in the book of God's remembrance! If we should be unexpectedly summoned to appear "before the judge of all," the sight of our sins will rather excite thankful action, and joyful praises of God for his mercy, that he hath pardoned them, than fearful despairing thoughts of his mercy, that he will not pardon them.

And as this considering our ways leads to repentance, and is a remedy for past sins, so it is a powerful preservative from sins afterwards. For as in war the greatest care is to fortify the weakest part of a besieged town, and make it impregnable; so a christian, by the experience of his infirmity and danger, will be more wise and wary, more circumspect and resolved against those sins whereby he has been often soiled, to prevent the daily incursion, and sudden surreption by them. And according to the degrees of our innocence, we have confidence of acceptance with God in judgment.

(4.) Let us improve with a wise and singular diligence, the talents committed to our trust: for in that day we shall be re-

sponsible for all that we have received. All the blessings we possess, whether natural, our life, our faculties, our endowments, our health and strength; or civil, honor and dignity, riches and reputation; or spiritual, the gospel in its light and power, the graces and assistance of the Holy Ghost, as they are gifts from God's love, so they are talents to be employed for his glory. We are stewards, not proprietaries: for the supreme Lord does not relinquish his right in our blessings, that we may dispose of them at our own pleasure, but hath prescribed rules for our using them in order to his glory, our own good, and the benefit of others. And it is sad to consider, that usually those who enjoy the greatest gifts, render the least acknowledgments, and the most abundant in favors are most barren in thankfulness. Time, that unvaluable treasure, that is due to God and the soul, the price of which arises from the work of salvation to be done in it, how is it squandered away? Conscience would blush at the serious reflection, that every day so much is spent in the business of the world, or pleasures, and so little redeemed for communion with the Holy God: that as in the prophetic dream the lean kine devoured the fat, so unconcerning vanities take up that time that should be employed for our last and blessed end. While time is miserably wasted, the soul lies a bleeding to everlasting death. More particularly, we shall be accountable for all the days of "the Son of man" that we have seen, all the special seasons of grace: these we should improve for our eternal advantage, to prepare us for the divine presence above. But alas, the Lord's day, that is consecrated for the immediate service of God, and should be entirely spent in it, and in things that have a necessary subordination to it, yet neither the enforcement of duty, nor incitations of love prevail upon the most, conscientiously to employ it in spiritual affairs. If they afford their presence at the public worship, it is thought enough; and as if the rest of the day was unsanctified time, they waste it either in complimentary visits, or secular business, in recreations, or things impertinent to their salvation.

Riches are an excellent instrument in doing good: gold is the most precious and extensive metal, and by a marvellous art an ounce may be beaten out into some hundred leaves: but it is a more happy art by giving it, to enrich our souls, and supply the necessities of many others. But great estates are often used to foment men's vicious guilty affections, pride and sensuality; and it is called \* greatness and magnificence to waste them in sumptuous vanities. I instance in these talents, because they are usually abused to the dishonor of the donor. If the slothful servant that hid his single talent in a napkin, and returned it without advantage to his Lord, was "cast into outer darkness, where

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\* Nullis vitis desunt pretiosa nomina. *Plin. Lib. 73.*

there is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" a fearful image of what will befall all unprofitable persons: how severe will their accounts be, who lavish out their numerous talents to gratify their carnal appetites, and betray the blessings of God to his enemy the devil? Only the wise and good servant, that with prudent contrivance, and zealous endeavors, improves his talents, shall from the gracious Lord, in whom are all attractives and remuneratives of our service, receive an excellent reward.

(5.) Another rule of our acceptance at the last day is, that we must with courage and zeal maintain in our rank and places the cause of Christ. For thus he declares expressly, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father which is in heaven, Mat. 10. 33. 34. When the truth, purity, and power of religion, in doctrine, worship and practice, is discountenanced and overborn, our Saviour commands, and will reward our undiscouraged visible constancy in it. He will not only reign in our hearts, but be honored with our lips, and in our conversations, Rom. 10. We usurp the title of christians, unless we adhere to our duty in despite of all opposition. The temptations that usually withdraw men from confessing and glorifying Christ, are such as work upon the passions of fear and shame. And the considerations of the last judgment will fortify us against both.

1. Sometimes religion exposes the professors of it to the loss of all temporal enjoyments, and of life itself. And when the honor of our Saviour requires such a service of us, when that confirmation is necessary to recommend Divine truth to the belief and affections of others, when our cheerful and courageous example in suffering, would animate those that are fearful to constancy and confession, then from cowardice to withdraw our testimony, is to betray him again. When our duty is attended with extreme dangers, then the sincerity and perfection of our love to Christ is brought to the strictest trial. As true carbuncles are discovered in the night, for the darkness redoubles their splendor; so the fidelity of christians is evident in persecutions, that inflame and excite their zeal to magnify the name of Christ in the sight of the world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, 1 John 4. 18. But fearfulness hinders the expressing acts of love to Christ, and betrays to apostacy. For as every passion is a perturbation, so especially carnal fear, that blinds and disturbs the mind, and hinders the serious consideration of the reasons of our duty, and those motives to persevere in it, that are the fountains of our strength. From hence the timorous are often treacherous, and faith lies buried under the cold pale ashes of fear. Now the irregularity of this passion is best cured, by directing it to the most powerful object. As the

rod of Moses swallowed up the rods of the magicians ; so a stronger fear will subdue that which is in a weaker degree. Our Saviour therefore threatens those that for the fear of men (who can but kill the body) dare not own and defend his truth and cause, that he will renounce them before his Father in the great day, the immediate consequence of which will be the destruction of body and soul in hell, Mat. 10. 31. 32. 33. If earthly potentates had a jurisdiction over heaven, if men were to be tried by their laws at the last day, if their power extended to eternity, they might exact unlimited obedience to their wills ; but conscience is a more desirable friend and terrible enemy than Cæsar ; and all temporal tribunals are subordinate and accountable to the supreme and eternal : there is "one lawgiver and judge, who is able to save, and to destroy forever." It is the worst perdition to secure ourselves by the neglect of our duty, when we ought to perish for the glory of our Saviour. "He that saves his life, shall lose it."

2. Shame wounds deeper the breasts of some than violence. Zedekiah would rather expose his kingdom and life to the fury of the Chaldean armies, than be himself exposed as an object of derision by surrendering it. And Satan, who understands the temper of men's spirits, suits his temptations accordingly. The purity and holiness of religion expressed in the actions of the saints, is by the scurrilous reflections and bitter sarcasms of profane persons made contemptible. This is as foolish and malicious, as if a slave should reproach the son of a king, that he was like his father in his countenance and actions : for by how much the resemblance of God's holiness appears with more evidence and eminence in their lives, their divine relation is more certainly and justly to be acknowledged. Yet how many are ashamed of this glory ? And zeal to vindicate the honor of religion is traduced and villified, either as the effect of designing faction, or of the indiscretion and rashness of a weak judgment and strong passions. In every age the faithful servants of God are by scornful titles despised : we are accounted, saith the Apostle, the off-scouring of the world, 1 Cor. 4. 17. But a generous christian looks upon disgrace for the sake of Christ as his honor. The Apostles rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts, 5. 41. It is said of the Baptist, "he was not that light but came to bear witness to that light:" intimating as if that were the next degree of dignity to it. And our Saviour, speaking of the proofs of his divine mission, reckons up the witnesses of such dignity, that it is not possible for sacred ambition to aspire to higher honor, than to be in conjunction with them ; They are John the Baptist, his miracles, his Father, and the Scriptures, John 5. 33. 36, 37. 39.

Let us appeal then from the light depraved fancies of carnal men, to the wise and faithful judgment and authority of the Son



of God. He will at the last day, in the presence of his Father, and all the court of heaven, give an incomparable crown to all that have "despised shame" for his sake. But those vile spirits whose courage of straw is quelled by vain opinion, and the reproaches of fools, and have deserted the cause of Christ shall then be clothed with confusion: for this we are assured by our Judge, that whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, Mar. 8. 38. If the unnatural brothers were astonished when the governor of Egypt told them, "I am Joseph, whom ye sold;" how much more will false christians, when the Lord of glory shall tell them, I am Jesus, whom for base shame ye denied? How will it confound those abject wretches to be a spectacle of abhorrence and scorn before that universal glorious confluence? They would choose rather to be covered under the ruins of the world. If we value and desire the approbation of the King of angels, if we fear a final rejection from him, to obtain the one and avoid the other, we must entirely adhere to his interest, without any respect to the eyes and esteem of the perverse deceived world.

(6.) A cordial beneficent love to the saints, is a requisite qualification of our acceptance in the Day of Judgment. Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me, Mat. 25. 34. 35. 36. The union and endearments betwixt Christ and his people, are mutual and reflective; as they are extremely tender of his glory, for he is concerned in all that is done to them. And though the perfection of love consists more in the affections of the heart than in outward offices, yet our Saviour most congruously produces in judgment the conspicuous effects of love to them, the supplying their wants, allaying their sorrows, owning them when obscured and depressed by afflictions, and injuriously treated by others. This love of service that is directed and exercised towards the saints for the image of God shining in them, because they are the children of God, and members of Christ, and therefore extended to all in whom the reason of that love appears, shall be gloriously rewarded; for he interprets what is done upon his account to those who are his own by so many dear titles, as done to himself. And what is more becoming his excellent goodness, than to reward the works of mercy with saving mercy? But those who when Christ presents himself to them in his poor distressed members, and solicits their assistance, to protect them from injuries, to refresh their sorrows, to support them

in their exigencies ; those that have ability, but want affection to do them good, and incompassionately neglect the suffering saints, shall be sentenced to be tormented with the apostate angels forever. What indignity is it to the Son of God, that those for whom he shed his most precious blood, should be in less value and regard with many, than the dogs and horses maintained for their pleasure ? And if those on the left hand shall be condemned to eternal fire for the coldness of their love ; how terrible will the judgment be of those, that from the heat of their enmity outrageously persecute the servants of Christ for his sake, in their persons, estates, reputations, that with a worse than barbarous inhumanity seek their ruin ? Is there any sin of a more mortal guilt ? The infernal furnace is seven-fold heated for the punishing such wickedness.

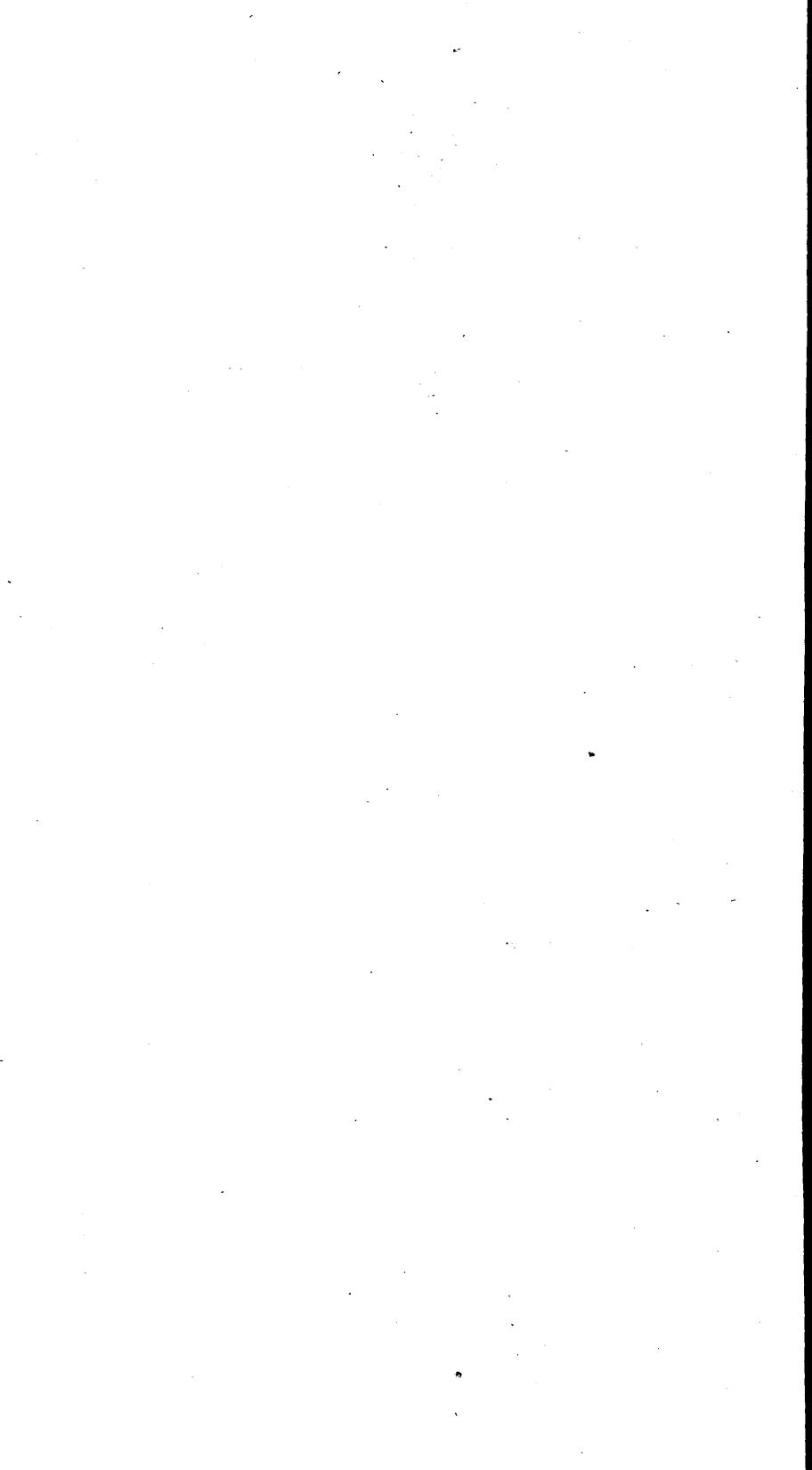
To conclude this argument : let us observe the command of our Saviour, to "watch and pray always, that we may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man." These are duties of universal influence into our lives ; the one prevents carelessness, the other vain confidence in ourselves ; and the consideration of judgment to come, is the greatest motive to them, and the first principle of holiness. This should work more powerful in us, considering the day of death is equivalent to the day of judgment to every person ; for then a particular sentence (decisive and irrevocable) passes, that shall be published at the last day. Methinks the terrors of the Lord should engage our souls and senses to a continual preparation for his coming. It is represented so as to affect the eye, and keep it vigilant : Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, Jude 15. Behold he comes in the clouds, and every eye shall see him ; Rev. 1. 9. And to call the ear, and make it attentive ; The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, 1 Thess. 4. 16. How circumspect should we be in all our ways, since every action shall be reviewed by our Judge ? St. Peter strongly infers from the dissolution of the world, as a most cogent argument, that we should be exactly and universally holy : Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ? 1 Pet. 3. 11, 12. But the consideration of the eternal judgment immediately succeeding the destruction of the world ; O how powerful should it be upon conscience and the affections, to regulate the whole course of our lives with a final respect to God's tribunal !

In short ; that which we read of the success of the apostle's preaching to the Athenians upon the present subject, the immortality of the soul, comprised in the resurrection of the body and future judgment, is the same in all times and places : And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked ; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter ; and others

believed ; Acts 17. 32, 34. There are three differences of the hearers of this doctrine of so great importance : some deride it as an extravagant fancy ; some believe it, and yield up themselves entirely in obedience to it ; others do not absolutely reject it as the first, nor accept it as the second, but have a conjecture, or slight superficial opinion of it, or a speculative assent as to a history of things that do not concern them, and defer the serious consideration and applying of it to themselves. And of this third sort (O grief!) are the most of those who are christians in name : they delay till death the solemn reflecting upon the final judgment, and the inevitable consequence of it, a blessed or miserable estate forever. And whereas the Apostle, who had infallible assurance of God's love, did with a holy severity and self-denial abstain from all carnal complacencies that might hazard the never-fading crown : I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others, I should be a cast-away. 1 Cor. 19. 27. \*Yet the most live and die in a secure state, without preparation to appear before the presence of his glory.

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\* Væ miseris nobis, qui de electione nostra nullam adhuc Dei vocem cognovimus, et jam in otio quasi de securitate torpemus. *Greg. Lib. 29. Moral.*



OF

# HEAVEN.

## CHAPTER I.

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PSAL. XVI. II.

*Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy presence is fullness  
of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more.*

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The Saviour of men was, before and under the law, by various predictions and types described, to prepare the world for his reception with faith and obedience. In this psalm, a mixture of history and prophecy. The words of the text applied by the Apostle to Christ's resurrection and ascension, and glory in heaven. The divine presence is the supreme and eternal felicity of the saints in heaven. The glory of the place considered. The happiness of heaven illustrated by sensible representations.

The divine wisdom and goodness was pleased, before and during the legal dispensation, by various predictions and types, to delineate the person of our Redeemer, and the work of redemption, to prepare the minds of men for his reception at his coming into the world. All the evangelical prophecies recorded in the old testament, as dispersed rays, are conspicuously united in him, "the sun of righteousness : " and as in a curious piece of Mosaic work, each stone (according to its natural vein and color) is so exactly disposed, and with that proportion joined to another, that the lively figure of the human body results from the composure ; so by variety of types, the entire image of our Saviour's life is represented from his first appearing on earth, to his ascending to heaven.

Now the due comparing and observing the harmonious agreement between the prophecies and types of the old testament

and the history of the new, is a powerful means to produce and establish a truly lively faith in the blessed Jesus, as the promised Messiah: for it is an infallible argument of the Divine Providence, in disposing times and things so, as the oracle should be verified in the event, and the mysterious figures substantially exhibited in the manifestation of the Son of God. It is true, his miracles raised admiration, and argued the concurrence of power truly divine: for the exercise of an absolute dominion over the order of nature, is a royalty reserved to God; but that his miraculous operations were foretold, added more authority to his person, and efficacy to his doctrine. Therefore our Saviour himself, in answer to the public question sent from John the Baptist, whether he were the expected Saviour of the world, commanded the messengers to tell him what they heard and saw; The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up; Mat. 11. Which healing miracles were foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, Isa. 35. as the clear and distinguishing characters of the Messiah from all seducers, when he should come. The fulfilling God's word by the works of Christ, of which there was sensible evidence was an irrefutable testimony that his miracles were true, and performed for the confirmation of the truth.

Now of all the chosen saints that foretold the coming of Christ, the new law of grace, and the new kingdom of glory, that he should reveal and establish; of all that represented him in various particulars, concerning his person and offices, there was not a more illustrious type than David, that by \* prophetic words, and by prophetic actions did so clearly describe him.

In this Psalm, composed by him, there is a mixture of history and prophecy; some things in the literal and immediate sense referring to David: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Our being at God's right hand, implies the highest honor; his being at our right hand, implies present and sure protection and defence: and of this David had the infallible promise of God, to secure his hope, notwithstanding all his unrighteous and implacable enemies. But the following verses are applicable to David, but in a lower sense, and by a remote metaphor, and have their literal and principal accomplishment in our Saviour: "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;" that is, in the state of the dead; "nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption:" that is, the body of our Saviour should be exempted from the corrupting power of the grave, and restored the third day to life. In this propriety and perfection of sense, the prophecy is applied by St. Peter to our Saviour's alone: for David died and saw corruption, Acts 2. 27. 29. and his body still remains under the dominion of death.

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\* Illorum hominum non tantum lingua, sed et vita prophetica fuit. *Aug.*

And this last verse, "thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures forever more;" is applied by the Apostle to Christ, his resurrection, ascension to heaven, "and sitting at the right hand of the majesty on high. Thou wilt shew me the path of life;" that is, introduce him into the kingdom of glory, and by experimental fruition make him partaker of it: "in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures forever more."

In these words the causes and excellencies of the heavenly life are expressed. The causes, are the glorious presence of God, and the intimate application of his presence, and discovery of his peculiar love to the saints. This our blessed Saviour had respect to, as the complete reward of his sufferings: "Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." And his right hand implies his bounty that dispenses, and his power that secures our happiness. The excellencies of it, are "fulness of joy, and pleasures forever more."

From the words I shall observe one proposition.

The enjoyment of the Divine presence in Heaven, is the supreme and everlasting felicity of the saints.

In discoursing of this point I will consider,

1. The place wherein the Divine presence is gloriously revealed. 2. Shew that the enjoyment of the Divine presence is the supreme felicity of the saints. 3. Prove that the felicity shall be everlasting.

[1.] The place wherein the Divine presence is revealed. It is consistent with the divine immensity, to be differently present in some places. The essential presence of God is the same every where; the influxive declarative presence of God is special, and otherwise in one place than another. He is more excellently present in the living temples, his saints on earth, by the gracious and eminent operations of his spirit, than he is in the rest of the world: he is most excellently present in heaven, by the clearest manifestation and the express characters and effects of the divine perfections.

This inferior world is framed with exquisite order; "the earth is full of the glory of the Lord:" yet it is but the sediment of the creation, the habitation of birds and beasts, nay of rebellious sinners: and by this we may raise our thoughts to conceive something of the glorious sanctuary of life, and blessedness above. It is called "the heaven of heavens," which is the highest comparison, to instruct and astonish us with the amplitude and glory of the place. It is a place becoming the majesty of God, the image of his immensity. Our Saviour assures us, "In his Father's house are many mansions," to receive the innumerable company of glorified saints. It is called the excellent glory, 2 Pet. 1. 17.

The shining firmament, with all the luminaries that adorn it, are but the frontispiece to the highest heaven. All the lustre of diamonds, the fire of carbuncles and rubies, the brightness of pearls, are dead in comparison of its glory. "It is the throne of the God of glory," wherein his majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner. For pleasantness it is called Paradise, in allusion to the delightful garden planted by the hands of God himself for Adam, his favorite, whilst innocent. There is the tree of life. There are rivers of pleasure springing from the divine presence. It is called "the inheritance of the saints in light;" to signify the glory and joy of the place: for light has splendor, and conciliates cheerfulness, and is a fit emblem of both. As on the contrary, hell is described by "the blackness of darkness forever," to signify the sadness and despair of the damned; and because in that centre of misery, a perpetual night and invincible darkness increases the horror of lost souls.

Heaven for stability is called "a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The present world is like a tent or tabernacle set up for a time, whilst the church is passing through the wilderness: but heaven is the "city of the living God," the place of his happy residence, the seat of his eternal empire. The visible world, with all its perishing idols, shall shortly fall, this beautiful scene shall be abolished: but the supreme heaven is above this sphere of mutability, wherein all bodies compounded of the jarring elements are continually changing and dissolving: it is truly called "a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Briefly, the wise maker has framed it correspondently to the end for which it was designed: it is the seat of his majesty, his sacred temple wherein he diffuses the richest beams of his goodness and glory, and his chosen servants see and praise his adorable excellencies forever.

[2.] I will endeavour to shew, that the enjoyment of the divine presence in heaven, is the supreme felicity of the saints.

To make this supernatural blessedness more easy and intelligible to us, the scripture describes it by sensible representations. For while the soul is clothed with flesh, fancy has such a dominion, that we conceive of nothing but by comparisons and images taken from material things. It is therefore set forth by a marriage feast, Rev. 17. 7. to signify the joy and glory of the saints above. But to prevent all gross conceits, we are instructed, that the bodies of the saints shall be spiritual, not capable of hunger or thirst, or consequently of any refreshment that is caused by the satisfaction of those appetites. The objects of the most noble senses, seeing and hearing, the pleasure of which is mixed with reason, and not common to the brutes, are more frequently made use of to reconcile the blessed and heavenly state to the proportion of our minds. Thus sometimes the saints above are represented on thrones, and with crowns on their heads: sometimes clothed in white with palms in their hands:



sometimes singing songs of triumph to him that sits on the throne. But the real felicity of the saints infinitely exceeds all those faint metaphors. The Apostle, to whom the admirable revelation was exhibited of the sufferings of the church, and the victorious issue out of them in the successive ages of the world, tells us, "it does not appear what the saints shall be in heaven. The things that God has prepared for those that love him," are far more above the highest ascent of our thoughts, than the marriage feast of a king exceeds in splendor and magnificence, the imagination of one that has always lived in an obscure village, that never saw any ornaments of state, nor tasted wine in his life. We can think of those things but according to the poverty of our understandings. But so much we know as is able to sweeten all the bitterness, and render insipid all the sweetness of this world.

## CHAPTER II.

Whatever is requisite to our complete blessedness, is enjoyed in heaven. There is an exemption from all evils. Sin and all the penal consequences, are abolished in heaven. The concurrence of all positive excellencies is enjoyed there. The body is revived to a glorious life. The soul lives in communion with God. The excellence of the object, and vigor of the actings upon it, the principal ingredients of happiness.

This will appear by considering, that whatever is requisite to constitute the complete blessedness of man, is fully enjoyed in the divine presence.

(1.) An exemption from all evils is the first condition of perfect blessedness. The sentence of the wise Solon is true,

———Dicique beatus  
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

No man can be called happy whilst in this valley of tears. There are so many natural calamities, so many casual, which no human mind can foresee or prevent, that one may be less miserable than another, but none perfectly happy here. But upon the entrance into heaven, all those evils, that by their number, variety or weight, disquiet and oppress us here, are at an end.

Sin, of all evils the worst and most hateful, shall be abolished and all temptations that surround us and endanger our innocence, shall cease. Here the best men lament the weakness of the flesh, and sometimes the violent assaults of spiritual enemies. St. Paul himself breaks forth into a mournful complaint, "O

wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" And when harassed by the buffets of Satan, renews his most earnest addresses to God to be freed from them. Here our purity is not absolute, we must be always cleansing ourselves from the relics of that deep defilement that cleaves to our nature. Here our peace is preserved with the sword in our hand, by a continual warfare against Satan and the world. But in heaven no ignorance darkens the mind, no passions rebel against the sanctified will, no inherent pollution remains. "The church is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing:" and all temptations shall then cease. The tempter was cast out of heaven, and none of his poisoned arrows can reach that purified company. Glorious liberty! here ardently desired, but fully enjoyed by the saints above. And as sin, so all the penal consequences of it are quite taken away. The present life is a continual disease, and sometimes attended with that sharp sense, that death is desired as a remedy, and accepted as a benefit. And though the saints have reviving cordials, yet their joys are mixed with sorrows, nay, caused by sorrows. The tears of repentance are their sweetest refreshment. Here the living stones are cut and wounded, and make fit by sufferings for a temple unto God in the New Jerusalem. But as in building of Solomon's temple, the noise of a hammer was not heard, for all the parts were framed before with that exact design and correspondence, that they firmly combined together; they were hewn in another place, and nothing remained but the putting them one upon another, and then as sacred they became inviolable: so God the wise architect, having prepared the saints here by many cutting afflictions, places them in the eternal building, where no voice of sorrow is heard. Of the innumerable assembly above, is there any eye that weeps, any breast that sighs, any tongue that complains, or any appearance of grief? The heavenly state is called life, as only worthy of that title. There is no infirmity of body, no poverty, no disgrace, no treachery of friends, no persecution of enemies. "There is no more death, nor sorrow; nor shall there be any more pain; for former things are past away. God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people." There salvation is complete in all degrees: pure joy is the privilege of heaven, unmixed sorrows the punishment of hell.

(2.) A concurrence of all positive excellencies is requisite to blessedness. And these are to be considered with respect to the entire man.

1. The body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and quickened into a glorious immortal life. The soul and body are the essential parts of man; and though the inequality be great in their holy operations, yet their concurrence is necessary. Good actions are designed by the counsel and resolution of the spirit, but performed by the ministry of the flesh. Every grace ex-

presses itself in visible actions by the body. In the sorrows of repentance it supplies tears; in religious fasts, its appetites are restrained; in thanksgivings the tongue breaks forth into the joyful praises of God. All our victories over sensible pleasure and pain are obtained by the soul in conjunction with the body. Now it is most becoming the divine goodness, not to deal so differently, that the soul should be everlastingly happy, and the body lost in forgetfulness; the one glorified in heaven, the other remain in the dust. From their first setting out in the world to the grave, they ran the same race, and shall enjoy the same reward. Here the body is the consort of the soul in obedience and sufferings, hereafter in fruition. When the crown of purity, or palm of martyrdom shall be given by the great judge in the view of all, they shall both partake in the honor. The Apostle assures us, the bodies of the saints shall be revived and refined to a spiritual and glorious perfection. "Flesh and blood," the body with its terrene qualities, is mutable and mortal, and "cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven;" it cannot breathe in so pure an air. God tells Moses, "No man can see my face and live:" the sight of the divine glory is not consistent with such tempered frail tabernacles of flesh. Nay, the body must be freed from the infirmities that were inseparable from Adam in Paradise: for "he was made a living soul," *i. e.* the soul united to the body was the fountain of the natural sensitive life, which was in a perpetual flux, the vital heat wasting the radical moisture, from whence there was a necessity of food and sleep to repair the substance and spirits, and preserve his life in vigor: but in the divine world, the body shall be spiritual in its qualities and the principle of its life; it shall be supported by the supernatural power of the spirit, without the supplies of outward nourishment, and exempted from all the low operations of nature: therefore our Saviour tells us, "the children of the resurrection shall be equal to the angels," prepared for the employment and enjoyments of those blessed spirits.

And a substantial unfading glory will shine in them infinitely above the perishing pride of this world, "and the glory of the flesh," that is but an appearance, like the false colors painted on the feathers of a dove, by the reflection of the light, which presently vanishes, when the posture is changed, or the light withdrawn. Of this we have a sure pledge in the glorified body of Christ, who is the "first fruits of them that sleep: he shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working of his power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." What can be more glorious, than to be conformed to the humanity of the Son of God? This conformity shall be the work of his own hands: and when omnipotence interposes, nothing is difficult. The raising the body to an immortal state of glory, is as easy to the divine

power, as the forming it first in the womb. As the sun labors no more in the mines, in the forming gold and silver, and the most precious and durable metals, than in the production of a short-lived flower.

2. The supreme happiness of man is in the soul's communion with God. This will appear by considering the principal ingredients of happiness: they are the excellence of the object, and vigor of the actings upon it. The life and blessedness of God is to know and love himself according to his infinite perfections. And it is the highest happiness of the reasonable creature, to know and love God: for he is a spiritual, infinite, unchangeable good, and can fully communicate all that is requisite to entire blessedness, supply all the wants, and satisfy all the wishes of the immortal soul. The understanding and will are our most comprehensive faculties, the principles our most eminent operations. To know and to love, are essential to the reasonable soul; and in directing those acts upon God, the rectitude, the perfection and felicity of man consists. As the intellectual creature by setting its mind and heart upon earthly things, is degraded into a lower order, the thoughts and desires that are spiritual with respect to the principle from whence they proceed, are sensual and perishing with respect to their objects: so when our noble faculties are exercised in their most lively and vigorous perceptions upon the supreme good, man is advanced to an equality of joy and perfection with the angels. Now in heaven, God by his most evident and essential presence, excites and draws forth all the active powers of the soul in their highest degrees; and, such is the immensity of his perfections, fills their utmost capacity, from whence a divine pleasure, a perpetual satisfaction springs, a joy that is as unspeakable as it is eternal.

## CHAPTER III.

The Understanding shall be clearly enlightened with the knowledge of God. Here the revelation of God in his works and word is according to our capacities. In heaven it is most glorious, and our faculties are raised and refined to receive it. The nature of God, his decrees and counsels, his providential dispensations are revealed to the blessed.

To unfold this more particularly.

[1.] The understanding shall clearly see the most excellent objects. Now we know but in part, 1 Cor. 13. The naked beauty of divine things is veiled, and of impossible discovery: and by natural or accidental weakness the mind is not proportionable to sustain that dazzling brightness: "but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." In that enlightened state, the manifestations of the objects shall abundantly exceed the clearest revealing of them here. And the understanding shall be prepared in proportion to take a full view of them. Therefore the Apostle compares the several periods of the church in respect to the degrees of knowledge, to the several ages of human life. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." In children the organs, either from the excess of moisture, or their smallness, are indisposed for the vigorous exercise of the mind: some strictures of reason appear, a presaging sign what will be, but mixed with much obscurity. But when the organs are come to that just proportion and temperament, the soul displays its strength and activity.

To explicate this, it is requisite to consider the expressions in scripture, that signify the eminent degrees of knowledge in the blessed. Our Saviour assures us, that "the pure in heart shall see God." Sight is the most noble, extensive, and affective sense, and therefore fit to notify the clear, sweet and satisfying intuition of God in heaven. It is true, the Deity is spiritual, and invisible to the eye of the body, infinite and incomprehensible to the eye of the soul; but the glorified saints so clearly understand the divine perfections, that our present knowledge of God, compared to that vision, is but as the seeing of a dark shadow in a glass, to the immediate view of the living substance and person. The discovery of the Deity to us in the present state, is by his works and word: and both are imperfect, and far inferior to the manifestation in heaven. The absolute fulness of perfection that

is inseparable from the Godhead, is inimitable by any creature; for the perfection of any creature is limited in its kind as well as degrees. Therefore God was pleased by variety of effects and resemblances, to express and represent his attributes, that our minds might ascend by those steps to contemplate those perfections that are in him eminently and beyond all comparison. The light of heaven in all its purity and lustre, is but a shadow of his unapproachable brightness: all the excellencies of visible things, are but a weak representation of the glory of his attributes, like the describing with a coal the beautiful colors of the morning: and compared with the immensity of his perfections, are like the describing in a sheet of paper the vast celestial spheres.

In his word there is a more clear and full discovery of his nature and will, but according to our capacity of receiving. The divine attributes in scripture are masked and shadowed under sensible comparisons: for no light shines into our minds here, but through the windows of sense. The intellectual powers depend, as to the first notices of things, on the lower faculties and senses: therefore as Elisha in reviving the Shunamite's child, contracted himself to the proportion of the child, and "put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands;" so God is pleased to condescend to our capacity, and to adapt the expressions of his majesty to the narrowness of our imaginations. But in heaven the revelation of the Deity is much more glorious: and the mind is clarified from those terrene images that flow through the gross channels of the senses. In this present state, our purest conceptions of God are mixed with dross, and very imperfect; but there the gold shall be separated from the dross, and our conceptions be more proper and becoming the simplicity and purity of God. Here the objects of glory are humbled to the perception of sense: hereafter, the sensible faculties shall be raised and refined, and made the subjects of glory. Now when divine light shines with direct beams, and the thick curtain of flesh is spiritualized and transparent, the soul enjoys the clearest vision of God. The light of nature was so defective as to the discovery of God's compassionate counsels to save the lost world, and the minds of men were so darkened from the fumes of their lust, that their light was but the hemisphere of the night, in comparison of the revelation of the gospel: as St. Peter expresses the happy privilege of Christians, and their consequent duty, "that they should shew forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And the glorious gospel, compared to the revelation of God in heaven, is but as the twilight of the morning, wherein the light of the day is chequered with the shadows of the night, to the sun in its full lustre. In heaven we shall "see God face to face;" which signifies the clearest manifestation of his glory, and of his favor to the blessed: for the face is the throne of majesty and

beauty, and the crystal wherein the affections are conspicuous. Accordingly, when Moses prayed, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory;" God answered him, it was impossible, "for no man could see his face and live." And the form of divine blessing to the people of Israel was, "The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee." Whether the immediate essence of God can be seen by the intellectual creature, is a question; but we are sure in the heaven of presence, God exhibits himself to the blessed in a most glorious manner: for according to the degrees of excellency in the work, are the impressions and discoveries of the cause. Now all gross material things in the low order of nature, are but weak resultances from his perfections, in comparison of their glorious effects in the divine world. The glories of the place, and of the inhabitants the angels and saints, are the most noble effects and expressions of the divine attributes. But in a transcendant manner God exhibits himself in the glorified Mediator. He is styled "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" to signify that God, in the person of the incarnate Mediator, is so fully represented to us, that in him we have a view of God's unchangeable perfections. This appears by the following words, "that having purged us from our sins, he sat down on the majesty on high: for they respect the Son of God as united to the human nature, in which he performed the office of the priesthood, and took possession of his kingdom. During his humble state, though darkened with many afflicting circumstances, the divine virtues, wisdom, goodness, holiness, power, were so visible in his life, revelations, and miraculous works, that when Philip with that ardency of affection desired the sight of his Father, the only consummate blessedness, "Shew us the Father, and it suffices;" he told him, he "that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." But how brightly do they appear in his exaltation? "We shall see him as he is," in the majesty and glory of the Son of God. The Apostle says, "We shall know as we are known:" this we are not to understand according to the exactness of the expression; for the sun may be as well included in a spark of fire, as God may be comprehended by our finite faculties. Beyond the fullest discoveries we can receive of the Deity, there remains an entire infinity of perfections, not to be known by the most intelligent spirits: but *as we are known*, is a note of similitude, not of equality. The light of a candle as truly shines as the light of the sun, but not with that extent and splendor. We shall have such a perfect knowledge of God, as our minds can receive, and our hearts desire.

We shall then see what we now believe concerning the glorious nature of God, his decrees and counsels, his providence and dispensations. The sublimest doctrine of the christian religion, above the disquisition and reach of reason, is that of the sacred

Trinity, upon which the whole economy of the gospel depends. In assenting to this, faith bows the head and adores. But such is the pride of the carnal mind, that it disdains to stoop to divine revelation: and the seeming wise philosophers despised the primitive christians as captives of a blind belief. But this foul reproach was as unjust as many others wherewith they designed to disgrace Christianity; for the humility of faith does not extinguish or darken the light of reason, but revives and increases it. What is more suitable to uncorrupt reason, than to believe the revelation God affords of his own nature, who cannot deceive us? In the state above, where reason is rectified and enlarged, we shall understand that from eternity God was sole existing, but not solitary; that the Godhead is not confused in unity, nor divided in number; that there is a priority of order, yet no superiority among the sacred persons, but they are all equally possessed of the same divine excellencies, and the same divine empire, and are the object of the same adoration. Our Saviour tells his disciples, "In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father," that is, by unity of essence, and as naturally and necessarily God as the Father. This promise immediately refers to the time of pouring forth the Holy Ghost upon them after the resurrection of our Saviour, but shall be fully accomplished in heaven.

All things of a supernatural order shall be revealed. The "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," the union of the high perfections of the divine nature with the innocent imperfections of the human nature, the contrivance of our redemption, wherein there is an harmonious concurrence and concord of the principle attributes of the Deity that seemed irreconcilable; that product of the divine wisdom that is so adored by the angels, that astonishes and saves us, shall be unfolded. The divine counsels in governing the world, the designs, the ways, the orders and operations of God's providence shall be conspicuous. In some dispensations of God, we discern the eye in the top of his sceptre: the wisdom, the rectitude, the equity of his providence, is so visible in the defence of the innocent, and his justice and power in the punishment of the guilty, that it may convince the atheists who deny a providence, and cause all sincere believers to admire and reverence it. But there are other dispensations, the immediate reasons of which are so concealed in the bosom of God, that only the Lamb, with whose blood the elect to glory are written in the book of life, can reveal: why the light of the gospel was never visible to so many kingdoms; "why many are called, and few chosen;" the unsearchable ways, and incomprehensible judgments of God, which St. Paul in an extasy admires, which it is not lawful to inquire into here, we shall then understand in such a manner, that light itself is not more clear. How often are the people of God here in miserable perplexities? and say with the Prophet, "Verily thou art a God



that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour!" It is true, a steadfast faith in the providence of God, that all that he does, and all that he permits and disposes is best, will quiet their passions, and change the tempestuous ocean into the pacific sea: but when they are admitted into the council of state above, and see the immediate reasons of his decrees, what a heavenly wonder, what an exquisite pleasure will fill their minds? When the original fountains of wisdom, as clear as deep, shall be opened, what sweet satisfaction will be shed abroad in their spirits? They will see the beauty of providence in disposing temporal evils in order to their eternal felicity: that as in a curious picture the darkest tinctures are so disposed, as to give light and grace to orient colors; so all the afflictions of this state were but shadows or foils, to make their faith, and love, and patience more resplendent, and their reward more excellent. What our Saviour said to Peter, is applicable to the impenetrable dispensations of Providence to us in our mortal state: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but shall know hereafter." Then the arcana imperii, the secrets of his counsels shall be unsealed, and we shall be able to expound the perplexing riddle, how "out of the eater came meat, and out of the strong came sweetness:" we shall understand that his over-ruling providence is most eminently glorified in extracting good out of evil; *for we shall know as we are known.*

#### CHAPTER IV.

The blessed effect of the vision of God in the saints. It is productive and conservative of his glorious likeness. It affects them with the most humble veneration of God's excellencies. It inflames them with the most ardent love of God, and of our Saviour.

I will consider the blessed effects of the vision of God in heaven upon the saints. Our Saviour tells us, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The beginning and introduction of our felicity, is by a lively faith here, the consummation of it is by present sight in heaven.

1. From the vision of his glory there will be a resultance of his likeness impressed on us. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* All the perfection and happiness of the saints is comprised in that promise. The sun, when the sky is clear and serene, forms its image on a cloud tempered to receive it, with that orient brightness, that the eye cannot distinguish between the copy and the original. Thus the uncreated sun by

powerful emanations transforms the soul into its likeness, in that divine degree of holiness and felicity, as gloriously resembles God. Moses by conversing with God in the mount, and seeing his back parts, returned to the Israelites with such a radiancy in his face, that they could not look on it without a veil. What an impression of glory is in the saints, who see his perfection in their infinite lustre? It is the privilege of christians in this life, above the church under the law; *they behold in the gospel as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory*: they become more and more holy and heavenly, more purified and adorned with his virtues and graces. Now if the vision of Christ here in a glass, an eclipsing medium, be so influxive upon believers, what an illustrious and infallible efficacy has the immediate, clear, and permanent view of his glory upon the saints in heaven? That sight is productive and conservative of his image in its purity and perfection forever.

2. The divine presence affects the saints with the most humble reverence and solemn veneration of God. This is an eternal respect due from the intellectual creature to the creator, upon the account of his infinite and incommunicable excellencies. He is distinguished not only from idols, but from creatures of the highest order, by his essential, supreme and singular name, I AM. Every kind of being, every spark of life, every degree of perfection is from his efficiency, and depends entirely upon his supporting power. The most eminent qualities of the creatures are but in show and appearance, compared with the reality and stability of his glorious nature. In the scripture, wisdom, holiness, goodness, power, truth, immortality, are attributed to God, with the exclusion of all creatures from those prerogatives; they being his essential, infinite, and incomparable perfections. They are separable qualities in the creatures, like the gilding and enameling of baser metal; but in the Deity, they are like substantial massy gold. There is a vast distance between created beings; but the distance between a fly, or a worm, and an angel, is nothing to the distance between an archangel and God, there being no comparison between finite and infinite. All creatures equally vanish, and disappear as nothing, compared to the glorious creator. As if one from the region of the stars should look down upon the earth, the mountains and hills with the valleys would appear one flat surface, an equal plain, the height and the lowness of the several parts being indiscernible at that immense distance.

Now in heaven the Divine Majesty is most visible, and most awful and adorable: the sublimest spirits "cover their faces" before his glorious brightness. The Prophet Isaiah had a representation of heaven: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. About it

stood the Seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." They highly honor him, by the reflection of his separate and peerless excellencies, his almighty power, his infinite supremacy, and eternal empire, in their concerts of praise.

3. In heaven the saints as perfectly love God, as they know him. This is the principal duty of angels and men to the blessed Creator, for his admirable perfections, and his excellent benefits. The evidence of it is so entire, that the reasonable mind cannot suspend its assent, for goodness and beauty, the fruit and the flower of amiable things, do so recommend them to the understanding and will, that they powerfully allure and engage the affections. Now these are in God in unspeakable degrees of eminence. The Prophet breaks out in a rapture, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!"

It was a precept of the ceremonial law, that the firstlings of the flock, and the first and best fruits of the earth should be offered to God: not as if the first that opened the belly was more valuable in his account than the last, or the most early fruits in the spring more pleasing to him than the later in the autumn; but it was instructive, that our love, the "first-born of the soul, and the beginning of its strength," should be consecrated to God.

The love of God is the essential character of a saint, that distinguishes him from the unregenerate. Indeed, it is strange that God, who is infinitely lovely, and infinitely liberal and beneficent, should not prevail on the hearts of all men; but if we consider the degeneracy of mankind, how their minds are depraved and deceived, and their affections are vitiated, the wonder will cease. Carnal men have not due conceptions of God, and will not attentively observe his amiable perfections. St. John tells us, *He that loveth not, doth not know God.* Knowledge is the leading principle in the operations of the soul: there must be a heavenly eye to discover the heavenly beauty, before there can be love of it. Now men are in ignorant darkness, and are defiled in flesh and spirit, and therefore cannot love God, who is glorious in holiness. Without resemblance, there can be no affectionate union, which is the essence of love. The contrariety of dispositions infers a contrariety of affections. The scripture expresses this in dreadful colors: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: the friendship of this world is enmity with God:" that is, pride, and covetousness, and sensuality, which are the lusts of the carnal mind, and are terminated upon worldly things, are inconsistent with the love of God. The justice of God is terrible to the consciences, and his holiness odious to the affections of the unrenewed. Till by divine grace the understanding is enlightened and purified, to have right

apprehensions of God; till the will and affections are cleansed and changed; till there be a resemblance of God's holy nature, and a conformity to his holy laws, they are not capable of delightful adhering to him; which is the internal, essential property of love.

But those who are partakers of the divine nature, the holy and heavenly, "taste and see how good the Lord is:" and according to the illustrations of the mind, such are the impressions upon the heart; the love of God in their breasts here is like smoking flax, but in heaven it is a triumphant flame. God is the first fair, the original of all amiable excellencies, in whom they shine in their unstained lustre and perfection. When he fully reveals himself, and displays the richest beams of his love and glory, how transporting and endearing is that sight? Our affections that are now scattered on many things, wherein some faint reflections of his goodness appear, shall then be united in one full current to him, "who is all in all." In heaven, the immense treasures of his grace are revealed: that when man for his rebellious sin was justly expelled from Paradise, and under the sentence of eternal death, God should not only pardon, but prefer us to the dignity of his children, and prepare such a glory for us, and us for such a glory; this will inspire the saints with such ardent affections, that will make them equal to the angels, those pure and everlasting flames of love to God.

In heaven we shall be with "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, who is seated at the right hand of God." And how admirable will he appear to the sense and soul of every glorified saint? For we shall see the king in his beauty. When our Saviour was upon the holy mount, and one vanishing beam of glory appeared in his transfiguration, Peter was so transported at the sight, that he forgot the world and himself: how ravishing then will the sight of him in his triumphant majesty be, when we shall be transfigured ourselves? Now while believers are in the shadows of the earthly state, they love their unseen Saviour with such intense degrees of affection, as deface all the washy colors, all the vain loves of things in this world; but when they are admitted into his shining presence, and see him in the day of celestial glory, with what an extasy of affection will they be transported?

We shall then feel the endearing obligations our Saviour has laid upon us, who ransomed us with so rich a price, and purchased for us such an unvaluable inheritance: for in proportion as we shall understand his greatness in himself, we shall his goodness to us. The eternal Son of God descended from the heaven of heavens to our lowly earth; and, which is more, from the majesty wherein he there reigned, and was visible to the angels: he became man that he might die, to redeem us from the most woful captivity, from death, and the sting of death, sin, and

the strength of sin, the law; and obtain a blessed life and immortality for us. O unexampled love! *Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend*: and what is the life of a sinful man, a vanishing vapor, a life mixed with troubles and vexation? And to lay down this for a friend deservedly dear, is the highest expression of human love: but for the Son of God to lay down his life, a life without sin, and without end, (for immortality was a privilege due to his innocence) and for enemies, for the worst enemies, rebels by revolture from obedience to their creator and king, is a love truly divine, and infinitely surpassing not only the affections, but the *understanding and knowledge of all creatures*, Ephes. 3. Briefly; he gave his life for us, and gives himself to us, the most excellent testimonies of love that we can receive from love itself; and we shall love him with all the strength of our glorified spirits.

## CHAPTER V.

Union with God by knowledge and love, causes the perfection and felicity of the saints. That union briefly unfolded. The pleasure that springs from knowledge. In heaven, the knowledge of the saints incomparably excels the knowledge acquired here. The felicity that flows from the enjoyment of God, that fully satisfies the love of the saints. The blessed communion between the saints and Christ in heaven. The love of the saints is most fully pleased in the glory of God.

Union with God by knowledge and love, accomplishes the perfection and happiness of the saints. The most pernicious effect of sin is the separation of the soul from God; and the restoral of us to happiness, is by reunion with him. This we obtain by Christ, who is Emanuel in his nature, and by office; who took our flesh, which he offered as a sacrifice to God to atone his displeasure, and gives "his spirit to dwell in us," as a permanent active principle, by whose special operation faith is produced in our hearts; that is, such a belief of his love in redeeming us, as inspires us with a sincere and superlative love to him: and by these vital bands we are united to him, and, as his true members, live the same life with him in grace and glory.

Now in heaven, our union with God is more near and noble, more intimate and influential, more inseparable and eternal. It is observable in natural causalities, that what is of a more refined and purer nature, is more active and penetrating, and more

closely unites with other things, than what is more gross and material. Light, which is the purest quality in the world, actuates all colors, and makes them visible, and actuates the eye, and conveys the lively image of the object with shining evidence into it. The sun shoots its invisible virtue into the deepest mines. Fire is more subtile and pure than water; and will pierce into solid metals, which the water cannot soak into. The glowing iron seems to be all fire. Now God is the purest spirit, and of infinite energy, and can unite himself to our spirits more intimately than the closest union between any creatures in the world. He unites himself to the understanding, by an immediate irradiation and discovery of his glorious excellencies; "In thy light," saith the Psalmist, "we shall see light." He unites himself to the will, by the infusion of his love, and by that drawing forth our love to him. This union is complete in heaven, and most communicative of the divine influences to the saints; and consequently their conformity and fruition of God, is in the highest degrees that created spirits are capable of. This is the most desirable and perfect state of reasonable creatures; for God is the overflowing fountain of felicity, the only stable centre of the soul, wherein it reposes itself forever. Accordingly the Psalmist speaks, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

When the soul opens its eyes to the clear discoveries of the first truth, in which is no shadow of error, and its breast to the dear and intimate embraces of the supreme good, in which is no mixture of evil, and beyond which nothing remains to be known, nothing to be enjoyed, what a deluge of the purest and sweetest pleasure will overthrow it? We cannot ascend in our thoughts so high, as to conceive the excess of joy that attends those operations of the glorified soul upon its proper object. But something we may conjecture.

Those who are possessed with a noble passion for knowledge, how do they despise all lower pleasures in comparison of it? How do they forget themselves, neglect the body, and retire into the mind, the highest part of man, and nearest to God? The bare apprehension of such things that by their internal nature have no attractive influence upon the affections, is pleasant to the understanding. As the appearance of light, though not attended with any other visible beauties, refreshes the eye after long darkness: so the clear discovery of truths, how abstract soever, that were before unknown, is grateful to the intellectual faculty. Thus some have been strangely transported with the pleasure of a mathematical demonstration, when the evidence, not the importance, of the thing was so ravishing; for what is more dry and barren of delight than the speculation of figures and numbers? Solon when near his end, and some of his friends that visited him were speaking softly of a point of philosophy,

by that sound of wisdom was awakened from the sleep of death that was just seizing on him; and opening his eyes, raising his head to give attention, being asked the reason of it, answered,\* "That when I understand what you are discoursing of, I may die." Such was his delight in knowledge, that a little of it made his agony insensible.

But here are many imperfections that lessen this intellectual pleasure, which shall cease in heaven. Here the acquisition of knowledge is often with the expense of health: the flower of the spirits, necessary for natural operations, is wasted by intense thoughts. How often are the learned sickly? As the flint when it is struck, gives not a spark without consuming itself; so knowledge is obtained by studies that waste our faint sensitive faculties. But then our knowledge shall be a free emanation from the spring of truth, without our labor and pains. Here we learn by circuit, and discern by comparing things; ignorant darkness is dispelled by gradual succession of light: but then perfect knowledge shall be infused in a moment. Here, after all our labor and toil, how little knowledge do we gain? Every question is a labyrinth, out of which the nimblest and most searching minds cannot extricate themselves. How many specious errors impose upon our understandings? We look on things by false lights, through deceiving spectacles: but then our knowledge shall be certain and complete. There is no forbidden tree in the celestial Paradise, as no inordinate affection. But suppose that all things in the compass of the world were known, yet still there would be emptiness and anguish in the mind: for the most comprehensive knowledge of things that are insufficient to make us happy, cannot afford true satisfaction. But then we shall see God in all his excellencies, the supreme object and end, the only felicity of the soul. How will the sight of his glorious perfections in the first moment quench our extreme thirst, and fill us with joy and admiration! It is not as the naked conception of treasures, that only makes rich in idea but that divine sight gives a real interest in him. The angels are so ravished with the beauties and wonders of his face, that they never divert a moment from the contemplation of it.

[2.] The pure love of the saints to God, is fully satisfied in the possession and enjoyment of him, and consequently the greatest delight and complacency is shed abroad in their hearts. Love considered as an affection of friendship, is always attended with two desires; to be assured of reciprocal love, and to enjoy the conversation of the person beloved, the testimony of his esteem and good will. This kind of † affection seems to be incon-

\* Ut cum istud quicquid est de quo disputatis percepero, moriar. *Val. Max.*

† Aristotle.

sistent with that infinite distance that is between God and the creature. But though it is disproportionable to the divine majesty, it is proportionable to his goodness. Accordingly our Saviour promises, "He that loves me, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him:" and to confirm our belief of this astonishing condescension, repeats it, "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." In the present state, the signs of God's special favor are exhibited to his friends. Now he bestows on them the honor of being his sons, the graces and comforts of his spirit, precious earnest of his love, "and seal of their redemption." But in eminency of degrees, the emanations of his love, and the effects of his beneficence, are incomparably more glorious in heaven. Here the saints are adopted, there crowned: there he opens all the bright treasures of his wisdom, the riches of his goodness, the beauties of holiness, the glories of his power, and by the intimate application of his presence makes his love most sensible to them. Infinite goodness excites and draws forth all the powers of the soul, and fills the utmost capacity and expansion of the spirit: from hence perpetual pleasure and satisfaction springs. O the pure delights between God and glorified souls! God looks on them with an engaged eye, as his own by many dear titles, and is ravished with the reflex of his own excellencies shining in them. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride (it is the language of divine love) so their God rejoices over them. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his loves; he will rejoice over thee with singing." He is infinitely delighted in the communication of his goodness to them. And what a blessed rest do they find in the complete fruition of his goodness! All their desires quietly expire in his bosom. What triumphs of joy follow! Can we frame a fuller conception of happiness, than to be perfectly loved by the best and most blessed being, and perfectly to love him, and to partake of the richest emanations of his *loving-kindness, that is far more valuable and desirable than life itself?*

How precious and joyful will the presence of Christ be to the saints! it was his prayer on earth "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." When the saints are received into the everlasting kingdom, the first object that draws their admiring regards, is Christ on the throne. Inestimable felicity! whether we consider him as the Son of God, in whose conspicuous countenance all the glory of his Father shines; or as the Saviour of men, and the head of the elect, upon a double account: partly, that "he that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood," after suffering all indignities and cruelties for our sake, has re-



ceived the reward of his meritorious sufferings, the triumph of his victory, being "glorified with the Father, with the glory he had before the world was;" and partly, because every member shall be conformed to him in glory. The sight of the face of Moses when radiant, had no transforming efficacy, for the light of it was not in him as its spring, but by derivation. But the Son of God is light essentially, and the sight of his glory will transform us into his likeness. And how dear and joyful is the presence of the saints to Christ? "He then sees of the travail of his soul, the fruit of his sharp sufferings and bleeding love, and is satisfied." How delightful is it to him to see all his spiritual progeny safely brought to heaven, and made partakers of his glory and joy in his everlasting kingdom? For according to the extent of the object, and dearness of the affection, joy rises. He will then present them to his father with infinite complacency; "Behold here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

The dearest affections of Christ and the saints in heaven, are mutual and reflexive. In the sacred song, the expressions of love, desire and joy, borrowed from the espousals of Solomon and his beloved wife, are as it were characters in the dark, to be understood in a spiritual sense, of the mystical marriage of Christ and the church. What endearing intercourse is there between the most perfect lover, and his spouse, inspired with the same pure flame? Here amiable perfections attract his eye and heart: Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee, Cant. 7. His propriety in the church is his unvaluable treasure: "My vineyard which is mine, is ever before me." He repeats the word *mine*, in the sweetest and most tender manner. And the church, with the same harmonious affections, speaks of Christ. She contemplates in a soft extasy his ever-satisfying beauty. My beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand, he is altogether lovely, Cant. 10. 16. She breaks forth in triumph, My beloved is mine, and I am his, Cant. 6. By all their expressions of joyful love and union, we may ascend in our thoughts, what are the joys of heaven, where the communion of Christ and the church is entire and uninterrupted forever. If faith and love of our unseen Saviour produce "a joy unspeakable and glorious," as if believers were wrapt up to Paradise, or Paradise descended into them; what will the sight and fruition of him? There is as great a difference in degrees between the joy that flows from the assurance and application of faith, and the joy from vision and full possession, as between the impression of joy the forerunner of Christ felt, when he sprang in the womb at the coming of our Saviour; and his ravishing joy, when he saw Christ, and pointed him out to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world."

[3.] The supreme joy of the saints is for the felicity and glory

of God himself. For as the holy soul feels no more powerful motive to love God, than because he is most worthy of it, as he is God, a being of infinite excellencies, and therefore to be loved above the dearest persons and things, even itself; so the highest joy it partakes of is from this consideration, that God is infinitely blessed and glorious. For in this the supreme desire of love is accomplished, that the most beloved object is perfectly honored and pleased. In heaven the love of the saints to God is in its highest perfection, and they see his glory in the most perfect manner, which causes a transcendent joy to them. And this is one reason why the saints, though shining with unequal degrees of glory, are equally content. For their most ardent love being set on God, that he is pleased to glorify himself by such various communications of his goodness, is full satisfaction to their desires. Besides, in those different degrees of glory, every one is so content with his own,\* that there is no possible desire of being but what he is.

## CHAPTER VI.

The communion of the angels and saints in heaven affords the purest pleasure. Love unites them. The allays of love cease there. As love is enlarged in its object and degrees, such is the delight that results from it. The joy of heaven is without defect or end. The productive causes of it are always equal. The face of God always shines there, and the contemplation of it is fixed. The constant enjoyment of God in heaven does not lessen the delight of the saints. The reasons why the fruition of sensible things without change is tedious. All those causes of dissatisfaction cease in heaven. The saints have as lively a perception of their happiness forever, as in the beginning of it.

In heaven "the innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly of the church of the first born," as they receive happiness from the sight of God, so they communicate the purest pleasure to one another. An unfeigned ardent affection unites that pure society. Our love is now kindled, either from a relation in nature, or a civil account, or some visible excellencies that render a person worthy of our choice and friendship: but in heaven the reasons are greater, and the degrees of love incomparably more fervent. All carnal alliances and respects cease in that supernatural state. The Apostle tells us, "If I have known Christ

\* Sic itaq; habebit donum aliud alio minus, ut hic quoq; donum habeat, non velit amplius. *Aug.*

after the flesh, I know him so no more." By the resurrection and ascension of Christ he was transported into another world, and had communion with him as a heavenly king, without low regards to the temporal privilege of conversing with him on earth. The spiritual relation is more near and permanent than the strictest band of nature. The saints have all relation to the same heavenly father, and to Jesus Christ the prince of peace, and head of that happy fraternity. The principle motives of love here, are the inherent excellencies of a person. Wisdom, holiness, goodness, fidelity are mighty attractives, and produce a more worthy affection, a more intimate confederacy of souls, than propinquity in nature, or any carnal respects. Virtue is amiable in an old person, though wrinkled and deformed: vice is hateful in a young person, though beautiful. There are clearer eyes than those of flesh, a purer light than what is sensible, a diviner beauty than what is corporeal, and a nobler love than what is sensual. David declares that *all his delight was in the excellent*. But there are allays of this spiritual love here. For,

1. There are relics of frailty in the best men on earth, some blemishes that render them less amiable when discovered. Here their graces are mixed with infirmities, and but ascending to glory. Accordingly our love to them must be regular, and serene, not clouded with error, mistaking defects for amiable qualities. But in heaven, the image of God is complete by the union of all the glorious virtues requisite to its perfection. Every saint there exactly agrees with the first exemplar, a divine beauty shines in them ever durable, a beauty that darts no contagious fire, that is inviolable and can suffer no injury. The Apostle tells us, "The church shall be glorious in holiness, without spot or wrinkle," or any thing that may cast an aspect of deformity upon it.

2. In the present state the least part of the saints worth is visible. As the earth is fruitful in plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metals, and the veins of marble hidden in its bosom. True grace appears in sensible actions, "but its glory is within." \* The sincerity of aims, the purity of affections, the impresses of the spirit on the heart, the interior beauties of holiness, are only seen by God. Besides, such is the humility of eminent saints, that the more they abound in spiritual treasures, the less they shew. As the heavenly bodies, when in nearest conjunction with the sun, and fullest of light, make the least appearance to our sight. But all their excellencies shall then be in view, "the glory of God shall be revealed in them." And how attractive is the divine likeness to a holy eye? How will it ravish the saints to behold an immortal loveliness shining in one

\* O si animum boni viri liceret inspicere, ex magnifico placidoq; fulgentem! nonne veluti numinis occursum obstupefacti essemus? *Senec.*

another? Their love is reciprocal, proportionable to the cause of it. An equal, constant flame is preserved by pure materials. Every one is perfectly amiable, and perfectly enamoured with all. How happy is that state of love? The Psalmist breaks out in a rapture, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Love is the beauty and strength of societies, the pleasure of life. How excellent is the joy of the blessed, when the prayer of Christ shall be accomplished, that they all may be "one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." God is absolutely one in his glorious nature and will, and therefore unalterably happy: and their inviolable union in love is a ray of the essential unity between the sacred persons. There are no divisions of heart and tongues, as in this Babel; but the most perfect and sweetest concord, an eternal agreement in tempers and inclinations. There are no envious comparisons; for love that affectively transforms one into another, causes the glory of every saint to redound to the joy of all. Every one takes his share in the felicity of all, and adds to it. Such is the power of that celestial fire wherein they all burn, that it melts and mixes souls in such an entire union, that by complacence, and an intimate joy, the blessedness of all is, as it were, proper to every one; as if every one were placed in the hearts of all, and all in the heart of every one. If in the church of the first-born christians in the earthly Jerusalem, the band of charity was so strict, that it is said, the "multitude of believers were of one heart, and one soul;" how much more intimate and inseparable is the union of the saints in Jerusalem above, where every one loves another as himself? It is recorded of Alexander, that entering with Hephestion, his favorite, into the pavilion of the mother of Darius, then his prisoner, she bowed to the favorite, as having a greater appearance of majesty, thinking him to be Alexander: but advised of her error, she humbly begged his pardon. To whom the generous king replied, "You did not err, mother, this is also Alexander\*." Such was their affection, that whoever was taken of them, the other was taken in him; the less ascending in the greater, without degrading the greater in the less. This is a copy of the holy love of the blessed; but with the same difference, as between the description of a star with a coal, and its beauty in its proper aspect. And where all is love, all is delight. The act itself is its own reward. As that benign and pleasant affection is enlarged, with respect to the object, and its degrees, such is the complacence and delight that results from it. In that blessed society there is a constant receiving and returning of love and joy. And that double exercise of the saints, in the perfect circle of love, is like the pleasant labor of the bees, who all the day are flying to

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\*Non errasti, Mater, nam hic Alexander est. *Curt.* l. 3.

the gardens, and returning to their hives, and all their art is in extracting the purest spirits from fragrant flowers, and making sweet honey. O how do they rejoice and triumph in the happiness of one another? With what an unimaginable tenderness do they embrace? What reciprocations of endearments are between them? O their ravishing conversation, and sweet intercourse! for their presence together in heaven is not a silent show. In the transfiguration, Moses and Elias talked with Christ: we may understand a little of it, by the sensible complacency that is among sincere friends here. In pure amity there is a three-fold union: a union of resemblance, that is the principle of it; likeness causes love: a union of affection, that is its essence; it is said of Jonathan, that incomparable friend, "his soul was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul:" the union of conversation, that is requisite to the satisfaction of love. What an entertainment of love and joy is there in the presence and discourses of dear friends! their mutual aspects, like a chain composed of spirits luminous and active, draw and fasten their souls to one another: the felicity of love consists in their conversation. Now in heaven, whatever is pleasant in friendship is in perfection; and whatever is distasteful by men's folly and weakness is abolished. With what excellent discourses do they entertain one another? If David felt such inward pleasure from the sense of God's favors, that he could not restrain the expression of it, but invites the saints, "Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul:" certainly in heaven, the blessed with overflowing affections recount the divine benefits; the admirable methods, whereby the life of grace was begun, preserved and carried on amidst temptations; the continual succession of mercies in the time of their hopes, and the consummation of all in the time of their enjoyment. How joyfully do they concur in their thanksgivings to God for the goodness of creation; in making them reasonable creatures, capable to know, love and enjoy him, when they might have been of the lowest order in the whole spheres of being; for his compassionate care and providence over them in this world, but especially for his sovereign and singular mercy in electing them to be vessels of honor; for his powerful grace, in rescuing them from the cruel and ignominious bondage of sin; for his most free love, that justified them from all their guilt by the death of his only son, and glorified them with himself. They are never weary in this delightful exercise, but continually bless him for his "mercy that endures forever." We may judge by the saints here, when they are in a fit disposition to praise God, what fervors they feel in their united praises of him in heaven. The Psalmist in an extasy calls to all the parts of the world to join with him: "The Lord reigns, let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, let the fields be joyful, and

all that dwell therein." He desires that nature should be elevated above itself, that the dead parts be inspired with life, the insensible feel motions of joy, and those that want a voice break forth in praises, to adorn the divine triumph. With what life and alacrity will the saints in their blessed communion, celebrate the object of their love and praises? The Seraphim about the throne cried to one another, to express their zeal and joy, in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. O the unspeakable pleasure of this concert! when every soul is harmonious, and contributes his part to the full music of heaven. O could we hear but some echo of those songs wherewith the heaven of heavens resounds; some remains of those voices wherewith the saints above triumph in the praises, in the solemn adoration of the king of spirits, how would it inflame our desires to be joined with them? "Blessed are those that are in thy house, they always praise thee."

[3.] The fulness of joy in heaven is everlasting, without defect, and without end.

(1.) It is undecaying, the productive causes are conservative of it, being always equal. Those are the beatific object, and the continual fruition of it. Whilst we are here below, the sun of righteousness, as to our perception and sense, has ascensions and declinations, accesses and recesses. And our earth is not so purified, but some vapors arise that intercept his cheerful refreshing light. From hence there are alternate successions of spiritual comforts and sorrows, of doubts and filial confidence in the saints. It is a rare favor of heaven, when a humble believer in his whole course is so circumspect, as not to provoke God to appear displeased against him: when a christian (as those tutelar angels spoken of in the gospel) always beholds the face of his heavenly Father, and converses with him with a holy liberty. And what a torment the "hiding God's face" is to a deserted soul only they know who feel it. External troubles are many times attended with more consolations to the spirit, than afflictions to sense; but to love God with a transcendent affection, and to fear he is our enemy, no punishment exceeds, or is equal to it. As his loving kindness in their esteem is better than life, so his displeasure is worse than death. How do they wrestle with God by prayers and tears, and offer, as it were, a holy violence to the King of heaven, to recover their first serenity of mind, the lost peace of heart? how passionately do they cry out with Job in the book of his patience, O that I were as in months past as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, when by his light I walked through Darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle! Job. 29. 2, 3. And sometimes God delays the revealing himself even to his dearest children; not that he does not see their necessities, and hear their prayers, or is so

hard, that till their extremities he is not moved with compassion, but for wise and holy reasons: either "that they may not return to folly," if by any presumptuous sin they forfeited their peace; or if they have been careful to please him, yet he may deprive them of spiritual comforts for a time, to keep them humble, and that with an obedient resignation to his sovereign pleasure they may wait for his reviving presence. And then joy returns greater than before: for thus God usually renders with interest, what he suspended only for trial. But the saints above are forever enlightened with the vital splendor, and dear regards of his countenance, always enjoy his beamy smiles. A continual effusion of glory illustrates heaven and all its blessed inhabitants.

And their contemplation of God is fixed. If the object, though extraordinarily glorious, were transient, or the eye so weak, that it could only see it but by glances, the height of joy would not be perpetual. But the mind is prepared with supernatural vigor, to see the brightness of God's face, and by the most attentive application always converses with that blessed object: so that the joy of heaven is never intermitted for a moment. They always see, and love, and rejoice, and praise him.

It is possible a carnal suspicion may arise in some, as if the uniform perpetual vision of the same glory might lose its perfect delightfulness. For those who seek for happiness in the vanity of the creatures, are always desirous of change, and have their judgments so corrupted, that while they languish with a secret desire after an unchangeable God, yet they conceive no God as desirable, that is not changed.

But to correct this gross error of fancy, let us a little inquire into the causes of dissatisfaction, that make the constant fruition of the same thing here to be tedious.

1. Sensible things are of such a limited goodness, that not any of them can supply all our present wants, so that it is necessary to leave one for another. And the most of them are remedies of our diseased appetites, and if not temperately used, are destructive evils. Eating and drinking are to extinguish hunger and thirst, but continued beyond just measure, become nauseous. Besides the insufficiency of their objects, the senses themselves cannot be satisfied all at once. The ear cannot attend to delightful sounds, and the eye be intent on beautiful colors at the same time. The satisfaction of one sense defeats another of enjoying its proper good; therefore the same object is not constantly pleasant, but the heart is distempered from as many causes, as there are desires accomplished. And farther, all things under the sun afford only a superficial delight, and miserably deceive the expectations raised of them: and many times there is a mixture of some evil in them, that is more offensive than the good is delightful. The honey is attended with a sting, so that often those very things we sigh after through vehement desire, when

they are obtained, we sigh for grief. Now all these causes of dissatisfaction cease in heaven; \*for there is an infinite variety in God, and whatever is truly desirable, is eminently enjoyed in him. And in his presence all the powers of the soul are drawn out in their most pleasant exercise, always enjoy their entire happiness. The fruition of him exceeds our most raised hopes, as much as he is more glorious in himself, than in any borrowed representations. God will be to us incomparably "above what we can ask or think." The compass of our thoughts, the depth of our desires are imperfect measures of his perfections. And as he is a pure good in himself, so he is prevalent over all evil. It is evident therefore, that nothing can allay the joys of saints, when they are in God's presence.

2. Novelty is not requisite to ingratiate every good, and make it perfectly delightful. God †is infinitely happy, to whom no good was ever new. It is indeed the sauce that gives a delicious taste to inferior things. For men relish only what is eminent; and the good things of this world are so truly mean, that they are fain to borrow a shew of greatness, by comparison with a worse estate preceding. But an infinite good produces always the same pure, equal, complete joy, because it arises from its intrinsic perfection, that wants no foil to command it. The Psalmist breaks forth, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" This is no vanishing rapture, but a constant joyful height of affection. God, the essential happiness of the saints, is always perfectly lovely and delightful to them.

3. The glorified saints in every period of their happy state, have as lively a perception of it as in the beginning. To make this evident, we must consider that the pleasure of novelty springs from a quick sense of the opposite terms, between our condition in the want of some desired good, and after obtaining it. Now the mind is more intense on the advantage, and more strongly affected at first. One newly freed from the torments of a sharp disease, feels a greater pleasure than from a constant tenor of health. Those who are raised from a low state to eminent dignity, are transported with their first change; but in tract of time, the remembrance of their mean condition is so weakened and spent, that it is like the shadow of a dream, and proportionably their joy is lessened. Honors, like perfumes, by custom, are less sensible to those that carry them. But the saints above always consider and feel the excellent difference between

\* Vitæ nos tædium tenet timor mortis, natat omne consilium, nec implere nos ulla fælicitas potest. Causa autem est, quod non pervenimus ad illud bonum immensum et insuperabile, ubi necesse est, consistat nobis voluntas nostra, quia ultra summum non est locus. *Senec. Ep. 74.*

† *Ἐὶ ἡ φύσις ἀπλή ἐστὶν, ἡ ἀτυτὴ πρᾶξις ἡ δὲ εὐχὴ ἐξαι. Διὸ ὁ Θεὸς αἰεὶ μίαν καὶ ἀπλήν χαίρει ἡ δὸνῆν.* *Arist. Eth. 1. 7. c. ult.*



their suffering and triumphant state. They never lose that ravishing part of felicity, the vivid sense of past evils. Their reflections are always as strong on the misery from whence they were raised to the pitch of happiness, as in their first glorious translation. In what an extasy of wonder and pleasure will they be, from the fresh memory of what they were, and the joyful sense of what they are? I was (says the admiring soul) poor, blind, and naked; but, O miraculous and happy alteration! I am full of light, enriched with the treasures of heaven, adorned with divine glory. I was under the tyrannous power of Satan, "but he is bruised under my feet." I was sentenced to an everlasting separation from the presence of God, my only life and joy; but now am possessed of my supreme good. O how transporting is the comparison of these wide and contrary extremes? How beautiful and pleasant is the day of eternity, after such a dark tempestuous night! How does the remembrance of such evils produce a more lively and feeling fruition of such happiness! How strangely and mightily does salvation with eternal glory affect the soul! This gives a sprightly accent to their everlasting hallelujahs: this preserves an affectionate heat in their thanksgivings to their victorious deliverer. And thus their happiness is always the same, and always new. Their pleasure is continued in its perfection.

## CHAPTER VII.

The number of possessors of heaven cannot lessen its felicity. The blessedness of the saints is without end. In the first creation, the happiness of angels and men was mutable. The happiness in heaven as unchangeable as the love of God to the saints, and the love of the saints to him. The woful folly of men in refusing such a happiness. An excitation to seek this happiness. The original moving cause of conferring this happiness, is the mercy of God: the meritorious cause, is the obedience and passion of Christ. It is impossible for an innocent creature, much more for the fallen creature, to deserve any good thing from God. Our Saviour expiated the guilt of sin, and by the merits of his obedience purchased the kingdom of heaven for believers.

The number of possessors cannot lessen their felicity. The divine presence is an unwasted spring of pleasure, equally full and open to all, and abundantly sufficient to satisfy the immensity of their desires. Envy reigns in this world, because earthly things are so imperfect in their nature, and so peculiar in their possession, that they cannot suffice, nor be enjoyed by all. But

in heaven none is touched with that base, low passion : for God contains all that is precious and desirable in the highest degrees of perfection, and all partake of his universal goodness, without intercepting one another. In the kingdom of heaven there is no cause for the elder brother to repine at the father's bounty to the younger, nor for the younger to supplant the elder to obtain the birthright. "The heirs of God" are all raised to sovereign glory ; and every one enjoys him as entirely and fully, as if solely his felicity. God is a *good*, as *indivisible*, as *infinite*, and not diminished by the most liberal communications of himself. We may illustrate this, by comparing the price of our redemption, and the reward. The death of Christ is a universal benefit to all the saints ; yet it is so applied to every believer for his perfect redemption, as if our Saviour in all his agonies and sufferings had no other in his eye and heart ; as if all his prayers, his tears, his blood, were offered up to his father only for that person. The common respect of it the Apostle declares in those admirable words, that signify such an excess of God's love to us : "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?" But to imagine that the \* propriety of every believer is thereby prejudiced, is not only false, but extremely injurious to the merit and dignity, and to the infinite love of Christ. Therefore the same Apostle tells us, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me ;" as if he were the sole object of Christ's love, the end and reward of his sufferings. And this appropriating of it to himself, is no prejudice to the rights of all others : St. John describes himself by that truly glorious title, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Could he speak this of himself, without the injury and indignation of the other disciples ? Certainly he might. For if we consider that incomprehensible love of Christ, expressed to them all at his last supper, after Judas was gone forth ; "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you ;" we may easily understand, that every one of them might justly believe that he was singularly beloved of Christ. They were all received in the heart, though (with John) they did not all lean on the breast of their divine master. Thus in heaven God is the universal treasure of all the saints, and the peculiar portion of every one ; not engrossed by possessing, nor wasted by enjoying. † As by his essence he equally fills the

\* Et totum se dedit universis, et totum singulis. Ac per hoc quicquid passionis sua Salvator præstitit, sicut totum ei debent universi, sic singuli ; nisi quod prope hoc plus singuli quam universi, quod totum acceperunt singuli, quantum universi. *Salvian.*

† Si audiat multitudo silens, non inter se particulatim comminuunt sonos, tanquam cibos ; sed omne quod sonat et omnibus totum est, et singulis totum. *August. in Ep. ad Volusian.*

whole world, and every part of it, and by his providence equally regards all and every particular creature; so in heaven he dispenses the riches of his love to all, that they cannot desire more, if every one of them were the sole heir of all the merits of his son, and enjoy him alone forever.

(2.) The blessedness of the saints, as it is without diminution, so it is without end: it is complete and continual forever. This makes heaven to be heaven; the security is as valuable as the felicity. There is no satiety of the present, no solicitude for the future. Were there a possibility, or the least suspicion of losing that happy state, it would cast an aspersion of bitterness upon all their delights: it would disturb their peaceful fruition, and joyful tranquility: as hope in misery allays sorrow, so fear in happiness dashes joy; and the more excellent the happiness is, the more stinging would be the fear of losing it: "But the inheritance reserved in heaven, is immortal, undefiled, and fades not away." And the tenure of their possession is infinitely firm, by the promise of God, who is truly immutable, and immutably true; and by the divine power, the support of their everlasting duration. Our Saviour assures his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" and "he lives for evermore." This blessed privilege the saints have by Jesus Christ, (who obtained eternal redemption for them) above the grace given to angels and men in the first creation. The angels were upon trial of their obedience, not in a determined state of felicity: the first declination of love and subjection was fatal to them. Woful change! How unlike to themselves in their original purity and glory! An unparalleled example of the frailty of the creature, and the divine severity. Man did stand in paradise for a little while, and had a ruinous fall with all his progeny: "But the glorified saints sit with Christ in heavenly places," and enjoy an unchangeable happiness, as permanent as the everlasting author of it, and the everlasting soul, the subject of it. *With God is the fountain of life*: who can pluck them out of the hands and bosom of a gracious God? He will never withdraw his love, and they shall never forfeit it. For sin is from the perverseness of the will, and the disorder of the affections, joined with some error of the mind: but in the light of glory, and full enjoyment of God, the understanding is so perfectly illuminated, the will and affections so exceedingly satisfied, that it is impossible they should apprehend erroneously, or desire irregularly. God is love, and will kindle in the saints a pure affection, that eternity shall not lessen. In the present state our love is imperfect, and, as fire out of its sphere, dies away by our neglect to feed it by proper materials, enamouring considerations of God: but in heaven, the uncreated sun attracts every eye with the light of his beauty, and inflames every heart with the heat of his love. The glorious presence of God is in different respects the cause and effect

of our love to him ; for the sight of God is the most powerful attractive to love him, and love fixes the mind upon him. And the persevering love of God assures the constant fruition of him : for by love the supreme good is possessed and enjoyed. The Apostle tells us, *Charity never fails*, and therefore the happiness of heaven never fails. They enjoy a better immortality, than the tree of life could have preserved in Adam. The revolutions of the heavens, and ages, are under their feet, and cannot in the least alter or determine their happiness. After the passing of millions of years, still an entire eternity remains of their enjoying God. O most desirable state ! where blessedness and eternity are inseparably united. O joyful harmony ! when the full chorus of heaven shall sing, " This God is our God forever and ever." This adds an infinite weight to their glory. This redoubles their joys with infinite sweetness and security : for the direct pleasure of enjoying God, is attended with the pleasant reflection it shall continue forever. They repose themselves in the complete fruition of their happiness. God reigns in the saints, and they live in him forever. Eternity crowns and consummates their felicity.

### THE APPLICATION.

From what has been discoursed, we should,

Consider the woful folly of men in refusing such a happiness, that by the admirable favor of God is offered to their choice. Can there be an expectation, or desire, or capacity in man of enjoying a happiness beyond what is infinite and eternal ? O blind and wretched world ! so careless of everlasting felicity. Who can behold, without compassion and indignation, men vainly seeking for happiness where it is not to be found, and (after innumerable disappointments) flying at an impossibility, and neglect their sovereign and final blessedness ? An error in the first inquiry might have some color of an excuse ; but having been so often deceived with painted grapes for the fruits of paradise, that men should still seek for substantial blessedness to fill the soul, in vain shows that can only feed the eye, is beyond all degrees of folly. Astonishing madness ! that God and heaven should be despised, in comparison of painted trifles. This adds the greatest contumely to their impiety. What powerful charm obstructs their true judging of things ? What spirit of error possesses them ? Alas, *eternal things are unseen* ! not of conspicuous moment, and therefore in the carnal balance are esteemed light, against temporal things present to the sense. " It does not appear what we shall be : " the veil of the visible heavens covers the sanctuary where JESUS our high priest is entered, and stops the inquiring eye.

But have we not assurance by the most infallible principles of faith, that the Son of God came down from heaven to live with us, and die for us, and that he rose again to confirm our belief, in his "exceeding great and precious promises" concerning this happiness in the future state? And do not the most evident principles of reason and universal experience prove, that this world cannot afford true happiness to us? How wretchedly do we forfeit the prerogative of the reasonable nature, by neglecting our last and blessed end? If the mind be darkened, that it does not see the amiable excellencies of God, and the will be depraved, that it does not feel their ravishing power; the man ceases to be a man, and becomes like the beasts that perish. As a blind eye is no longer an eye, being absolutely useless to that end for which it was made. And though in this present state men are stupid and unconcerned, yet hereafter their misery will awaken them, to discover what is that supreme good wherein their perfection and felicity consists. When their folly shall be exposed before God, angels and saints, in what extreme confusion will they appear before that glorious and immense theatre? Our Saviour told the unbelieving Jews, "There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth; when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves turned out." They shall be tortured with the desire of happiness, without possible satisfaction. It is most just, that those who err without excuse, should repent without remedy.

Let us be seriously excited to apply ourselves with inflamed desires, and our utmost diligence, to obtain this unchangeable happiness: in order to this, we shall consider the causes of it, and the means whereby it is obtained.

The original moving cause, is the pure rich mercy of God, that prepared it for his people, and prepares them for it. The procuring cause, is the meritorious efficacy declared by the Apostle; "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

1. The designing, the preparation, and actual bestowing of the heavenly glory, is from the mercy of God. This will appear by considering,

(1.) That it is absolutely impossible that a mere creature, though perfect, should deserve any thing from God: for enjoying its being and powers of working from his goodness, the product of all is entirely due to him; and the payment of a debt acquires no title to a reward: he is the proprietary and Lord of all by creation. Hence it is clear, that in the order of distributive justice, nothing can be challenged from him.

(2.) Besides, such is the infinite perfection of God in himself, that no benefit can redound to him by the service of the creature: "When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants; for we have done but what we ought to do." The neg-

lect of our duty justly exposes to punishment; but the performance of it deserves no reward, because no advantage accrues to God by it: "Who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" He challenges all creatures, even of the highest order. To speak strictly therefore, when God crowns the angels with glory, he gives what is merely his own, and does not render what is theirs. If he should leave them in their pure nature, or deprive them of the being, he were no loser, nor injurious to them: for what law binds him to enrich them with immortal glory, who are no ways profitable to him, or to preserve that being they had from his unexcited goodness? No creature can give to him; therefore none can receive from him, by way of valuable consideration.

(3.) There is no proportion between the best works of men, and the excellency of the reward, much less an equivalence. It was the just and humble acknowledgment of Jacob to God, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies;" those that common providence dispenses for the support and refreshment of this temporal life; but how much less than the glorious excellencies of the supernatural divine life, wherein the saints reign with God forever? The most costly, the most difficult and hazardous services are equally nothing in point of merit, with the giving but "a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ," there being no correspondence in value between them and the kingdom of heaven. The Apostle tells us, "I count the sufferings of this present life are not to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us:" and suffering is more than doing. God rewards his faithful servants, not according to the dignity of their works, but his own liberality and munificence. As Alexander having ordered fifty talents of gold to be given to a gentleman in poverty to supply his want; and he surprised with that immense bounty, modestly said, ten were enough: he replied, "If fifty are too much for you to receive, ten are too little for me to give; therefore do you receive as poor, I will give as a king." Thus God, in the dispensing his favors, does not respect the meanness of our persons or services, but gives to us as a God. And the clearest notion of the Deity is, that he is a being infinite in all perfections, therefore all-sufficient, and most willing to make his creatures completely happy.

(4.) If a creature perfectly holy, that never sinned, is incapable to merit any thing from God, much less can those who are born in a sinful state, and guilty of innumerable actual transgressions, pretend to deserve any reward for their works. This were presumption, inspired by prodigious vanity. For,

1. By his most free grace they are restored in conversion to that spiritual power by which they serve him. The chaos was not a deader lump before the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, than the best of men were before the vital influ-

ences of the spirit wrought upon them : and for this they are so deeply obliged to God, that if a thousand times more for his glory were performed, yet they cannot discharge what they owe.

2. The continuance and increase of the powerful supplies of grace to the saints, who even since their holy calling by many lapses have justly deserved that God should withdraw his grieved Spirit, are new obligations to thankfulness ; and the more grace, the less merit.

3. The best works of men are imperfect, allayed with the mixtures of infirmities, and not of full weight in the divine balance. If God should strictly examine our righteousness, it will be found neither pure nor perfect in his eyes, and without favor and indulgence would be rejected. And that which wants pardon, cannot deserve praise and glory. "He shews mercy to thousands that love him, and keep his commandments." If obedience were meritorious, it were strict justice to reward them. The Apostle prays for Onesiphorus, who had exposed himself to great danger for his love to the gospel ; "The Lord grant he may find mercy in that day." The divine mercy gives the crown of life to the faithful in the day of eternal recompense.

II. The meritorious cause of our obtaining heaven, is the obedience of Jesus Christ, comprehending all that he did and suffered to reconcile God to us. From him, as the eternal word, we have all benefits in the order of nature ; "for all things were made by him," and for him, as the incarnate word, all good things in the order of grace. What we enjoy in time, and expect in eternity, is by him. To shew what influence his mediation has to make us happy, we must consider,

1. Man by his rebellion justly forfeited his happiness, and the law exacts precisely the forfeiture. Pure justice requires the crime should be punished according to its quality, much less will it suffer the guilty to enjoy the favor of God : for sin is not to be considered as an offence and injury to a private person, but the violation of a law, and a disturbance in the order of government : so that to preserve the honor of governing justice, an equivalent reparation was appointed. Till sin was expiated by a proper sacrifice, the divine goodness was a sealed spring, and its blessed effects restrained from the guilty creature. Now the Son of God in our assumed nature offered up himself a sacrifice, in our stead, to satisfy divine justice, and removed the bar, that mercy might be glorified in our salvation. The Apostle gives this account of it ; We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, Heb. 10. 19. 20.

2. Such were the most precious merits of his obedience, that it was not only sufficient to free the guilty contaminated race of mankind from hell, but to purchase for them the kingdom of

heaven. If we consider his human nature, all graces were born with him, as rays with the sun, and shined in the whole course of his life in the excellence of perfection. And the dignity of his divine person derived an immense value to all he performed as mediator. One act of his obedience was more honorable to God, than all the lives of the saints, the deaths of the martyrs, and the service of the angels. God was more pleased in the obedience of his beloved Son, than he was provoked by the rebellion of his servants. Therefore, as the just recompense of it, he constituted him to be universal head of the church, supreme judge of the world; invested him with divine glory, and with power to communicate it to his faithful servants: "He is the Prince of life." In short, it is as much upon the account of Christ's sufferings that we are glorified, as that we are forgiven. The wounds he received in his body, the characters of ignominy, and footsteps of death, are the fountains of our glory. His abasement is the cause of our exaltation.

If it be said, this seems to lessen the freeness of this gift, the answer is clear:

This was due to Christ but undeserved by us. Besides, the appointing his son to be our Mediator in the way of our ransom, was the most glorious work of his goodness.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The gospel requires qualifications in all that shall obtain the kingdom of heaven. The renovation of man according to the likeness of God, is indispensably requisite for the enjoying of God. Renewing grace described. The wisdom and justice of God requires that men be sanctified before they are admitted into heaven. Without sanctification, there is a moral incapacity of enjoying the beatific vision.

The means of our obtaining heaven are to be considered. Though the divine goodness be free in its acts, and there can be nothing in the creature of merit, or inducement to prevail upon God in the nature of a cause, yet he requires qualifications in all those who shall enjoy that blessed unchangeable kingdom. The Apostle expressly declares, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that sheweth mercy, Rom. 9. 16. But we must distinguish the effects of this mercy, which are dispensed in that order the gospel lays down. The first mercy is the powerful calling the sinner from his corrupt and wretched state; a second mercy is the pardoning his sins; the last and most eminent is the glorifying him in heaven. Now it is clear, that in



this place the shewing of his mercy, signifies the preventing grace of God in conversion; for in the 18th verse it is said, God shews mercy "to whom he will, and whom he will he hardens." Where it is evident that *shewing mercy* is opposed not to condemning but to *hardening*; and consequently the intent of the words is this, that divine grace overcomes the rebellious will, softens the stiff and stubborn heart, and makes it pliant to obedience. This flows from his pure good will and pleasure, without the least motive from the inclinations or endeavors of sinful men. But the other effects of God's mercy require conditions in the subjects that receive them: for he pardons only penitent believers, and glorifies none but persevering saints.

To make this clear, it is worthy of observation, the gospel has several denominations. It is called *a law*, *a covenant*, and *a testament*, Rom. 3. 27. 1. It is called *the law of faith*, and *the law of the spiritual life*. As a law, it signifies a new right that God has most freely established in favor of lost man, that commands certain duties, and sets before them eternal life as the reward of obedience, and eternal death to the punishment of disobedience. According to this the trial and decision of men's everlasting states shall be, which is the character of a true law. This law of grace is very different from the law of nature, that required entire innocence, and for the least omission, or accusing act, passed an irrevocable doom upon the offenders; for that strictness and severity is mollified by the gospel, which accepts of sincere persevering obedience though imperfect; accordingly it is called *the law of liberty*, James 2. But *the law of faith* is unalterable, and admits of no dispensation from the duties required in order to our being everlastingly happy.

2. The gospel is styled *a covenant* and that imports a reciprocal engagement between parties for the performance of the matter contained in it. The covenant of grace includes the promise of pardoning and rewarding mercy on God's part, and the conditions on man's, with respect to which it is to be performed. There is an inviolable dependence between them. He will be our God to make us happy, but we must be his people to yield unreserved obedience to him, Heb. 9. He will be our Father, and we shall be his sons and daughters; but it is upon the terms of purifying ourselves from all pollutions of the flesh and spirit, and unfeigned endeavors to perfect holiness in his fear, 2. Cor. 7. It is astonishing goodness, that he is pleased to condescend to such a treaty with fallen creatures: by a voluntary promise he encourages them; but though most free in making, it is conditional in performance. The constancy of his holy nature obliges him to fulfil his word, but it is if we do not fail on our part by carelessness of our duty. A presumer may seal assurance to himself, and be deceived in this great matter; but "God will not be mocked." If we prove false in the covenant, he will be

faithful, and exclude those from heaven that were neglectful of the conditions to which it is promised.

3. The gospel is styled, *a testament* sealed in the blood of Christ, confirmed by his death. The donation of eternal blessings in it, is not absolute and irrespective, but the heirs are admitted to the possession of the inheritance according to the will of the rich, liberal, and wise testator. There can be no regular title or claim made out without performing what is required. And this "is the will of God and Christ, our sanctification," without which we cannot enjoy it.

Now from hence we may see the admirable agreement between these two notions, that heaven is a gift, and a reward. It is a reward in the order of giving it, not due to the work, but from the bounty of the giver. God gives heaven to those that faithfully serve him. But their service was due to God, of no worth in respect of heaven; so that man's work is no merit, and God's reward is a gift. Our everlasting glory must be ascribed to his most free grace, as much as the pardon of our sins.

I shall now proceed to consider, what the gospel declares to be indispensably requisite in order to our obtaining heaven: this is comprised in the holy change of man's nature, which I will briefly unfold, and shew how necessary it is to qualify us for celestial glory.

1. This holy change is expressed in scripture by the new birth. Our Saviour, with a solemn repeated asseveration, tells Nicodemus; verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, John 3. 3. Sin is natural to man from his conception and birth, and infects with its contagion all his faculties. This is fomented and cherished by temptations that easily encompass him. The understanding is polluted with evil principles, full of strong prejudices, and lofty imaginations against the supernatural mysteries of salvation. It is full of ignorance and folly, and from hence either rejects them as incredible, or despises them as impertinent or unprofitable. The will is depraved and perverse, full of unruly and unhallowed affections. The senses are luxurious and rebellious. In short, man is so viciously and sensually inclined, so "alienated from the life of God," as if he had no diviner part within him, that should aspire to a spiritual blessedness, that should regulate and control the excess of the inferior appetites. This is the unhappy character Satan impressed on him in his fall, and without renovation upon an infinite account he is incapable of seeing God. This renovation consists not in the change of his substance, as the water was miraculously turned into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: The same soul with its essential-powers, the same body with its natural senses, the work of the creator, remains; but in the cleansing of his stained nature, in the sanctifying his faculties that are the springs of his actions, the whole man is

quicken into a divine life, and enabled to act in conformity to it. And of this the new birth is a convenient illustration. An active principle of holiness is planted in him, that springs up into visible actions. The Apostle particularly expresses it in his earnest prayer for the Thessalonians: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole spirit, soul and body blameless, till the coming of Jesus Christ." Every faculty is renewed, and every grace infused that constitutes the divine image. The mind is renewed by spiritual light, to believe the truth and goodness of unseen things promised, the reality and dreadfulness of things threatened in the word of God. It sees the truest beauty in holiness, the highest honor in obedience to God, the greatest equity and excellence in his service. The will is renewed by holy love, a purifying flame, and feels the attractive virtue of our blessed end before all desirable things on earth, and determines to pursue it in the vigorous use of proper means. The body is made a holy instrument fit for the renewed soul. In short, the natural man becomes spiritual in his perceptions, resolutions and actions. "All things are become new." There is a firm assent, an inviolable adherence to those most precious objects revealed in the scripture, and a sincere chosen constant obedience flows from the renewed faculties. And from hence we may distinguish between regenerating grace, and formal hypocrisy in some, and the proficiency of nature and power of common grace in others. A hypocrite in religion is acted from without, by mercenary base respects; and his conscience being cauterized, handles sacred things without feeling: a regenerate person is moved by an internal living principle, and performs his duties with lively affections. Natural conscience under the compulsion of fear, may lay a restraint upon the outward acts of sin, without an inward consent to the sanctity of the law. Renewing grace cleanses the fountain, and the current is pure. It reconciles the affections to the most holy commands, "I love thy law because it is pure," saith the Psalmist.

A moral principle may induce one to abstain from sins, and to perform many praise-worthy things in conformity to reason. But this is neither sanctifying nor saving; for it only prunes sin as if it were a good plant, and does not root it up; it compounds with it, and does not destroy it. There may be still an impure indulgence to the secret lustings of the heart, notwithstanding the restraint upon their exercise. And many duties may be done on lower motives, without a divine respect to the commands and glory of God.

But renewing grace subjects the soul to the whole royalty of the law, uniformly inclines it to express obedience to all its precepts, because they are pure, and derived from the eternal spring of purity. It mortifies concupiscence, and quickens to every good work, from a principle of love to God, and in this is

distinguished from the most refined unregenerate morality. In short, there may be a superficial tincture of religion from common grace, a transient esteem, vanishing affections, and earnest endeavors for a time after spiritual things, and yet a person remain in a state of unregeneracy. But renewing grace is a permanent solid principle, that makes a man "partaker of the divine nature," and elevates him above himself.

This holy change is wrought by divine power. Our Saviour tells Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The analogy of a new birth signifies, that it is entirely the work of the sanctifying Spirit, that conveys a principle of life in order to the functions of it. It is the living impression of God, the sole efficient and exemplar of it, the fruit and image of the divine virtues. It is expressed by the *new creature*. The production of it is attributed to God's power displaying itself in a peculiar excellent way, even in that precise manner, as in making the world. For as in the first creation all things were made originally of nothing, so in the second, the habit of grace is infused into the soul that was utterly void of it, and in which there was as little preparation for true holiness, as of nothing to produce this great and regular world. And although there is not only an absolute privation of grace, but a fierce resistance against it; yet creating invincible power does as infallibly and certainly produce its effect in forming the new creature, as in making the world. From hence it appears, that preventing renewing grace is so entirely the work of God, as his forming the human body from the dust of earth at first; but with this difference, the first creation was done without any sense in the subject, of the efficiency of the divine power in producing it: but in the new creation, man feels the vital influence of the spirit, applying itself to all his faculties, reforming and enabling them to act according to the quality of their nature.

And by the way, we may observe the admirable grace shewed to man in the renovation of his corrupted nature. In the composition of his being are united a spirit like the angels, and a body like terrestrial animals, by which he partakes of the spiritual and natural life: but he has peculiar favors conferred upon him. For, whereas his soul sinned with the angels, and his body dies with the beasts, yet God is pleased to restore them by his glorious power. An angel after sin never repents, and is therefore incapable of pardon, and irrecoverably disinherited of heaven: a beast after death never revives; but though man sins and dies, yet his soul may be renewed by divine grace, and his body shall be raised in an incorruptible glory.

Now the indispensable necessity of this holy change is evident from the words of our Saviour, for he speaks universally, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* He

does not simply declare that an unregenerate man shall not, but with the greatest emphasis, *cannot*, to signify an absolute impossibility of it. The Jews highly presumed of the privilege of their carnal birth, they sprang from the pure and noble blood of Abraham, God's friend; they had the seal of the holy covenant marked in their flesh: and hence it was proverbial amongst them, that every Israelite should have a part in the world to come. But our Saviour overthrows this vain conceit, and tells them, that the supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance. Circumcision then, and baptism now, without real grace, is an ineffectual sign, of no avail to salvation. In the quality of sons, we are heirs of God's kingdom, Rom. 8. 17. And that honorable relation we have upon a double account, by adoption and regeneration, Gal. 4. 7. Divine adoption is not a mere change of our state, a naked declaration that one shall be dignified with the title of God's Son; but a holy nature is always infused into the person, whereby he is made like to God in his excellencies. In this it differs from human adoption, that gives the name and arms, the honor and estate of the adopter to a person, without conveying any of his intellectual or moral endowments. Whom God adopts, he begets to a divine life. Besides, our Saviour purchased this high privilege for us: "God sent his son made of a woman, under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons:" by union with him we receive the investiture of this dignity. "Now whoever is in Christ, is a new creature." For the quickening spirit, that is to the soul what the soul is to the body, the principle of life and strength, of beauty and motion, and an active purifying faith that is influential upon all other graces, are the band of that vital union: so that as all in Adam are universally corrupt by the first birth, all that are in Christ are made holy by a new birth. But of this I shall speak in the next chapter more fully, under a distinct head. Briefly, the spirit of grace that sanctifies, is the spirit of adoption that seals our right to that kingdom.

Now the reasons why this change must be in order to our obtaining of heaven, are these:

1. There is an exquisite wisdom shines in all God's works, in disposing them for the ends to which they are appointed: and is it not monstrously absurd to imagine, he will admit into his presence and kingdom those that are absolutely unqualified for its blessedness, and opposite to its purity?

2. His invariable justice excludes forever all unholy persons from heaven. For in the last judgment God will be glorified as a governor, in the distribution of rewards with respect to the obedience and disobedience of men. It is worthy of observation, that the actions of God on the reasonable creatures are of two sorts. Some proceed from his sovereign good pleasure, of which there is no motive or reason in the subjects on which they are

terminated. Thus by a free and insuperable decree (when all mankind, lapsed and miserable, was in his view) he chose some to be "vessels of mercy," and by privilege separated them from the rest that finally perish. Now what induced him to place a singular love on the elect? There was nothing in them to incline his compassion, being equally guilty and depraved with the rest of the progeny of Adam. This difference therefore is to be resolved into his unaccountable and adorable will, as the sole cause of it. Thus God declares it to be his glorious prerogative, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And this is no unjust acceptance of persons: for as a benefactor, he may dispense his own favors as he pleases. A gift from mere and arbitrary bounty may be bestowed on some, and not on others, without injustice. But there are other actions of God, for which there is an evident reason in men on whom they are terminated. Thus, as the supreme judge, without respect of persons, 1 Pet. 1. 17. he will judge and reward every man according to his works, Rom. 2. 16. Acts 26. 18. The evangelical law (as was touched on before) is the rule of eternal judgment, and gives a right from the gracious promise of God to all penitent believers in the kingdom of heaven, and excludes all impenitent infidels. Divine justice will illustriously appear then, in distinguishing believers from unbelievers by their works, the proper fruits either of faith or infidelity: all the thick clouds of disgraces, calumnies, persecutions, that often oppress the most sincere christians here, shall not then darken their holiness; and all the specious appearances of piety, which the most artificial hypocrites make use of to deceive others, shall not conceal their wickedness. And accordingly the one shall be absolved and glorified, the others condemned and punished forever. In short, without violation of his own righteous establishment in the gospel, God cannot receive the unholy into his glory, Heb. 12. 14.

3. Besides the legal bar that excludes unsanctified persons from the beatific vision of God, there is a moral incapacity. Suppose that justice should allow Omnipotence to translate such a sinner to heaven, would the place make him happy? Can two incongruous natures delight in one another? The happiness of sense is by an impression of pleasure from a suitable object: The happiness of intellectual beings arises from an entire conformity of dispositions. So that unless God recede from his holiness, which is absolutely impossible, or man be purified, and changed into his likeness, there can be no sweet communion between them. Our Saviour assigns this reason of the necessity of regeneration in order to our admission into heaven: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit." According to the quality of the principle, such is what proceeds from it. The flesh is a corrupt principle, and accordingly the natural man is wholly

carnal in his propensions, operations and end. The disease is turned into his constitution. He is dead to the spiritual life, to the actions and enjoyments that are proper to it: Nay, there is in him a surviving principle of enmity to that life; not only a mortal coldness to God, but a stiff aversation from him, a perpetual resistance and impatience of the divine presence, that would disturb his voluptuous enjoyments. The exercises of heaven would be as the torments of hell to him, while in the midst of those pure joys his inward inclinations vehemently run into the lowest lees of sensuality. And therefore till this contrariety, so deep and predominant in an unholy person, be removed, it is utterly impossible he should enjoy God with satisfaction. As it was necessary that God should become like man on earth, to purchase that felicity for him, so man must be like God in heaven, before he can possess it. Holiness alone prepares men for celestial happiness; that is against the corruption, and above the perfection of mere nature.

I shall now proceed to consider more particularly what is requisite in order to our obtaining of heaven.

## CHAPTER IX.

Faith in the Redeemer is indispensably required of all that will partake of salvation. Heaven must be chosen as our supreme happiness, and sought as our last end. The choice of heaven must be sincere, early, firm and constant. The sincerity of the choice discovered by the zealous use of means to obtain it. The sincerity of the choice will regulate our judgments and affections, with respect to temporal things that are so far good or evil to us as they conduct or divert us from heaven. The sincere choice of heaven will make us aspire to the highest degrees of holiness we are capable of in the present state. The vanity of the hopes of the lukewarm in religion discovered.

1. Faith in the redeemer is absolutely required of all that will partake of the salvation purchased by him. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life, John 3. 16. This is the spirit and substance of the gospel, therefore I will briefly unfold it. The Son of God having assumed the human nature, and performed what was necessary for the expiation of sin, Phil. 2. 8, 9. the Father was so pleased with his obedience, that from his lowest state he raised him to divine glory, and gave him supreme authority, and all-sufficient power to communicate that glory, to others. Thus our Saviour declares;

Thou hast given him (i. e. the Son) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, John 17. 2. And he exhorts the people, labor for that meat that endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed, John 6. Now this glorious life is not given to all, but only to those who are united to him. As Adam, the principle of the carnal corrupt nature, derives guilt and death to all his progeny: so Jesus Christ (who is opposed to him) the head and prince of the renewed state, communicates life and glory to his people. The Apostle expresses it, As in Adam all die (his natural descendants are involved in his condemnation) even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. 15. 22. that is, all that are spiritually united to him, shall partake of his glorious resurrection. And St. John tells us, He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 John 5. 12. The having the Son, upon which our right to eternal life depends, is believing in him. Faith has a principal efficacy in receiving Christ, therefore it is expressed by that act, But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, John 1. 12. (and consequently heirs of glory) to as many as believed on his name. And Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith, Eph. 3. 17. This is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the gospel concerning the dignity of his person, that he is in so high and glorious a relation of being the eternal Son of God, and the infinite value of his merits, whereby he is able to save all that come unto God by him, and his merciful compassionate nature to embrace returning sinners, and the excellency of the benefits purchased by him; but such a belief as sways the will and affections to receive him upon God's terms for our salvation. Faith is seated in the whole soul, in the mind and heart, and accepts of Christ entirely as prophet, priest, and king. The parts of the Mediator's office are inseparably connected, and all the effects of them are communicated to the same persons. "Jesus Christ is made of God to believers, wisdom," to cure their ignorance and folly; *righteousness*, to abolish their guilt; *sanctification*, to renew their natures; and *redemption*, to free them at last from the grave, and bring them to glory, 1 Cor. 1. From hence it is clear, that the faith which is justifying and saving, includes in its nature, as dependence and trust in Christ, as a powerful and merciful Mediator, that is able and willing to reconcile us to God, and make us forever happy in his favor; so a sincere resolution of obedience and subjection to all his holy commands, even to the plucking out of the right eye, and the cutting off the right hand, the parting with the most pleasing or profitable sins. For the promises of God that are the rule of faith, make an offer of Christ upon these conditions to us: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give re-



penitance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts 5. 31. And only the justified shall be glorified, Rom. 8. Those therefore who desire a partial interest in him as a Saviour, out of absolute necessity to escape hell, and will not out of love submit to him as their prince, have not *that faith that is unfeigned*, and gives a title to eternal life by the promises of the gospel.

2, We must choose heaven as our supreme happiness, and regard it as the main end of our lives. Man fell from his duty and felicity, by preferring sensual pleasure beyond the favor of God, and became guilty of the greatest disobedience and dishonor to his maker, and is restored by the holy change of his will, the setting his affections on a pure spiritual blessedness. This subliming the will, and turning its love and choice from the creatures to God, is the effect of divine grace, and wrought in a *rational way*. For man is not moved as artificial engines by force, nor as brutes from necessity, their faculties being determined by the outward application of objects; he is not drawn up to heaven by such a natural impression, as steel by the loadstone nor forced by a violent motion, as a stone ascends; but as an understanding free agent, by the direction of the enlightened mind, and the consent of the will, an elective unconstrained faculty. And herein the wisdom, goodness and equity of God's transactions with man appears. His wisdom, in that as he has ordered in the whole sphere of nature, that the active powers of every creature be drawn forth into exercise for their preservation, and accordingly he is pleased to work in and by them; so the understanding and will, the principles of operation in man, are to deliberate and choose in order to his happiness: otherwise the rational faculties would be in vain. His goodness and equity, in that he sets before them eternal life as the reward of obedience. God will be glorified by him as a lawgiver and a benefactor, and has ordained in the gospel, that all who choose and diligently seek the kingdom of heaven, shall infallibly obtain it, and none be deprived of it but for their neglect. The decree of a final state of misery, though not in time, yet is consequent in the order of causes, to the obstinate reluctance of sinners against restoring grace, and the wilful forsaking their own mercies. Therefore God vindicates the equity of his proceedings with men by their own principles, and with tender pity expostulates, "Why will ye die?" The corrupt will declining from God, and adhering to the creatures as its happiness, is the true cause of man's ruin. This will infinitely clear the wisdom and justice, the purity and goodness of God from all imputation.

The choice of heaven for our felicity is primarily to be determined, for it is from the prospect of it, that all holy counsels derive their life and vigor. As in drawing the picture of a man, the first work is to delineate the head, not only as the part that in dignity and eminence is above the rest, but as it regulates the

drawing of the other parts, and gives a just proportion and correspondence between them, without which the whole figure becomes disordered and monstrous. Thus in the moral consideration of man, that which is primarily to be considered is the soul, and its final felicity, as incomparably more excellent than the body and its pleasure : for this will have a powerful influence upon the whole life, directing to avoid what is inconsistent and impertinent, and to do what is conducive to it.

Now this being a matter of unspeakable importance, I will, first, shew what the regular choice of heaven includes, as to its qualities and effects. Secondly, direct how to make this choice. Thirdly, present some powerful motives to excite us to it.

The qualities of this choice are three : 1. It must be sincere and cordial. 2. Early, in our first and best days. 3. Firm and constant.

[1.] It must be sincere and cordial. The most essential and active desire in human nature is to happiness ; but there being two kinds of good things presented to the will that solicit the affections, the pleasures of sense, and spiritual joys, from hence it is that that which makes men happy is the object of election. And although there is nothing more uniform and inviolable than the natural inclination to happiness, yet the great distinction of mankind arises from this source, the regular or perverse use of this inclination, the wise or mistaken choice of happiness. Now the sincerity of our choice is discovered, when it is clear and entire, arising from a transcendent esteem of the favor and enjoyment of God as our chief good, and absolutely requisite for us. And from hence it is evident, that the choice of true happiness, necessarily includes the despising and rejecting of the false happiness that stands in competition with it. There cannot be two reigning principles in the soul ; for it cannot vigorously apply itself to two objects at the same time. Our Saviour has decided it ; “ No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or hold to the one, and despise the other : ye cannot serve God and Mammon : ” the masters are irreconcilable, and their commands are directly opposite. It was as possible to place upon the same altar the Ark of God, and the Idol of the Philistines, as that heaven and the world should compound and take equal shares in our affections. Indeed, if the conceptions in the mind are but faint and floating, of the universal satisfying goodness of the object proposed to make us happy, the will remains in suspense ; but when it is clearly and strongly represented, the heart is drawn entirely to embrace it. Divine grace, by the illumination of the understanding, purifies and changes the depraved will, and heals the distempered affections. The wise merchant, that had a discerning eye, saw reason enough to part with all, that he might gain the pearl of price, the grace and glory of the kingdom of hea-

ven. The Apostle declares his resolute contempt of the concurrence of all the prerogatives either the law or the world could afford him, that he might have an interest in Christ, the Reconciler and restorer of man to the favor and fellowship of God: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ." The glorious gospel is the brightest and most pleasant light that ever shone upon the world, a revelation of the deepest wisdom and most admirable love, wherein the combination of God's holy and wonderful counsels for our salvation is unfolded; and accordingly St. Paul, with the greatest life of affection, sets forth his value of it, and by full and most vilifying expressions, rejects all things in comparison of it.

2. The sincerity of the heavenly choice is discovered by a zealous observance of the means requisite in order to it. Inanimate things incline to rest in their centre, the rational intend and pursue it: the blessed end, when valued and respected according to its worth, excites and directs the affections and endeavors in that order and measure as is proportionable to its excellency, and the difficulties of obtaining it. There may be a naked estimation, and some desires of eternal happiness simply considered, yet the will remains incomplete and undetermined in its choice: for the end, in conjunction with the means, is propounded to us, and the carnal man will not consent to the means: he dislikes the holiness of religion, and will rather forfeit heaven than submit to such strict terms. Though with Balaam, in a fit of devotion, he says, "O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his!" yet, from indulgence to his sensual inclinations, he will not live as the righteous. All his wishes of true happiness are soon strangled by the predominant love of some vanity. It is said of the Israelites, they despised the pleasant land, Psal. 106. 14. not absolutely in itself, for it was "the glory of all lands," abounding with things for the support and delight of man; but considering its distance, a wilderness waste and wild interposing, and the enemies to be encountered, they did not think it worthy of undergoing such hazards and difficulties. The land of Canaan was a type of heaven, both with respect to its pleasantness, and the manner of the Israelites obtaining it; their title to it was derived from the rich bounty of God, therefore it is called the "land of promise;" but it was to be possessed by conquest. Thus the celestial Canaan is the pure gift of God; but the actual enjoyment of it is obtained by victorious resistance against the enemies of our salvation. And carnal men despise this pleasant land, the promise being inseparably joined with precepts of duty and obedience, from which they are averse. But he that chooses

sincerely, is joyful and vigorous in the use of means for acquiring his most desired good. Ardent affections, like Elijah's chariot of fire, ravish the soul above this sensible world, to the place where God dwells in glory. Zeal animates his endeavors, as the motion of the heart diffuses the spirits into the arteries, to convey life to all parts of the body. "One thing (saith the inflamed Psalmist) have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The sensual man is ranging abroad for satisfaction, and shoots all the game that crosses his eye; but the soul that has a discovering light, and feeling heat of the divine beauty, unites all its desires in God, and, with affection to an extasy, longs for the enjoyment of him; and the endeavors are in some proportion to the desires. Our Saviour tells us, that "from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Some previous rays of the Sun of righteousness appeared in his ministry, and produced such a holy ardency in those converts, that with all resolution, diligence and earnestness, they sought to be partakers of the blessedness revealed. Lazy desires, easy prosecutions, sluggish attempts, discover that the heart is not thoroughly engaged for the spiritual eternal good. When the end is truly designed, it will give law to the actions: this is visible in carnal worldly men; how sagacious, how solicitous are they to accomplish their ends and base designs? They try all ways, either by fine dissimulation, or toilsome industry, to obtain their desires. No time is too much in their gainful affairs, or voluptuous enjoyments: they transform the night, to lengthen out the day for their profit; they veil the day, to lengthen out the night for their ease and pleasure. But alas, heaven is only regarded by the by; as if the intellectual soul were only given to dwell with the body on earth, the place of its banishment, and direct affairs here below, and not to lead in the way to heaven, the place of its nativity, and prepare for another world. The work of salvation is followed with that remiss degree of affection, as if it were a slight matter whether performed or neglected. These persons carry their conviction in their bosoms; for they are ardent and active to obtain inferior and infinitely less concerning ends, but with that cold application mind the superior nobler end of man, that it is wholly frustrate, which plainly shews it was never seriously intended by them.

The sight of worldly men so active and vigilant to prosecute their low designs, should quicken us to seek with greater diligence and alacrity the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof. A carnal wretch, urged by the sting of a brutish desire, with what impatience doth he pursue "the pleasures of sin that are but for a season?" An ambitious person, with what an inter-

perate height of passion does he chase a feather? A covetous man, how greedily does he pursue the advantages of "the present world, that passes away, and the lusts thereof? Ah! how do they upbraid our indifferent desires, our dull delays, and cold endeavours, when such a high prize is set before us? Who is able to conceive the ravishing pleasure of the soul, when it first enters through "the beautiful gate" of the celestial temple, and sees the glory of the place, and "hears a voice from the throne, enter into thy Master's joy," to be happy with him forever? The serious belief of this will draw forth all our active powers in the service of God.

3. The sincerity of our heavenly choice declares itself in the temper and frame of our hearts, with respect to all temporal things in this world. For our main and happy end being established, that it consists not in secular riches and honors, and the pleasures of sense, but in the clear vision of God, the blessedness of the Spirit; it follows, that all present things are in our use so far good or evil, and to be desired or not, as they are profitable or prejudicial to our obtaining salvation, as they conduct or divert us from heaven. A wise christian looks on temporal things, not through the glass of disordered passions, that are impetuous and impatient for what is grateful to them, but with reference to his future happiness. He considers the train of temptations that attend an exalted condition, and desires such a portion of these things, as may redound to the glory of the giver, and be improved for his own salvation. This purity of affections our Saviour teaches us: For in his divine form of prayer, (the true directory of our desires) are set down, in an admirable order, all things we are to pray for. And they respect the end, or the means. The end is the primary object of our desires. Accordingly the two first petitions concern our blessed end, as it respects God and ourselves; we pray, "Hallowed be thy name," that is, by the reverence and adoration of all his subjects; and, "Thy kingdom come," that is, for the manifestation of his eternal glory in the next world, that we may reign with him. The means in order to this end are of two sorts: some conduct to it by themselves; those are the good things desired in the third and fourth petitions; and some lead to it by accident, and those are the freedom from evils, expressed in the last petition. The good things desired, either have a direct influence upon our obtaining happiness; and they are summed up in our universal obedience to God's will, expressed in the third petition, "Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" or they are such as by way of subserviency promote our happiness, and those we pray for in the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." And it is observable, there is but one petition for temporal blessings, and it is the last in the order of those that concern good things: And that single petition is so restrained, that it is evident by its tenor, that earthly things are not

absolutely good to be desired for themselves, but relatively and subordinately to our eternal good. Daily bread we must ask of our heavenly father, the necessary support of the present life, without which, we cannot exercise our internal or external powers and faculties in his service; but not delicacies and abundance for the luxurious appetite.

The difference of conditions in the present world is very great; as in Pharaoh's dream, some ears of corn were so full and weighty, that they bended with their weight; others so thin and blasted, that they were as stubble for the fire. Thus some abound in all felicities possible in this life, others are "chastened every morning" under various and continual afflictions. Now this infallible principle being planted in the heart, that all present things are to be improved with respect to our future happiness, will moderate the affections in prosperity, so to use the world that we may enjoy God, and make us not only patient, but pleased in adversities, as they are preparatory for heaven.

\* The original of all the sins and misery of men, is their perverse abuse of things, by turning the means into the end, setting their affections of love, desire and joy upon sensible things, as their proper happiness, with inconsiderate neglect of the spiritual eternal state, to which all other things should be subservient. As if one diseased and sickly in a foreign country, that could not possibly recover his health but in his native air, in his return thither, invited by the pleasantness of the way, should take up his residence in it, and never arrive to his country. Among the West-Indies some are † reported to be swift in running; that no horse can keep pace with them; and they have a constant rule in their diet, to eat of no beast, or bird, or fish, that is slow in motion, fancying it would transfuse a sluggishness in them. The christian life is by the apostle compared to a race, and earthly things by an inseparable property of nature load and depress the soul, that it cannot with vigor run the "race set before it." The believer therefore who intends "for the high price of his calling," and is true to his end, will "be temperate in all things." Nay, he will not only be circumspect, lest they should check with his great design, but wisely manages them in subserviency to it. St. Paul charges them that are rich in this world, to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life, 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19.

And the fixed aim at heaven, as our felicity, will reconcile an afflicted state to us. When temporal evils are effectual means to promote our everlasting happiness; the amiableness and excel-

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\* *Frui est amore alicujus rei inhærere propter seipsam, uti autem, quod in usum venerit, ad id quod amas obtinendum referre.* Aug. de Doct. Christ.

† Acosta.

lency of the end changes their nature, and makes those calamities that in themselves are intolerable, to become light and easy.

The poor, the mourners, the persecuted are blessed now, "because theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." The Apostle, though under variety of sharp troubles, yet expresses his sense with that mitigation, as but lightly touched with them: "As sorrowful but always rejoicing." From hence he tells us, that with unfainting courage he prosecuted his glorious end. "For our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory." This seriously believed and considered, will make us understand the harmony and consent of the most discordant parts of God's Providence. This will reconcile the severity and roughness of his hand, with the tender compassions of his heart toward his servants. This will dry up rivers of unprofitable tears that flow from the afflicted, and make the cross of Christ a light burden. For their heaviest afflictions are not only consistent with his love, but the effects of it are influential upon their happiness. We are now tossed upon the alternate waves of time, but it is that we may arrive to the port, the blessed bosom of our saviour, and enjoy a peaceful calm; and "so we shall be ever with the Lord." Words of infinite sweetness! This is the song of our prosperity, and the charm of our adversity: well might the Apostle add immediately after, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

4. The sincere choice of heaven as our final happiness, will make us aspire to the greatest height of holiness we are capable of in the present state. For the end has always a powerful virtue to transform a man into its likeness: And heaven is a state of perfect conformity to the holy God. This difference is observable between the understanding and the will in their operations: the understanding is forming conceptions of things, draws the object to itself. The will is drawn by the object it chooses, and is always fashioning and framing the soul into an entire conformity to it. Thus carnal objects, when propounded as the end of a man, secretly imprint on him their likeness; his thoughts, affections, and whole conversation is carnal. As the Psalmist speaks of the worshipers of idols, "they that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them." Whatever we adore and esteem, we are changed into its image. Idolaters are as stupid and senseless, as the idols to which they pay homage. Thus when God is chosen as our supreme good and last end, by conversing with him, the image of his glorious holiness is derived on the soul, and it becomes Godly: the heart is drawn by his attractive excellencies, and the life directed to him. This being a point of great importance, I shall further prove and illustrate it. There is no deliberating about the degrees of that which is loved for itself as our end. More or less may respect the means that are valued and used to obtain it, but the love of the end is

vast and unlimited. A physician endeavors to recover his patient to sound and perfect health, that being the end of his art. He that seeks for honor or riches, is not content with a mediocrity of success, but drives on his affairs to the full period of his desires. An ardent lover of learning with a noble jealousy strives to excel others in knowledge. In short, no man designs and longs for a thing as his happiness, but will use all diligence to gain the present and full possession of it. Therefore it cannot be imagined that any person sincerely propounds the enjoyment of heaven as his end, but love will make him fervent and industrious to be as heavenly as is possible here. He will strive by blessed and glorious gradations, to ascend to the perfection of his aims and desires, "to be holy as God is holy in all manner of conversation, to be pure as Christ is pure." We have an admirable instance of this in St. Paul, who declares, Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3. 13, 14. His progress was great, yet that did not make him slack in the prosecution of his end. He labored to attain the precedent of our Saviour, to feel the power of *his death and life, to apprehend Christ* entirely and perfectly as Christ had apprehended him. *He was very diligent* to improve the divine image in his heart and life.

From hence we may discover the vanity of their hopes, that are of lukewarm affections in religion, (the abhorred character of Laodicea) who esteem it a prudent principle, as convenient for their carnal ease and interest, not to be *earnest in following holiness*. Vices in mediocrity are tolerable with them, only the excess is condemned. They content themselves with a mediocrity in religion, and are presumptuous and secure, as the church that said, "I am rich, and have need of nothing." They boast as if they had found out the temperate region between the burning line and the frozen pole. They account all that is above their degrees in religion, to be furious or indiscreet zeal, and all below to be dead, cold profaneness. They censure those for hypocrisy or unnecessary strictness, who are visibly better, and stand upon proud comparisons with those who are visibly worse: and thus set off themselves by taxing others. But how easily do men deceive and damn themselves? Can we have too much of heaven upon the earth? Can we become too like God, when a perfect conformity to him is our duty and felicity? Indeed moral virtue consists in a mediocrity, not of the habitual quality, but of the affections and actions between the vicious extremities. Fortitude consists in the mean between cowardice, and rash boldness; but how much the more confirmed the courageous habit is, so much the more a man excels in that virtue. Liber-



ality consists between an indiscreet profuseness, and sordid avarice; patience between a soft delicacy, and stupid insensibility. Thus philosophic virtue glories in its beauty as pure and entire, between two vicious deformities. And the religion of many is paganism dressed up in a christian fashion. But this mediocrity only belongs to inferior virtues, that respect things of created limited goodness, and is determined according to the worth of their nature. But divine graces respect an object supremely good, and their perfection consists in their most excellent degrees, and the most intense affections and operations that are leading to it. Faith in its obedience, hope in its assurance, love in its ardor can never exceed. When the object is infinite, a mediocrity is vicious. Humility can never descend too low, nor love ascend too high: for reflecting upon our natural and moral imperfections, that we are raised from nothing, that we are defiled and debased with sin, we cannot have too low thoughts of ourselves. And since God the sovereign being, infinite in perfections, and infinitely amiable, is the object, no bounds or measure must be set to our affections, but with all our united powers, "all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength," we must love him, and please him, and endeavor to be beloved of him.

There are others will acknowledge their defect, and tell you they do not pretend to eminent sanctity, to the graces of the Apostles and martyrs, nor aspire to their degrees in glory; they are content with a lower place in heaven, and less strict religion is sufficient for their purpose. This deceit is strengthened by Popery, that enervates and dissolves many of our Saviour's precepts, by teaching they are not laws obliging all christians to obedience, that will attain to eternal life, but counsels of perfection: if they are not done, it is no sin; and the performance of them meritoriously entitles to a richer crown. And though men by impure indulgencies please their sensual affections, yet by tasting purgatory in the way, they may come to heaven on easier terms, than an universal respect to God's commands, and an equal care to observe them. But death will confute all these feeble wretched pretences: for though the saints above shine with an unequal brightness, as the stars differ in glory; yet none are there but saints. And those who do not mourn under their imperfections, and unfeignedly desire and endeavor to be better, were never really good. The slothful servant that did not waste, but neglect to improve his talent, was cast into "outer darkness." There are different degrees of punishment in hell, but the least miserable there are miserable forever. In short, it is a perfect contradiction, a prodigy, for any man to think he is sincere in his choice, and prepared in his affections for the pure glorious felicity in heaven, that does not labor to "cleanse himself from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

## CHAPTER X.

The choice of heaven must be early, in the prime of our days. The choice must be constant. Saving perseverance includes the permanent residence of grace in the soul, and the exercise of it, and progress towards perfection. Perseverance is required, notwithstanding all temptations that may allure or terrify us from our duty. Saving perseverance excludes not all sins, but total apostacy and final impenitency. The sincerity of obedience is discovered by its constancy. A corrupt confidence, or a vicious dejection of spirit, the trusting in ourselves, and distrusting God are equally pernicious to the stability of a christian.

[2.] The choice of eternal felicity must be early, in the prime of our days. The rule of our duty, and reason binds us "to remember our Creator in our youth," to pay him the first fruits of our time and strength. When we are surrounded with enticing objects, and the senses are entire and most capable to enjoy them, when the electing powers are in their vigor, then it is just we should live to God, obey him as our lawgiver, and prefer the fruition of him in heaven, the reward of obedience, before all the pleasures of vanity. It is very honorable and pleasing to God to give the heart to him, when the flesh and the world strongly solicit to withdraw it. It is a high endearment of the soul to him, when his excellencies are prevalent in the esteem and affections, above all the charms of the creatures. And it is an unspeakable satisfaction to the spirit of a man, to declare the truth and strength of his love to God, by despising temptations, when they are most inviting, and the appetite is eager for the enjoyment of them. But alas! how many neglect their duty, and defer their happiness? they think it too soon to live for heaven, "before the evil days come, wherein they shall have no pleasure," when they cannot sin and vainly presume they can repent. The danger of this I have considered in the discourse of death, and shall therefore proceed to the next head.

[3.] Our choice of heaven must be constant and lasting.

The two principal rules of the spiritual life are to begin and end well: to fix and establish the main design for everlasting happiness, and from a determinate resolution, and ratified purpose of heart, to pursue it with firmness and constancy: to live for heaven, and with readiness and courage to die for it, if the glory of God so require. Perseverance is indispensably necessary in all that will obtain the eternal reward.

For the clearing this most important point, I will,

I. Represent from scripture the idea of perseverance, that is attended with salvation.

II. Consider why it is so strictly required.

I. (1.) Saving perseverance includes the permanent residence of grace in the soul: it is composed of the whole chain of graces, the union of holy habits that are at first infused into a christian by the sanctifying Spirit. When eternal life is promised to faith, or love, or hope, it is upon supposal that those graces being planted in the heart, shall finally prosper. He that is faithful to the death, shall inherit the crown of life, Rev. 2. It is love that never fails, 1 Cor. 13. that shall enter into heaven. "It is hope firm unto the end," that shall be accomplished in a glorious fruition. If grace be disseised by a usurping lust, apostacy will follow, and the forfeiture of our right in the kingdom of heaven.

(2.) Grace must be continually drawn forth into exercise, according to our several states and duties, and the various occasions that happen in our course through the world. Those "who are light in the Lord, are commanded to walk as children of the light;" to signify the excellency and purity of the christian life. "Those who live in the Spirit, must walk in the Spirit;" that is, by a conspicuous course of holiness declare the vigor and efficacy of the divine principle that is communicated to them. "*Paulum sepultæ distat inertiae celata virtus:*" virtue that breaks not forth into visible actions, is not worthy of the name. The mere abstaining from evil is not sufficient, but all the positive acts of the holy life are to be constantly done. In discharging both these parts of our duty, complete religion is expressed, and the power of grace consists.

(3.) Perseverance includes not only continuance in well-doing, but fervor and progress towards perfection. There are two fixed states, the one in heaven, the other in hell. The blessed spirits above are arrived to the height of holiness. The Devil and damned spirits are sunk to the lowest extremity of Sin. But in the middle state here, grace in the saints is a rising growing light; and sin in the wicked improves every day, like poison in a serpent, that becomes more deadly by his age. We are in-joined not to remain in our first imperfections, but to "follow holiness" to the utmost issue of our lives, to its entire consummation. For this end all the dispensations of Providence must be improved, whether prosperous or afflicting. And the ordinances of the gospel were appointed, that in the use of them we may be "changed into the divine image, from glory to glory."

(4.) Perseverance is required notwithstanding all temptations that may allure or terrify us from our duties; whatever affects us one way or other, while we are clothed with frail flesh. It is the fundamental principle of Christianity declared by our Saviour, "If any man will come after me," that is, be my disciple

and servant, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;" even to be crucified with him, rather than wilfully forfeit his integrity and loyalty to Christ. He must by a \* sacred fixed resolution divest himself of all things, even the most valued and desirable in the present world, and actually forsake them, nay entertain what is most distasteful, "and resist unto blood," rather than desert his duty.

1. He must with unfainting patience continue in doing his duty, notwithstanding all miseries and calamities, losses, disgraces, torments, or death itself, which wicked men, and greater enemies, the powers of darkness, can inflict upon him. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality, eternal life is promised, Rom. 2. He that endures to the end (notwithstanding the most terrible sufferings to which he is exposed for Christ's sake,) shall be saved, Mat. 10. 22. In this a christian must be the express image of his Saviour; "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." Disgrace and pain are evils that human nature has a most tender sense of; yet the Son of God, with a divine generosity and constancy, endured them in the highest degrees. He was scorned as a feigned king, and a false prophet. He suffered a bloody death, and by the cross ascended to glory. And we must follow him if we desire to be where he is.

2. But this is not the only trial of a christian. Prosperity is a more dangerous enemy, to the soul, though adversity be more rigorous.

Sevior armis.  
Incumbit luxuria. Juven.

For the spirit is excited by perils and difficulties to seek to God for strength, and with vigilant resolute thoughts unites all his powers to oppose them; but it is made weak and careless by what is grateful to the sensual inclinations. It keeps close the spiritual armor in the open encounter of dangers that threaten its ruin, but is enticed to put it off by the caresses and blandishments of the world. It does not see its enemies under the disguise of a pleasant temptation. Thus sin insinuates itself, and by stealing steps gets into the throne without observation. A man is wounded with a pleasant temptation, as with the plague that flies in the dark, and grace is insensibly weakened. From hence it is, that adversity often reforms the vicious, and prosperity corrupts the virtuous. Now perseverance must be of proof against fire and water, against whatever may terrify or allure us from our duty.

\* Natator amnem interpositum superaturus, exiit, nec tamen hoc tanto apparatu, quod se dispoliaverit, transnabit, nisi totius corporis nisi torrentis impetum scindat, et laborem natationis exhauriat. *Paulin.*

(5.) Saving perseverance excludes not all sins, but total apostacy, and final impenitency, which are fatal and deadly under the new covenant. If the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and commiteth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespasses that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, he shall die, Ezek. 18. 24. If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, saith the Lord, Heb. 10. 38. These threatenings imply, there is a possibility of the saints falling away considered in themselves; but not that they are ever totally deserted by the Holy Spirit, and left under the reigning power of sin. The threatenings are intended to awaken their care, and are preservatives of them from ruin, and have a singular influence on their perseverance. A vigilant and cautious fear establishes the certainty of their hope. Indeed from the relics of weakness and corruption in the saints, they sometimes actually fall into presumptuous sins, and by rebellious relapses wound conscience, and let out much of the vital spirits, their graces and comforts. But though the divine nature is miserably wasted by such sins, yet it is not abolished. As after the creation of light, there was never pure and total darknes in the world. Grace does not consist in a point, but is capable of degrees. The new creature may decline in beauty and strength, yet life remain. Between a lively and dead faith, there may be a fainting faith; as in St. Peter, for certainly our Saviour was heard in his prayer for him, that his "faith should not fail" in his dreadful temptation. The saints do not by a particular fall extinguish the first living principles of obedience, faith and love; nor change their last end, by an entire turning from God to the world. In short, a single act of wickedness does not reduce them into a state of unregeneracy: for it is not the matter of the sin singly considered, but the disposition of the sinner that denominates him. If grace in the saints should utterly perish, as some boldly assert, their recovery would be impossible: for the Aopstle tells us, that "if those who are enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift," that had been under some common workings, and lower operations of the spirit, if such *fall away universally*, and live in a course of sin opposite to their former illuminations and resolutions, it is impossible to renew them by repentance; how much more then if those who were truly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, should entirely lose all those gracious habits planted in them in their regeneration? But David, though guilty of adultery and murder, sins of so foul a nature as would dishonor paganism itself, and "made the enemies of God to blaspheme," was restored by repentance. The gospel propounds a remedy, not only for sins committed before conversion, but after it. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." God does not revoke the

adoption, nor reverse the justification of a believer, but upon scandalous disorders, the effects of justification are suspended with respect to the new contracted guilt, until there be sincere and actual repentance. He is not disinherited, but his right to the kingdom of heaven is eclipsed as to the comfortable sense of it, nay suspended, till by renovation he is qualified and made fit for the enjoyment of that pure inheritance. For those sins which are a just cause of excommunicating an offender from the church on earth, would exclude him from the kingdom of heaven without repentance. Our Saviour tells us, "what is bound on earth, is ratified in heaven." And the Apostle expressly declares of those kinds of sin for which professors must be removed from the communion of saints here, that they are an exclusive bar from the kingdom of heaven. But I have written to you, not to keep company, if any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat, 1 Cor. 5. 11. And know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. If one that is truly a child of God fall into any of these sins, till by an extraordinary repentance he is prepared for pardon, he cannot obtain it, nor have a comfortable hope of entering into heaven. For only those "who are justified, are glorified." Indeed it is not imaginable where "the seed of God remains," the vital principle of grace, as it does in "all that are born of God," but that notorious sins that cannot be concealed from the view of conscience, will cause stings and sorrows proportionable to their malignity, and consequently a hatred and forsaking of them. Now perseverance principally respects the end of our course: there may be interruptions in the way for a time; but if with renewed zeal and diligence we prosecute our blessed end, we shall not fall short of it.

II. I come now to consider the second thing propounded, the reason why perseverance is requisite in all that will obtain eternal life; and it is this, that their sincerity may be discovered by constancy in obedience under all trials. "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." The law requireth unsinning obedience as the condition of life, the promise that gives right to the reward. Now sincerity implies such an entire love of God, as makes a person submit to all duties commanded in his law, and all trials appointed by his providence. A high example we have of this in Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his only son Isaac, and by his own hands, for a burnt-offering. This was to kill a double sacrifice at one blow; for the life of Abraham was bound up in

Isaac: he lived in him more dearly than in himself; all his joy, all his posterity by Sarah had died in Isaac. What resentments, what resistance of nature did he suffer? Yet presently he addressed himself to perform his duty. Who ever saw a more glorious victory over all the tender and powerful passions of human nature? O unexampled obedience! being an original without any precedent to imitate, and without a copy to succeed it. After this clear infallible testimony of his sincerity, the angel declared from heaven, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." And it is said concerning the followers of the Lamb, that "they loved not their lives unto the death." The love of Christ that animated them in all their sufferings, was sweeter than life, and stronger than death.

Indeed there was a wonderful difference in the behaviour of the martyrs under sufferings, but in all, the same persevering grace was evident though working variously. Some in the most beautiful flower of their age encountered fire and sword, tormenters and torments, with that sensible joy, with those songs of praise to Christ, as if they saw the heavens open with St. Stephen, and their Saviour ready to receive and crown them. But many others, as \* Chrysostom testifies, went to the tribunals, to the theatres, to death, with many appearances of fear. Upon hearing the wild beasts roar, they were struck with horror; at the sight of the executioners and the instruments of torment, they were pale and trembling. The flesh seemed to cry out, "O let this cup pass from me;" yet weak and faint, it followed the spirit, that corrected the natural desire, with "not my will, but thine be done." As the moon in eclipse, though obscure, yet goes on in a regular course, as when it is full of light by the reflection of the sun: so those desolate matyrs, though as it were forsaken, and deprived of the bright beams of comfort, yet persevered in their profession of the truth. When one word to renounce Christianity would have saved them, no torments could force it from them, but they patiently endured all. Now in these the combat of nature was visible, and the admirable power of grace. They first overcame their own fears, the reluctancy of the carnal part, their affection to whatever is desirable in the world, which is the noblest victory, and then the cruelty of their persecutors. In them was verified the testimony of the spirit, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the command of God, and the faith of Jesus.

But how many appear faithful, while their faith is not to be shewed by difficult works, and proved by sufferings? The seed that fell on the stony ground, sprang up as hopeful as the seed in the good ground at first; but when tribulation came, it with-

\* Homil. 6. de laud. Paul.

ered away, wanting the root of sincerity. And that which was sown among thorns, was choked by the cares and pleasures of the world. Some lust in the heart interweaves with the affections, and causes apostacy. How many from glorious beginnings, have made a lamentable end? Not only mercenaries in religion, whose zeal was a foreign complexion, not springing from an inward principle of life and health, relinquish even the profession of Godliness, when their gain ceases; but some who have thought themselves sincere, yet in times of danger their resolutions, like the morning dew, have suddenly vanished. As the foolish builder that computed not the charges of his designed work, began to raise a magnificent structure, but unable to finish it, laid the foundation in his own shame. They repented their choice of heaven when they saw what it must cost them, and would save the world with the loss of their souls.

Others that began in the spirit, and with raised affections set out in the ways of Godliness, yet by the allurements of sensual lusts and temptations, (and therefore with greater \* guilt) leave their first love, and end in the flesh. They fall from high possession, but, deceived by soft pleasure, feel not the fall. These were never sincere, and never had a right to heaven. They took up sudden resolutions, not grounded in serious and deep thoughts, and for a flash were hot and active, but with great levity return to their former lusts. The Apostle tells us of such, "It had been better for them they had not known the way of righteousness, than to turn back and voluntarily to forsake it." It is observed that boiling water taken off from the fire, congeals more strongly than that which was never heated: because the subtile parts being evaporated by the fire, the more terrestrial parts remaining are more capable of cold. So those who have felt the power of the word in their affections, and afterwards lose that holy heat, become more hardened in their sins. God justly withdraws his grace, and the evil spirit that was expelled for a time, returns with seven worse, and aggravates his tyranny.

To conclude; since the certainty of salvation is conditional, if we persevere in a holy state, let us beware of a corrupt confidence, and a vicious dejection of spirit, the trusting in ourselves, or distrusting God. To prevent the trusting in ourselves, consider,

1. The most excellent creatures are by the instability of nature liable to defection, subject to a corruptive change. Of this the fallen angels are a dreadful example, who of their own motion, untempted, sinned in heaven.

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\* *Quæ justior venia in omnibus causis, quam voluntarius, an quam invitatus peccator implorat? Negationem quanta compellunt, ingenia carnificum, et genera poenarum? Quis magis negavit, qui christum vexatus, an qui delectatus amisit? Qui quum amitteret doluit, an qui quum amitteret lusit? Tert. de pudicit.*



2. The danger is greater of falling away, when they are urged and solicited by a violent or great temptation. Thus our first parents fell, and lost more grace in an hour, than can be recovered by their posterity in all ages to the end of the world.

3. When there is supervenient corruption in the creatures, that inclines them with earnest propensity to forbidden things, and takes flame from every spark, the danger is extreme. Like a besieged city that is in great hazard of taking, by assaults from without, and conspiracies from within. Let us therefore be very watchful over our hearts and senses, and keep as much as is possible at a safe distance from temptations; and be very diligent in the use of all holy means to confirm and fortify our resolutions for heaven. God promised to Hezekiah fifteen years, but not to preserve his life by miracle; he was obliged to repair the wastings of nature by daily food, and to abstain from what was noxious and destructive to his body. The Apostle excites christians "to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let him that stands take heed lest he fall." None are a more easy conquest to the tempter, than those who presume upon their own strength. We should be always jealous of ourselves, from the sad examples of apostacy in every age. \* St. Ambrose testifies from his own knowledge, that many after the courageous enduring of cruel torments for religion, the tearing open their sides that their bowels appeared, and the burning of some parts of their bodies; yet when led forth to finish the "victory of faith," to be a triumphant "spectacle to angels and men," when the blessed rewarder was ready to put the martyrs' crown on their heads, at the sight of their mourning wives and children in the way, were overcome by pity, the weakest affection and failed in the last act of christian fortitude. "We must pray to be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." For some may vigorously resist one sort of temptation, and render themselves to others. And if finally vanquished by one of those enemies, we lose our victory and crown.

And as presumption betrays the soul into the devil's snares, so a vicious dejection of spirit from a distrust of relief from God in our difficulties, and his assistance with our unfeigned endeavors for salvation, is very pernicious. For this damps industry, and causes either a total neglect, or uncomfortable use of means for that end. Many christians considering their graces are weak, their nature fickle and apt to revolt, and ready (as David said,

\* Deniq; sæpe cognovimus, quoniam quem formidolosa carnificum pompa non terruit, nec devisi lateris sulcus infregit, nec ardentis laminæ à triumphalis fortitudinis vigore abducere potuerunt, eum inter sacra præmia constitutum, uxor teneræ prolis oblatione, miserabilis unius lacrymæ miseratione decepit.

“One day I shall perish by the hand of Saul)” to conclude sadly of the issue of their condition. To encourage such, let them consider, that perseverance is not only a condition, but a privilege of the covenant of grace; for that assures us of supply of spiritual strength to the sincere believer, for performing the condition it requires. Indeed, if grace were the mere product of free-will, the most fervent resolutions would vanish into a lie, upon the assault of an overpowering temptation: as Hezekiah acknowledged, that the Assyrian kings had “destroyed the gods of the nations, that were no gods, but idols, the work of men’s hands.” But sanctifying grace is the effect of the Holy Spirit; and he that “begins that good work in the saints, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He that inclined them joyfully to choose the spiritual eternal good, will bind their unconstant hearts, that by a faithful adherence they shall cleave to their duty and felicity. God hath most graciously declared, “I will put my Spirit into their heart, that they shall never depart from me.” The promise is founded in the unchangeable love of God to his people. Were God, as man, subject to variation, there might be jealousies in believers, lest they should lose his good will: as those who depend on princes are suspicious, lest from the natural inconstancy of the human will, a new favorite should supplant them. “But whom God loves, he loves to the end.” The Apostle prays for the Thessalonians, that “God would preserve them blameless until the coming of Christ;” by this consideration, “Faithful is he that calleth you, he will do it.” He speaks of the internal call, that opens the heart, and overpowers all resistance: as when the angel came with a light shining in the prison to St. Peter, and struck him on the side, bid him arise quickly, loosed his chains, and led him through the guards, opened the doors, and restored him to liberty. The effectual calling of a sinner, is the visible and infallible effect of electing mercy; and God is unchangeable in his own purpose, and faithful to his promises, of bringing all such by sanctification to glory. The same Apostle tells the saints at Corinth, That the Redeemer would confirm them to the end: “God is faithful, by whom ye are called.” Grace that was at first inspired, is continually actuated by the spirit, who is styled “the earnest of the saints’ inheritance.” So that whereas the angels that excelled in strength, kept not their first state of purity and glory, but are sunk into corruption and misery; yet true humble believers, though weak, and encompassed with many difficulties, shall be preserved from destructive evil, and raised to an unchangeable estate of perfection. This is truly admirable, as if the stars should fall from heaven, and clods of earth ascend and shine in the firmament. The Apostle, who acknowledged his *insufficiency of himself to think a good thought*, yet triumphantly declares, *I can do all things (within the compass of his duty) through Christ that*

*strengthens me.* The love, fidelity, and power, of God, are a sure fountain of assistance to every christian, that sincerely resolves and endeavors to prosecute his last and blessed end.

## CHAPTER XI.

Directions to fix the choice aright. The danger from the senses, and the fancy, of perverting our choice. The power of fancy considered. The carnal affections are the worst counsellors. The senses and carnal affections are incapable of apprehending spiritual things: they are deceitful, and very numerous and clamorous. The general example of men is corruptive of our judgments about worldly things. It is foolish to be directed by the multitude, in an affair of eternal moment. The universal judgment of worldly men, in their last serious hours, is considerate, and to be believed.

I shall now come to the direction to fix our choice aright.

This is a matter of everlasting consequence; it therefore becomes us with the most intense application of mind to consider it, and according to the advice of wisdom, to "keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Indeed, the choice were not difficult between lying vanities and substantial blessedness, if uncorrupted reason had the superior sway; but in this lapsed state of nature, the understanding and will are so depraved, that present things (pleasing to sense) ravish the heart into a compliance. Men are deceived, not compelled into ruin: the subtle seducer prevails by fair temptations. This will be evident, by reflecting upon the frame and composition of man, as he consists of *spirit, soul* and *body*, and the manner of his acting. The spirit is the intellective discerning faculty, the seat of reason, capable to compare and judge of the qualities of things, and foresee their issues. The body includes the lower faculties, the senses, fancy and passions, that are conversant about present things. The soul is the will, the principle of election, in the midst of the other, as the centre to which all their addresses flow. Now upon the proposal of the spiritual and carnal good, in order to choice, the will is to be directed by the mind, and by its own authority to rule the lower passions: but alas! the mind has lost its primitive light and purity, vigilance and integrity; neglects its duty, and from ignorance, error and carnal prejudices, often pleads for the flesh; and the will, the rational appetite, is voluntarily subordinate, and enslaved by the sensitive. From hence it is, that in the competition, heaven (with

all its glory) is despised, and the present world embraced. To open this more particularly, consider,

1. The senses can only taste and enjoy grosser dreggy pleasures.

2. The fancy that depends upon them in its operations, and is guided by their report, conceives of felicity only under the notion of sensitive pleasure. We may illustrate this by the practice of \* Aretius a painter, recorded with infamy; who being often employed to paint the goddesses to be set in the Pagan temples, always drew their pictures by the faces and complexions of his harlots, that the objects of his impure love might have veneration, and divinity attributed to them, under the titles and presence of Minerva, Juno, Diana, and the other goddesses adored by the heathens. This impiety in an idolater, is resembled by men who fancy happiness (that is, a spiritual divine perfection, enjoyed in the glorious vision of God) to be a carnal fruition, and having with sensible colors, and lineaments represented it agreeable to their brutish faculties, placed it in their hearts, and sacrifice all their thoughts, affections and service to it.

The fancy is very powerful in men upon a double account:

1. The understanding naturally receives the notions of things by phantasms, that are still mixing in its contemplations. While the soul is confined to a tabernacle of flesh, it apprehends no object without the precedent excitation of the senses: from whence it is impossible, that a person absolutely deprived of sight from his birth, should have an idea of light, or colors; or that is born deaf, should conceive what sound is; the sense never having imparted an account of it to them. And the image of the object is not immediately transmitted from the sense to the mind, but first to the imagination, that prepares it for its view. And from hence the sensual fancy is so predominant in swaying the judgment, and inclining the will. As those counsellors of state that have the ear of the prince, and are continually with him, by specious informations, and disguising truth, influence him to approve or reject persons and things, according to the various aspects given by them. The same object propounded in a dark confused manner, weakly moves us; but varnished and beautified with lively and pleasant colors by the imagination, is armed with such power that ravishes the esteem of the mind, and consent of the will. Now celestial happiness being purely spiritual, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man to conceive;" though some discoveries be made of it by revelation, yet the imagination makes such an obscure detracting idea of it, that it effects no more, than a dead

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\* *Flagitio insigni, semper alicujus feminae amore flagrans, et ob id deas pingens sub dilectarum imagine. Itaque scorta ejus venerabantur, Plin.*

shadow drawn in some imperfect lines of an exquisite beauty : But when the fancy is warmed and enlivened by the presence of sensible objects, it makes a vigorous impression of them upon the mind, and that represents the pictures of pleasure as very lovely and delightful to the will, which presently embraces them.

2. The fancy has a marvellous force upon the sensitive appetite, that eagerly desires what is represented as pleasant, though the enlightened mind sees through the temptation, and knows it is a mere dream, that brings neither solid nor durable joy. One in a fever is pleased by imagining fountains and streams, though he knows that imaginary waters cannot quench his thirst, nor afford the least real refreshment. Now the sensitive appetite being inflamed by the fancy, imparts a contagious fire to the will, and that induces the mind either to concur with it, and palliate the deceit, and to judge favorably according to its inclinations, or makes it slack or remiss in its office, diverting the thoughts from what might controul the appetite : or if the understanding still contradicts, yet it is in so cold and speculative a manner, that "the law of the members" rebels against the superior light, and is too strong "for the law of the mind;" and that saying is verified,

Video meliora, proboque;  
Deteriora sequor:

I see what is worthy to be chosen, but pursue what is to be abhorred. Thus miserably weak are the rational guiding powers in man since his fall, thus imperious and violent the brutish faculties. In short, illusion and concupiscence are the principal causes why the most noble and divine good is undervalued and rejected, in comparison of inferior transitory vanities. O the cheap damnation of beguiled souls! A mess of pottage was more valuable to Esau, than the birthright that had annexed to it the regal and priestly dignity. Unwise and unhappy wretches! "that following vanities, and forsake their own mercies."

Thus I have briefly set down the process of men's foolish choice in this degenerate state. Now that we may with a free uncorrupted judgment compare things, in order to a wise choice of true felicity, it follows from what has been said, that as the Apostle in obeying his heavenly commission, "conferred not with flesh and blood," we must not, in this matter of infinite importance, attend,

[1.] To the suggestions and desires of the senses and carnal appetites; which are the worst counsellors, as being incapable of judging what is our proper happiness, deceitful and importunate.

(1.) They are incapable of apprehending spiritual eternal things, which alone bring true and complete satisfaction to the soul; and cannot look forward to the end of sinful pleasures, and balance the terrible evils they leave at parting, with the slight vanishing content that springs from their presence: Therefore as

blind persons lay hold on things they feel, so the sensitive faculties (that are blind and brutish) adhere to gross present enjoyments, not understanding the pure spotless felicity that is to come, and despising what they do not understand. Now who would, in an affair upon which his all depends, advise with children and fools; whose judgment of things is without counsel, their counsel without discourse, their discourse without reason? There is nothing more contrary to the order of nature, than for men that should affect with judgment, to judge by their affections.

(2.) The carnal appetite with its lusts are very deceitful; a party within holding correspondence with our spiritual enemies, the armies of evil angels, so active and assiduous in conspiring and accomplishing the damnation of men. The Devil, in Scripture, is called *the tempter* by way of eminence, who manages and improves temptations; and his pernicious design is, by the objects of sense, ordered and made more alluring and killing by his various arts, to engage the affections into a compliance, and so to gain the will. Now our great danger is not so much from Satan, the enemy without, as from the carnal appetite, the traitor within, that gives him the first and easy entrance into the soul. He can only entice, by representing what is amiable to sense; but the corrupt appetite inclines to the closing with it. He tempted Jesus Christ, but was repelled with shame, *having found nothing within him to work upon*. The perfect regularity of faculties in our blessed Saviour, was not in the least disordered, neither by the fairest insinuations, or most furious assaults: and we might preserve our innocence inviolable, notwithstanding all his attempts, did not some corrupt affection, cherished in our bosoms, lay us naked and open to his poisoned darts. The Apostle Peter, who had a spiritual eye, and discerned wherein the strength of our great enemy lies, admonishes christians; "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, that war against the soul." And we are told by him, that "the corruption that is in the world, is through lust." The outward objects are useful and beneficial in their kind; the abuse of them is from lust. The poison is not in the flower, but in the spider. It is therefore infinitely dangerous, to consult or trust our carnal faculties in this matter, for they are bribed and corrupted, and will commend temporal things to our choice.

(3.) The sensual affections are so numerous and clamorous, so vehement and hasty, that if they are admitted to counsel, and give the decisive vote, the voice of conscience will not be heard or regarded. In concernments of a lower nature, it is constantly seen, that nothing more disturbs reason, and makes men improvident and precipitant in their determinations, than a disordered passion. From hence, it is a prudent rule, that as it is not fit to eat in the height of a fever, because the meat feeds the disease, by increasing the feverish, not the vital heat; so it is

not good to deliberate in the heat of any affection; for then the thoughts strongly blow up the passion, and smother reason, and the mind is rather a party than a judge: but after the declination of that fever in the soul, in a quiet interval, it is seasonable to consider. Now if any simple passion, when moved, transports and confounds the mind, and makes it incapable of judging aright; much more the love of the world, a universal passion that reigns in men, and has so many swarming desires answerable to the variety of sensible things, and therefore is more unruly, lasting and dangerous, than any particular passion. In short, sensual affections captivate the mind, and hinder its due considering the folly and obliquity of the carnal choice, and when incensed, (as distracted persons whose strength grows with their fury) violently break all the restraints the understanding can apply from reason and revelation.

[2.] In order to make a right choice, we must be very watchful lest the general example of men taint our reason, and cause an immoderate esteem of temporal things. "The whole world lies in wickedness," in a sensual sty, without conscience of its misery, or care of regaining its happiness; deceived and pleased with shews of felicity. The way to hell is broad, as the inclinations of the licentious appetite; pleasant, as the delights of sense; so plain and easy, that men go to it blindfold; and so frequented, that it would force tears from any considering person, to see men so hasty to meet with damnation. When Calisto the harlot reproached Socrates, that there were more followers of her beauty, than his wisdom; the philosopher replied, that was not strange, because it was much easier to draw them in the way of pleasure, that is steep and slippery, than to constrain them to ascend to virtue, seated on a hill, where the ascent is slow, and with toil and difficulty. Now there is nothing more contagious than example: We blindly consent with the multitude, and are possessed with foolish wonder, and carnal admiring of worldly greatness, treasures and delights, neglecting to make a due estimation of things. It is the ordinary artifice of the devil, to render temporal things more valuable and attractive to particular persons, from the common practice of men who greedily pursue them as their happiness: as some crafty merchants, by false reports, raise the exchange, to advance the price of their own wares. The men of the world are under the direction of sense, and think them only to be wise and happy that shine in pomp, abound in riches, and overflow in pleasures. The Psalmist tells us of the prosperous worldling, "that while he lives, he blesses his soul; and men will praise thee when thou dost well to thyself." By vicious imitation our judgments are more corrupted, and our passions raised to higher degrees for painted vanities. The affections in the pursuit of earthly things, are inflamed by the contention of others. And when holy desires and resolutions spring

up in men, yet so powerful is the custom of the world, that they often become ineffectual. As a ship whose sails are filled with a fair wind, but makes no way, stopped by the force of the current. Now to fortify us against the pernicious influence of example, consider,

1. It is most unreasonable in this affair of so vast moment, to be under the direction of the multitude. For the most are sottiſh and sensual, governed by the uncertain motion of a giddy voluble fancy, and roving impetuous passion; so that to be led by their example, and disregard the solid immortal rules of heavenly wisdom, is as perfect madness, as for one to follow a herd of swine through the mire, and leave a clean path that lies before him. If there were but a few in an age or country that were deluded with false appearances, it would be a disgrace to imitate the practice of the foolish: and shall the great numbers of the earthly minded give reputation and credit to their error? He were a strange fool indeed, that should refuse a single piece of counterfeit money, and receive a great heap in payment: as if the number added a real value to them. It is therefore a necessary point of wisdom to divest all \* vulgar prejudices, to separate ourselves from the multitude, that we may see the vanity of things that dazzle inferior minds.

2. Consider the universal judgment even of worldly men in their last and serious hours, when the prospect of eternal things is open before them. How vastly different are their apprehensions of temporal things in the review, from what they were in their vicious desires? How often do they break forth in the sorrowful words of the Apostle, "We have been toiling all night, and caught nothing?" When there are but a few remaining sands in the glass of time, and death shakes the glass before them, how powerfully do they preach of the emptiness and uncertainty of things below, and sigh out in Solomon's phrase, "All is vanity?" And this is more singularly observable in those who have had the fullest enjoyment of earthly things. How do they complain of the vain world, and their vainer hearts, when experience has convinced them of their woful folly? Solomon, who was among other princes as the sun in the midst of the planets, that obscures them by his illustrious brightness: he that had surveyed this continent of vanity, to make an experiment whether any satisfaction could be found in it, at last sadly declares, that all things here below are but several kinds and ranks of vanities, as ineffectual to make men happy, as counterfeit jewels of several colors are to enrich the possessor. Nay, they are not only vanity, but vexation, an empty shew that has nothing real, but the vexation of disappointment. And shall we

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\* Nonquam de vita judicatur, semper creditur, sanabimur, si modo sep-remur à cœtu. Sen. de vit. Beat.



not value the judgment of men when they are best instructed, and give credit to their testimony when they are sincere? Certainly in their approaches to the divine judgment they are most considerate and serious, they have the truest and justest thoughts of things, and most freely declare them. O the astonishing folly of men! they will not be convinced of the error of their ways, till they come to the end of them, and the sun is set, and no time remains for their returning into the way of life.

I shall proceed to shew further what is necessary to direct us in our choice, that we may not fall into the double misery, of being deceived with a false happiness for a little time, and deprived of true happiness forever.

## CHAPTER XII.

A steadfast belief of unseen eternal things is necessary to direct our choice. Faith realizes things future, and controls the efficacy of present temptations. The neglect of the great salvation proceeds from infidelity. The most that are believers in title, are infidels in their hearts. Consideration is necessary in order to a wise choice. It must be serious and deliberate; frequent, and with application to the soul. Motives to consideration. It is the noblest exercise of the mind, and most profitable.

First, a sound and steadfast belief of unseen eternal things. Secondly, serious consideration of the vast difference between things that are the objects of sight, and that are the objects of faith.

[1.] The sound and steadfast belief of eternal things, is requisite to direct our choice aright. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, Heb. 11. 1. It assures us of their reality and worth, as if they were before our eyes, and in our actual possession. This divine light governs and conducts the will to choose wisely, and excites all the practical powers for the preventing the greatest evils, and the obtaining perfect felicity. When the devil, the deadly flatterer, by inviting representations of the world, entices the heart, the serious belief of the future reward, so glorious and eternal, disgraces the most splendid temptations, and makes them ineffectual. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." If tempted to lasciviousness by the allurements of an earthly beauty, faith represents the angelical lustre of the saints, when they shall come with the unspotted lamb in his glorious appearance; and this unbinds the charm, and makes the tempting per-

son an object, not of desire, but aversation. If tempted with honor to a sinful compliance, faith represents so convincingly the glory which all those who preserve their conscience and integrity inviolable, shall receive all the universal judgment, in the presence of God and the holy angels, (as our Saviour has promised, "He that serves me, him will my Father honor)" and the confusion wherein the most honorable sinners shall then be covered, that with a generous disdain all secular honors will be dispised. And it is as powerful to enervate the temptation of temporal profit. We read of Moses, that "by faith, when he was come to years, (and therefore more capable to understand and enjoy what felicity the brightest honors and greatest riches could afford) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of reward." And all the evils which a wicked world (inspired with rage from Satan) can threaten, to fright us from our duty, poverty, disgrace, banishment, nay, torments and death, those *terribiles visu formæ*, so heightened by the carnal fancy, are easily overcome by a sincere and strong believer. Thus some who were urged by such motives to renounce their religion, told the persecutors, that \* life was not sweet to them, if they might not live christians, nor death bitter, if they must die for Christ. A lively firm persuasion of the excellence and eternity of the reward, what miraculous effects would it produce? Nothing would be impossible within the compass of our duty, either to do or suffer, in order to a glorious immortality. Faith has a celestial power, a magnetic virtue, to draw up the heart from the earth, and fasten it to things above. It is not imaginable, that a clear sighted soul, that sees a good infinitely great, should reject it for mean things, to please the lower desires: we may as probably imagine, that a skilful jeweller would part with the richest oriental pearls, for cherry stones to play with children.

From hence we may discover the true cause of the neglect of the great salvation offered in the gospel; "The word preached does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it." It is astonishing to consider, that earth should contend with heaven for our affections, and prevail against it; that vanity should turn the scale against the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" that men should pursue fleeting shadows, and neglect the most excellent realities; as if they could be happy here, and continue here forever, and hereafter there were neither happiness nor eternity. But this releases the wonder, that "all men have not faith." Eternal things are not of conspicuous mo-

\* Nec vereamur occidi, quos constat, quando occidimur, coronari. *Cyp.*

ment in the carnal balance. Some are infidels in profession, openly declaring themselves to be without religion, without God; and have the same credit of the heaven and hell discovered in the gospel, as if the Elysian fields, and Stygian lake, the fables of the poets. These live as if they should never die, and die as if they should never live in the other world; as if death caused so deep a sleep, that the voice of the Son of God could not awaken them at the last day. Their unbelief is not from reason, but vicious opposite affections; for the truth of the eternal state is so clearly revealed, and strongly established in the gospel, that the sincere mind must readily assent to it: but the wicked cannot delight in the discovery of that for which they are unprepared, and therefore try all ways to elude the force of the most satisfying arguments. Their infidelity is obstinate and incurable: an instance whereof we have in the Pharisees, who rejected our Saviour. Though all the characters of the Messiah were conspicuous in his person, though his doctrines were confirmed by miracles, yet they would not yield up themselves to that omnipotent conviction; so strong were their carnal prejudices against his humble state, and holy doctrines. That reproach is more justly due to infidels under the gospel, than to Israel in the prophet; "Who is blind as my servant?" The heathens who are blind from their birth, and have only some glimmering apprehensions that eternity succeeds time, are less culpable than those who have infinitely more reason to believe it, and yet believe it less. The plea for them will be a terrible accusation against such unbelievers. If a blind person falls, it moves compassion; but if one voluntarily shuts his eyes against the sun, and refuses the direction of the light, and falls from a precipice, his ruin is the just consequence of his folly. Simple ignorance excuses as to the degrees of the fault, but affected wilful ignorance, now reason and revelation with united beams give so clear a prospect into the eternal world, aggravates the guilt and sentence of such unbelievers.

Besides, the most that are believers in title, are infidels in heart. Our Saviour tells the Jews, who pretended the highest veneration to the writings of Moses, "That if they had believed Moses, they would have believed him, for Moses wrote of him." If men did seriously believe such an excellent reward as the gospel propounds, would it be a cold unpersuasive motive to them? The depravation of the will argues a correspondent defect in the mind; though not absolute total infidelity, yet such a weakness and wavering in the assent, that when temptations are present and urgent, and it comes to actual choice, sense prevails over faith. This will be clear by universal experience in temporal things. The probable hope of gain will make those who are greedy of gold, prodigal of their lives, and venture through tempestuous seas to accomplish their desires. And if the be-

lief were equal, would not men do or suffer as much for obtaining what is infinitely more valuable? A firm assent would produce adherence, and faith in the promises, fidelity in obeying the commands of Christ. Tertullian propounds it as a powerful incentive to the martyrs, *quis ergo non libentissime tantum pro vero habeat erogare, quantum alii pro falso?* Who would not joyfully sacrifice life and all its endearments, to obtain true blessedness, which others do for the vain appearance of it? Men may be as truly subjects without subjection, as believers without a heavenly conversation, which is inseparable from the reality of faith. Many in the bosom of the church are as truly, though not so notoriously, infidels, as Turks and Heathens. Indeed even in true believers, the apprehension of eternal things has such great allays, that temporal things are over valued and over feared. A strong faith in the truth and power of God, would make the glorious world so sure and near in our thoughts, that with indifferent affections we should receive good or evil things here; "Rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and mourn as if we mourned not." Our lives would be so regular and pure, as if the judge were to come the next hour, as if the sun did now begin to be darkened, and the trumpet of the archangel were sounding, and the noise of the dissolving world were universally heard, infidelity deads the impression, and suppresses the reigning power of eternal things in our hearts. In short, men are heavenly or earthly in their choice and conversation, as they are directed by the sincere light of *faith*, or misled by the false beams of *sense*.

[2.] The second thing requisite in order to a wise choice, is consideration. For as by faith the virtue of the reward is diffused through all the faculties, and the powers of the world to come are felt in the soul; so by consideration faith is exercised; and becomes effectual. This unites and reinforces the beams of eternal truth, and inflames the affections. As the Psalmist expresses himself, "my heart was hot within me: while I was musing, the fire burned." Heaven is a felicity so glorious and attractive, that if duly considered, no man can possibly refuse it: and hell is a misery so extreme and fearful, that if seriously laid to heart none can possibly choose it. The last end is to be conceived under the notion of an infinite good, without the least mixture of evil, to which the human will, swayed by the invincible impression of nature, has a tendency. The liberty of indifference is with respect to some particular good things, which may be variously represented, so as to cause inclination or aversion. That men who believe eternal life is the reward of holiness, yet with a careless inadvertency neglect their duty: and that eternal death is the wages of sin, yet securely continue in it, is more wonderful than to see martyrs sing in the flames; and the great cause of it is the neglect of consideration.

This is assigned to be the cause of that unnatural and astonishing rebellion of Israel against God their father and sovereign: Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider, Isa. 1. 2, 3.

This duty, as it is of admirable advantage, so it is universally necessary; for all are equally concerned, and it is within the power of all to perform. Though men cannot convert themselves, yet they may consider what is preparatory to conversion. For the will may turn the thoughts of the mind to any sort of objects.

I will briefly show the nature of this duty, and how to manage it for spiritual profit, and those objects from whence our thoughts derive vigor for the swaying of the will, and the conduct of the life.

(1.) The nature of consideration is discovered by its end, which is this; that the mind being satisfied in the just reasons upon which the choice of heaven is to be made, the will and affections may be engaged in an earnest, joyful and constant pursuit of it. And in this respect it differs from simple knowledge, and naked speculation, that informs the mind, without influence and efficacy upon the heart: like a garland of flowers that adorns the head, without any benefit and refreshing to him that wears it. And practical meditation differs from the study of divine things, in order to the instructing of others. That is like a merchant's buying of wine for sale, this like providing it for our own use.

(2.) That the consideration of eternal things may be effectual, it must be,

1. Serious and deliberate. For the affair is great in reality above all possible conception or comparison. All other things, how considerable soever in themselves, yet respectively and in parallel with this, are of no account. Our Saviour told Martha, "One thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the better part, that shall not be taken from her." What instance can be of equal moment with that of entertaining the Son of God? Yet a serious attention to the words of eternal life dropping from his lips, was more necessary than making provision for him. The greatest and most weighty affairs in the world are but a vain employment, but irregularity and impertinence, in compare with eternal salvation. And the greatest solemnity of thoughts is requisite to undeceive the mind, and engage the will for heaven. It is very observable, that errors in judgment and choice spring from the same causes, the not sincere and due weighing of things. In the decisions of questions, truth is discovered by comparing, with an equal staid attention, the reasons of the one and the other

part. But when some vicious affections contradict the truth, it fills the mind with prejudices, that it cannot impartially search into things, and is deceived with specious fallacies, with the image of truth. For according to the present application of the mind it is determined, and passion strongly applies it to consider that which is for the carnal interest, and consequently inclination, not reason, is the principle of the persuasion. And this is more evident in men's foolish choice : as the eye cannot see but what is visible, nor to the understanding conceive what is not intelligible, the will cannot love and choose what is not amiable, at least in shew. If the Devil did appear without a disguise, he would have no power to persuade, but in all his temptations there is the mixture of a lie to make it pleasant. He presents a false perspective, to make what is but superficial appear solid and substantial. And the carnal heart turns the thoughts to what is grateful, without seriously considering what is infinitely better, and accordingly chooses by the eye of sense, the happiness of this world. Therefore until eternal things are opened in the view of conscience, and the mind calmly considers by the light of faith their reality and greatness, no right valuation, nor wise choice can be made.

Besides, the most clear and rational enforcements by the actings of the thoughts, are necessary to make a strong impression on the affections, and rescue them from the captivity of the flesh. In other things, as soon as the mind is enlightened, the will resolves, and the inferior faculties obey ; but such is the resistance of the carnal heart, that although it is evident from infallible principle there is an everlasting glory, infinitely to be preferred above the little appearances of beauty and pleasure here, yet the most piercing reasons enter heavily without earnest inculcation. Slight or sudden thoughts may produce vanishing affections of complacence, or distaste, and fickle resolutions, that like sick feathers drop away, and leave the soul naked to the next temptation ; but solemn and fixed thoughts are powerful on the heart, in making a thorough and lasting change. When the clouds dissolve in a gentle shower, the earth drinks in all, and is made fruitful ; but a few sprinkling drops, or a short storm of rain, that wets only the surface, without sinking to the root, is little beneficial. In short, there may be some excitations to good, and retractions from evil ; some imperfect faint essays toward heaven, from an impulse on the mind : but solid conversion is produced by deliberate discourse, by the due consideration and estimation of things, it is rational and perpetual.

2. Consideration must be frequent, to keep eternal objects present, and powerful upon us. Such is the natural levity and inconstancy, sloth and carnality of the mind, that the notions of heavenly things quickly pass through, but of earthly abide there. If a stone be thrown upwards, it remains no longer in the air,

than the impression of the force by which it was thrown continues; but if it falls on the earth, it rests there by nature. When the soul is raised in contemplation to heaven, how apt is it to fall from that height, and lose the esteem, the lively remembrance and affections of eternal things? But when the thoughts are excited by the presence of what is pleasing to sense, the withdrawing the object does not deface the idea of it in the memory, nor lessen the conceit, nor cool the desires of it, because the heart is naturally inclined to it. Therefore it is necessary every day to refresh and renew the conceptions of eternal things, that although they are not always in act, yet the efficacy may be always felt in the heart and life. The soul habituated to such thoughts, will not easily yield to temptations, that surprise and overcome others that are strangers in their minds to the other world: nay, the presence of temptations, as by Antiperistasis, will reinforce the resolutions for heaven; like the pouring water upon lime, that revives a hidden fire in it, which seems a natural miracle. It is therefore of great advantage frequently to sequester ourselves from the world, to redeem time from secular affairs, for the recollecting our thoughts, and their solemn exercise upon the eternal world. Sense, that reveals natural things, darkens spiritual. How can the thoughts be fixed on invisible things so distant from sense, if always conversant with secular objects that draw them down? In the silence of the night, a small voice is more distinctly heard, and a little distant light more clearly seen: so when the soul is withdrawn from the noisy throng of the world, and outward things are darkened, the voice of conscience is better heard, and the light of heaven more perfectly received.

3. Consideration of eternal things must be with present application to the soul. It is not the mere conviction of the mind, but the decree of the will that turns men from sin to holiness, from the creatures to God. The heart is very deceitful, and by variety of shifts and palliations is disposed to irresolutions and delays in spiritual concerns. How often does the miserable sinner contend with himself, and while conscience urges him to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the affections draw down to the earth, the carnal part prevailing over the rational, he overcomes, and is overcome, he is convinced and condemned by his own mind. Till consideration issues in this, that with settled judgment and affections the soul determines for God and heaven, it is without profit. Therefore in the managing this duty, it is our wisdom not to be curious and inquisitive after subtle conceptions, and exalted notions of the future state, that little confer to the making the heart better; but to think seriously on what is plain and evident, and most useful to produce a present lasting change. It were egregious folly in a man, that for the use of his garden, should with great labor fetch water

from distant fountains, and neglect that which springs up in his own ground. That meditation is profitable which produces not new thoughts, but holy and firm resolutions of obeying God, in order to the full enjoying of him forever.

To persuade us to the serious practice of this duty, there are many enforcements.

Is any man so foolish, so regardless of his convenience, to purchase a house wherein he must live all his days, and will not first see whether it will be convenient, and secure for his habitation? Shall we not then consider heaven, the mansion of blessedness, and hell the seat of misery and horror? For according as we choose here, we shall be in the one or other place forever. I shall in the fourth part of this treatise, endeavor to represent something of the inexpressible misery of the wicked hereafter, and shew how congruous and powerful the thoughts of it are to restrain men from sin; but at present shall briefly excite to the meditation of the heavenly glory, as the most noble, delightful and fruitful work of the soul, whilst confined to the body of flesh. It is the most exalted exercise of the mind, the purest converse with God, the flower of consecrated reason. It is most like the life of glorified spirits above, who are in continual contemplation of the divine excellencies; and it is most raised above the life of carnal men, that are sunk into sensuality and brutishness. It is the most joyful life, in that it sheds abroad in the soul delights that neither satiate, nor corrupt, nor weaken the faculties, as the delights of sense do, but afford perfection as well as pleasure. It is the most profitable life. As in those parts of the earth where the beams of the sun are strongly reflected, precious metals and jewels are produced, wherein the refulgent resemblance of that bright planet appears: so the lively and vigorous exercise of the thoughts upon the heavenly glory, will produce heavenly affections, heavenly discourses, and a heavenly shining conversation. This will make us live like the blessed society above, imitating their innocence and purity, their joyful, entire and constant obedience to God. This confirms the holy soul in its choice, with an invincible efficacy against the temptations and lusts of the world. The serious considering believer is filled with ravishing wonder of the glory that shall be revealed, and looks down with contempt upon the earth, and all that has the name of felicity here. All the invitations, nay, terrors of the world, are as unable to check his pursuit of his blessed end, as the breath of an infant to stop the high flight of an eagle.

But how rare and diffused a duty is this? How hardly are men induced to set about it? Business and pleasures are powerful diversions. Some pretend business as a just cause, but in vain; *for the one thing necessary* challenges our principal thoughts and care. Besides there are intervals of leisure, and the thoughts are always streaming, and often run waste, which directed aright



would be very fruitful to the soul. The true cause of this neglect is from the inward temper of men. Carnal pleasures alienate the mind, and make it unfit for the deep, serious actings of the thoughts upon eternal things. "I have said of laughter, thou art mad." It makes the mind light, and vain, and desultory. As a distracted person by every motion of fancy flies from one thing to another without coherence. The heart is filled with cloudy and smoky fires, with thoughts and desires about worldly things, is unprepared for such a clear, calm, and sedate work. A carnal person can taste no sweetness, feel no relish in the meditation of heaven, nor any spiritual duty. It is as if one should take some delicious fruit into his mouth, a peach, or the like, without breaking the skin; it would be rather a trouble, than pleasant. Nay, the gospel expressly declaring, "That without holiness no man shall see God:" those who by vicious affections are engaged in any sinful way, being conscious of their guilt and unpreparedness, and that while such, they are under a peremptory exclusion from celestial glory, cannot endure the thoughts of heaven. The divine presence is their torment, and the serious consideration of it is to bring them before God's holy and just tribunal, to accuse and condemn them.

### CHAPTER XIII.

The objects from whence consideration derives its power to direct our choice.

The end for which man was designed in his creation. We must make a judicious comparison between the objects that stand in competition for our choice, the present world, and heaven. The vast difference between them in their quality and duration.

I shall now take a particular view of those objects, from whence consideration derives vigor, for the inclining of the will to a right choice, and for regulating the life.

1. Consider the end for which man was designed in his creation, why endued with rational and noble powers of soul, and placed by the sovereign maker in the highest rank of so numerous and various natures that fill the universe. Is it to raise an estate, to shine in pomp, to enjoy sensual pleasures for a little while, and after the fatal term to be no more forever? Was he sent into the world upon as mean a business as that of the foolish emperor, who employed an army, furnished with all military preparations, to gather shells upon the sea-shore? This were, according to the passionate expostulation of the Psalmist, to

charge God that "he had made all men in vain." Reason and scripture tell us, the end of man is to glorify and enjoy God; the obtaining whereof makes him perfectly happy, and the missing of it perfectly miserable. This is a fundamental truth, upon which the whole fabric of man's duty and felicity is built; without this foundation, our faith presently sinks. If the clearness of this principle be obscured, we shall wander from the way of eternal life, and not only lose the way, but the remembrance and desire of it. Thinking is the property of the reasonable soul; and the just order of consideration is, that the mind primarily regards this supreme directive truth, that is to govern all our actions. It was prudent counsel, that one of the \* ancients gave for composing a book; that the author frequently reflect upon the title, that it may correspond in all its parts with his original design. Thus it becomes a man often to consider the end of his being, that the course of his life may have a direct tendency to it; and the more excellent our end is, the more constraining is the necessity to prosecute it. It is of great efficacy to reflect upon ourselves, whither do my thoughts and desires tend? For what do I spend my strength, and consume my days? Will it be my last account, how much (by my prudence and diligence) I have exceeded others in temporal acquisitions? If a General were at play while the armies are engaging, would it be a noble exploit for him to win the game, while his army, for want of conduct, loses the victory? Will it be profitable for a man to gain the world, and lose his soul? Let conscience answer in truth.

It is observable, what is reported of a † noble foreigner; that on his birth-day reflecting upon the age of his life, he was surprised with grief, and struck with astonishment, that, without a due sense of the proper business and end of life, he was arrived to that age, when our days begin to decline. In an instant, all things seemed to change appearance in his view. Then first (says he) I perceived I was a man, for before I had not resolved for what I should employ my life. The issue was, his serious resolution unfeignedly to honor God, sincerely to confess Christ, to place his felicity in holiness of life, and most zealously to follow it. Let any one, that is not of a reprobate mind, and an incorrigibly depraved heart, duly consider the sublime and supernatural end of man: O what a marvellous change will it make in him, of carnal into spiritual? Nay, it would be a kind of miracle if he continu-

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\* Primum ego scriptoris officium existimo, ut titulum suum legat, atque identidem interrogat se, quid cœperit scribere.

† Cum natalis dies Februarij admonuisset ætatis numerandæ, et tricessimo reperissem, invasit me subita mœstitia, et percussit admirantem, quomodo sine sensu vitæ ad ejus culmen pervenissem, à quo lux quælibet fit obscurior, et dies nostri ad occasum inclinare incipiunt. Visa est mihi, rerum facies momento mutata, et tunc primum me hominem agnovi.—*Memoires Chanut.*

ed in his sinful state. How will it transform him into another man, with new valuations, new affections and resolutions, as if he were "born again" with a new soul? How will it amaze him, that his whole course has been a contradiction to the wise and gracious design of God, that all his industry has been a race out of the way, a perpetual diversion from his main business, that his life has been fruitless and dead to the true end of it? How will he be confounded at his former folly? Then alone we act with understanding, when moved by our blessed end, and our actions by a strict tendency, without variation, issue into it.

[2.] Consider attentively the objects that stand in competition for our choice, the present world and heaven, to make a judicious comparison between them in their quality and duration.

(1.) In their quality. The things of the world, according to the judgment of God himself, who is only wise and good, and has the highest authority to decide in the case, are but fallacious appearances of happiness, mere vanity: and certainly the Creator knows the true worth of all things, and would not disparage his own works, but would undeceive men, that are apt to judge and choose by the eye of sense. The Apostle tells us, "That an idol is nothing in the world:" although the matter of it may be of gold, or marble, or wood, yet it has no divine perfection, which the idolater attributes to it: so all worldly things, in which men place their chief care, and confidence, and joy, though they have some degrees of goodness, and are a transient relief to us in our passage to eternity, yet they are nothing as to perfect felicity. It is merely opinion and conceit that makes them so valued and pleasing; like a rich dye to a slight stuff, from whence its price arises. Reason is either obscured, or not obeyed, when the world is the object of our choice. Now what are these appearances of beauty and pleasure, compared with a blessedness that is truly infinite? Carnal joy smiles in the countenance, flatters the fancy, touches the sense, but cannot fill the heart; but the favor of God satisfies the soul: "Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than when their corn and wine increased." Carnal joy, in its highest elevation, in the time of the harvest and vintage, is incomparably less than spiritual joy, that springs from the light of God's countenance. The world cannot fill the narrow capacity of our senses, but divine joys exceed our most enlarged comprehensive faculties: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; but the peace of God passes all understanding." The things of the world are of a limited goodness; wisdom is not strength, nor learning riches, nor beauty fruitfulness: but God is a *universal good*, in whom are all attractives to raise and satisfy our desires. If men did consider, they would distinguish and despise, in comparison, all that is named felicity here, with the favor of God: to seek for satisfaction in the creature, and forsake him, is as if one desirous to see

the light, should withdraw from the presence of the sun, to borrow it from a weak ray reflected by some obscure matter. Now if there be so vast a difference in their nature, as between a painted vapor, and the solid glorious good, between finite and infinite; why is there not a difference accordingly in our esteem, affections and respects to them? How unreasonable is it, that a soul capable of God, should cleave to the dust? It would be most egregious folly to hang a weight, that is able to turn a great engine, upon a small clock: it is incomparably more foolish, when the love of happiness, the weight of human nature, which applied aright, will turn our desires to heaven, is only used to give vigorous motion to our endeavors about earthly things.

(2.) Consider their duration. The Apostle tells us, that the main scope of his actions was *things invisible*: and gives the reason of it; "For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal;" 2 Cor. 4. 18. To insist upon the vast difference between temporal and eternal, may seem needless; for the first notions of things are of such uncontrollable clearness, that an attempt to prove them, is to light a candle to discover the sun. Yet this principle drawing after it such powerful consequences for the government of our hearts and lives, and conscience being so remiss, and the sensual affections so rebellious, it is needful to consider this seriously, that what is really assented to in speculation, may not be contradicted in practice. Now who can unfold the infinite volume of ages in eternity? The understanding of an angel can no more comprehend what is incomprehensible, than the mind of a man. A snail will pass over an immense space as soon as an eagle; for though one dispatches more way than the other, yet both are equally distant from arriving to the end of what is endless. But that the conception of eternity may be more distinct and affecting, it is useful to represent it under some temporal resemblances, that sensibly, though not fully, express it. Suppose that the vast ocean were distilled drop by drop, but so slowly, that a thousand years should pass between every drop; how many millions of years were required to empty it? Suppose this great world in its full compass, from one pole to another, and from the top of the firmament to the bottom, were to be filled with the smallest sand, but so slowly, that every thousand years only a single grain should be added; how many millions would pass away before it were filled? if the immense superficies of the heavens, wherein are innumerable stars, the least of which equals the magnitude of the earth, were filled with figures of numbers without the least vacant space, and every figure signified a million; what created mind could tell their number, much less their value? Having these thoughts, I reply; the sea will be emptied drop by drop, the universe filled grain by grain; the numbers written in the heavens will come to an end: and how

much of eternity is then spent? Nothing; for still infinitely more remains. In short, whatever is temporal, extend the continuance of it to the utmost possibility of conception, is infinitely short of eternity. A day, an hour, a minute, has some proportion with a thousand years; for that duration is determined by a certain number of days, and hours, and minutes; but millions of ages have no proportion to eternity, because it is an indeterminate duration. The mind is soon tired and lost, in searching after numbers to represent it: It is confounded and struck with amazing horror, and can only direct the eye upward or downward to the two habitations of eternity, the glorious and the miserable, heaven and hell. Now let us compare the things of the present world with those of the future state: the first are measured by flying time, the other remain in an unmoveable eternity. The comforts that spring from the earth, suddenly wither and fall to it: the tree of life flourishes only above. Frequent changes from prosperity to adversity, are the properties of this mortal state. As those who are in voyages at sea, sometimes are in a calm, and presently suffer a storm, and are forced to alter their course by the changing of the winds; so it is with us in our passage here. But upon the first entrance into another world, all the variations of this are at an end. "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain shew, surely they are disquieted in vain." The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening cloud by the reflection of the sun invested with so bright a lustre, and adorned with such a pleasant variety of colors, that in the judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it. But in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaming appearance, nothing remains but a dark vapor, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here. In this, sense assists faith; for the experience of every day verifies what the scripture declares, "that the fashion of this world passes away." And therefore the guilty folly of men is aggravated, "to set their eyes and hearts upon that which is not." To see one passionately dote on a face ruined and deformed with age, to be enchanted without a charm, raises wonder, and exposes to contempt. Yet such is the stupidity of men to embrace with their most entire affections the withered vanities of the world, that are hastening to their period. It was a stinging reproach to idolaters from God: "None considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding," to say, "I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, I have also baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" And are not sensual men equally guilty of

such monstrous folly ? for though universal experience convinces them, that all things under the sun are fading, and that many times their dearest comforts are snatched away from their embraces ; yet who does not advisedly consider, and say to himself, shall I give my heart to transient shadows ? Shall I cherish vain hopes, vain aims and desires of obtaining happiness in a perishing world ? Although the worshiping a stock be idolatry of grosser infamy, yet it is as foolish as destructive to set our chief love and joy, that is only due to God, upon the creature. And what follows in the prophet, is justly applicable to such persons ; “ He feedeth on ashes, (that not only afford no nourishment, but is very hurtful to the body) a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand ?” Thus carnal men are so blinded with their affections to these short-lived pleasures, that they cannot take the true liberty of judging and reflecting, they are deceived and delighted with empty shadows that will suddenly end in disappointment and sorrow ? Briefly, these glittering fictions and false joys cannot please without an error in the mind, that shall last but a little while. And if you saw a distracted person sing and dance, with a conceit that he is a prince, would you be willing to lose sober reason for his fantastic pleasure ; especially if you knew that his cheerful fit should suddenly change into a mournful or raging madness forever ? But the blessedness above is unchangeable as God, the author and object of it ; eternal, as the soul that enjoys it. And shall “ the world, that passes away with the lusts thereof,” *turn our affections from the undefiled immortal inheritance ?* Shall the vanishing appearance, the fleeting figure of happiness, be preferred before what is substantial and durable ? If a spark of true reason, of sincere love to our souls be left, “ we shall count all things but dross and dung, that we may gain the kingdom of glory.” Thus eternity enlightens, thus it counsels us.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Other motives to seek the kingdom of heaven. God is very willing men should partake of his glory. All who unfeignedly and earnestly seek, shall obtain it. Heaven is promised upon gracious terms. An answer to the carnal allegation, that we are commanded to pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, and to submit to the sharpest sufferings. Fervent and constant prayer for divine grace, that we may fix our aims upon eternal happiness, and be diligent in the use of means to obtain it. The grace of the spirit, requisite to convince the mind thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible and future happiness. It is requisite to purify the will and affections, that with full consent the soul may desire and prosecute its blessed end.

To encourage us to seek the kingdom of heaven, I shall propound other motives to consideration.

1. God is very willing that men should be saved and partake of his glory. For this end, "he has brought life and immortality to light in the gospel." The Lord Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, has dispelled the darkness of the Gentiles, and the shadows of the Jews, and rendered the blessed and eternal state so clear and so visible, that every eye may see it. Our assurance of it is upon infallible principles. And though the excellent glory of it is inexpressible, yet it is represented under variety of fair and lovely types to invite our affections. Besides, God makes an earnest offer of life to us in his word; he commands, counsels, excites, urges, nay entreats and beseeches with infinite tenderness, that men will accept of it. Thus the Apostle declares, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God." Is it not evident then beyond the most jealous suspicion, God is desirous of our happiness? Can we imagine any design, any insincerity in his words? Why should heaven court a worm? It is his love to souls that expresses itself in that condescending compassionate manner, to melt and overcome the perverse and hardened sin.

And as his words, so his works are a convincing argument of his will: his most gracious sustaining and supporting of sinful men, his innumerable benefits conferred upon them, in the provision of good, and preservation from evil, are for this end, that by the conduct of his merciful providence they may be led to repentance, and received into his favor. And the temporal judgments inflicted on sinners, are medicinal in their nature, and in

his design to bring them to a sight and abhorrence of sin, to prevent their final ruin; if they prove mortal to any, it is from their obstinate corruption. The time allowed to those who are obnoxious to his justice every hour, is not a mere reprieve from torment, but a space of repentance to sue out a pardon: they are spared in order to salvation. The Lord is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. 3. 9.

But, above all his other works, the giving of his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, is an incomparable demonstration how much he delights in the salvation of men. Since God has been at such cost to put them into a capacity of obtaining the kingdom of unchangeable glory, far transcending the earthly paradise that was forfeited by sin, we have the strongest assurance that he desires their felicity. And how guilty and miserable will those sinners be, that when Christ has opened heaven to us by his blood, refuse to enter into it? When Brutus, the most noble Roman, propounded to a philosopher his design to restore Rome to liberty, he replied, that the action would be glorious indeed, but that so many servile spirits that tamely stooped under tyranny, were not worthy that a man of virtue and courage should hazard himself to recover that for them, which they did so lightly esteem. The redemption of mankind is without controversy the masterpiece of God's works, wherein his principal attributes appear in their excellent glory. But how astonishing is the unworthiness of men, who wretchedly neglect salvation, which the Son of God purchased by a life full of sorrows, and a death of infinite sufferings? Blessed Redeemer! may it be spoken with the humble, affectionate, and thankful sense of thy dying love, why didst thou give thyself a ransom for those who are charmed with their misery, and with the most foul ingratitude disvalue so precious a redemption? How justly shall they be forever deprived of it? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

2. Consider, this glorious blessedness shall be the portion of all that unfeignedly choose it, and earnestly seek it. This motive was inclosed in the first, but deserves a separate consideration. And of this we have infallible assurance from the word of God, "who cannot lie. Godliness has the promise of the life to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance." The hope of a christian is so certain, that it is compared to an anchor fastened in heaven. And besides the fidelity of his word, God has given us security of the reward, the life of his Son. This methinks should turn the current of our desires and endeavors to heaven. For notwithstanding all our toil and sweat, the labor of the day, and the watchings of the night for the obtaining earthly things, yet we many times fall short of our aims and hopes. It was the observation of the wisest man, "I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift,



nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to all." Indeed such is the order of divine providence in the world, there must be different conditions of men here: some rich, others poor; some noble, others mean; some in command, others in subjection. And from hence it is also evident, that neither dignity, nor riches, nor pleasures are the happiness of man. For it is not becoming the wisdom and goodness of God to make the last end of the reasonable creature, which though sought with sincerity and diligence, may not be obtained, or of which without his own consent he may be deprived. But civil distinctions and qualities are of no value and consideration with respect to the obtaining or excluding from heaven. The rich and honorable that are in an exalted state, have not a more easy ascent and entrance into the kingdom of God, than those who are in the lowest degree. The stars appear with the same brightness to him that stands in the deepest valley, as on the highest hill. Is there any difference between the souls of the rich and great in the world, and the souls of the poor and despised? Are they not equally the offspring of God, and equally ransomed by the most precious blood of his Son? Are they not equally capable of eternal rewards? Are not the promises of the heavenly kingdom equally addressed to every one that has an immortal soul, that is faithful to his duty and covenant with God? This should inspire all with flaming desires, and draw forth their utmost industry, "and make them steadfast and unmoveable, always to abound in the work of the Lord, knowing our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

I know the carnal will is impetuous and impatient of delay; and earnest for what is present, with the neglect of the future glory. But the unreasonableness of this is evident to all: for it is not a new and strange thing to sow in hopes of reaping a harvest, for men to be industrious and active on land and sea for future advantage. Nay, it is the constant practice of the world: the merchant, the husbandman, the student, the soldier, and every man in the circle of his calling, are visible instances of this; and though many times the most flourishing hopes are blasted, they are not discouraged. And is it not a sight full of wonder, to observe men cheerful in labors and hardships in the service of the world, to carry it so lightly as if they had wings, and all for a poor and uncertain recompense, and to be slow and languid in their endeavors for a reward as great and as sure as God is glorious and true? How many ambitiously strive to please a prince, and wait long in his service, who is but a man, and therefore variable in his temper and state; sometimes is not willing to do what he can, and sometimes cannot do what he would to reward his servants? And is there not infinitely more

reason we should labor to please God, who is the most liberal, and rich, and "certain rewarder of all them that seek him?"

3. Consider how gracious the terms are upon which heaven is promised in the gospel. Our Saviour's laws are so holy, just, and in their own nature so good to men, even in their present performance, that their own excellence, and equity, and sweetness, is sufficient to recommend them without a respect to the glorious reward of obedience. For what can be more desirable than conformity to the nature of the blessed God? What pleasure is comparable to that which springs from a pure conscience, from a godly, righteous and sober conversation? How joyful is the performance of that service which more immediately is directed to the honor of the divine Majesty? In prayer, and other sacred actions, we draw near to the fountain of felicity, and receive from his fulness. In the affectionate praises of God, we are companions of the angels. And is not integrity and honesty in our dealings with men more easy and comfortable than fraud and oppression? Is it not troublesome to be always under a mask, to use arts and disguises to avoid the reproach and revenge that attends unjust actions when discovered? Are temperance and chastity as hurtful to the body, as luxury and lasciviousness, the essential parts of carnal felicity? How miserable is man when the heart is rent with numberless vanities, the affections distracted between various objects! How quiet and composed, when the heart is united to God as the supreme good, and the affections joyfully conspire in his service! Can it then be pretended that the yoke of Christ is heavy, and his law hard? Or are his promises uncertain, and his reward small? No, "his commands are not grievous; in the keeping them there is a great reward," a present Paradise. Religion will make us happy hereafter in the enjoyment of God, and happy here in obedience to his holy will. Such is his goodness, that our duty and happiness are the same.

But it will be said, that the gospel requires "us to pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, and to take up the cross of Christ; that is, to mortify the dearest lusts, and to submit to the sharpest sufferings for his honor, that we may be eternally happy."

To this I answer :

It is true, the human nature in this depraved state, only relishes such objects as pleasantly insinuate with the carnal senses, and it is bitter as death to bind up the affections from them. But grace gives a *new divine nature to the soul*, and makes it easy to abstain from fleshly lusts. To make this more clear by a sensible instance: suppose a diseased person, whose stomach is oppressed with corrupt humors, and his throat and mouth so heated with choler and continual thirst, that he thinks it impossible, though for his life, to abstain from immoderate drinking.

If a physician by some powerful medicine cleanses the stomach, and tempers the internal heat, he then can easily restrain himself from excess. Thus a carnal man that is full of false estimations, and irregular desires, while there are pleasures without, and passions unsubdued within, though his salvation depends on it, thinks it impossible to restrain the exorbitant appetites of flesh and blood. The "Gentiles thought it strange, christians did not run with them to the same excess of riot." But divine grace so clarifies and enlightens the mind, so purifies and elevates the affections, that it is not only possible, but easy to abstain from unlawful pleasures. St. Austin, before his conversion, was astonished, that many in the vigor of youth, and in a frail world lived chastely; and reflecting upon himself, was encouraged by this thought, that which such and such observe, why shall it be impossible for me to observe? And upon serious trial, by the prosperous influence of heaven, was a conqueror over all carnal temptations. Nay, after his holy change, the withholding his heart from vicious delights, \* was inexpressibly more sweet than his former enjoying of them. And are there not many visible examples of holy heavenly christians, to whom grosser sensual pleasures are unsavory and contemptible? You may as well tell the number of the stars, as of those who have practised religion in its strictness and purity, and by their enlightened conversations directed us in the way to heaven. And are their bodies taken from the vein of a rock, and not composed of flesh and blood as well as others? Are their passions, like Solomon's brazen sea, unmoveable by any winds of temptations? Are they entirely exempted from the impression of objects, and lower affections? No, they are alive, and sensible of those things that affections of carnal men, but by the power of grace despise and overcome them. And this grace is offered in the gospel, to all that sincerely desire it; so that it is a vain wretched pretence that religion binds to hard service.

To the other part of the objection, that sometimes religion exposes the professors of it to heavy sufferings, I answer; indeed the gospel is plain and peremptory in this, if we will "reign with Christ, we must suffer with him," when we are called forth to give a noble testimony to his truth. It is no extraordinary elevation, no point of perfection, but the duty of every christian to be always ready in the disposition and resolution of his mind, to sacrifice his life when the honor of Christ requires it. But it is no hard condition to suffer transient afflictions for the obtaining a happy immortality, to be conformable to the image of our suffering Redeemer, that we may be crowned with his glory. How many christians esteemed themselves honored in the disgrace, and blessed in the injuries they suffered for Christ, and with an

\* *Quam suave carere suavitatibus istis?*

invincible patience, and astonishing joy, endured the most cruel persecutions, though yet the human nature in them was as tender, and sensible of pains as in others? But the natural aversion and repugnance to suffering was over-ruled by the reward attending it. They gave a most convincing sensible testimony how much more valuable heaven is, than this present world, willingly exposing themselves to all evil here, "rejoicing in hope" of a glorious issue.

In short; the reward of obedience is a triumphal crown; and where there is no victory, there can be no triumph; and where no combat, no victory; and where no enemy, no combat. Therefore we are commanded to fight against our internal enemies, our corrupt affections, to kill the lusts of the flesh, and to encounter and overcome, by humility and meek submission, the cruelty of malicious enemies without us, in order to obtain the crown of life. And a believer that has heaven in taste and expectation, will easily renounce the most pleasant, and willingly endure the sharpest temptations, for the blessed reward of his obedience.

*Lastly*, Fervent and constant prayer, is requisite for the grace of God, that we may fix our aims aright upon eternal happiness, and use those sure means that with divine advantage are proposed in the scriptures, that can make us wise to salvation. Such is the depravation of man since his fall, the mind is diverted by vain thoughts, and the heart prepossessed with sensual desires, that till *the spirit of his mind be renewed*, and his original affections to the Supreme Good be revived and restored by divine grace, he is regardless of it, and only applies himself to what is pleasing to sense. There may be some transient glances, and volatile wishes of heaven in carnal men, but they are miserably weak, and ineffectual. Therefore a most necessary duty incumbent upon us, is by humble and fervent prayer to address ourselves to God for his spirit, to enlighten our minds, that we may believe the reality and greatness of the eternal reward; and to reform our wills, that we may feel its attractive force. Both these acts of the spirit are requisite, that the love of God, as our chief felicity, may be the regent principle of our hearts and lives.

1. For this end the Holy Spirit convinces men thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible and future happiness. In the light of the gospel, how many of eminent intellectual faculties are stupid as to their great interest, and spend themselves about trifles, and are equally tractable to eternal ruin, as the ox to the slaughter? He that is destitute of the illuminating grace of the spirit, "is blind, and cannot see far off." Now by the analogy between the corporeal and intellectual faculties, we may understand in some measure, how the mind is illuminated by the Spirit of God. For as to the act of seeing, two things are requi-

site ; 1. External light in the air, without which the colors, figures and beauties of objects are not visible to the sharpest eye, but lie obscured under impenetrable darkness. 2. Internal light in the eye, in which the visive power consists : if this be extinguished, the clearest light of heaven is of no use for the discovery of things. Thus the understanding is enabled to see spiritual things. 1. by the revelation of the object : in this respect "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." Till that bright discovery was made of eternal blessedness, it was above the desires and hope of sinful man. *Cælum, homo, nec optare poterat ex ignorantia, nec sperare ex propria miseriæ conscientia.* 2. By the inward enlightening, "from the spirit of wisdom," that removes the ignorance, prejudice, and inadvertency of the mind, which as scales darkened its sight, and disposes it to perceive the verity and excellency of spiritual and future things, though not with comprehensive evidence, yet with that assurance, that no doubtfulness or suspense remains concerning them. It is observable that faith is expressed in scripture, by *prudence, wisdom, and knowledge*, whereby a man knows the grounds and motives of his judgment and actions. And sin is called *folly*. For as when the understanding faculty, either from the indisposedness of the organs as in idiots, or from the disorder of fancy, by inflammation of the humors, as in distracted persons, cannot weigh and compare, and therefore makes a perverse judgment of things : so the carnal mind, by not due measuring and pondering, judges falsely of spiritual things. If something no bigger than the hand were put before the eye, it would intercept the sight of the heavens ; and he that not considering the properties of things near and distant, should conclude that piece to be bigger than the heavens, were justly reputed a fool. And the folly of carnal men is more gross, who prefer things present to sense, before what is future, and of everlasting consequence to the soul. But there are some actions, which if done by a natural, would be counted folly ; yet being done by those who in the reputation of the world are wise, are esteemed prudent, but they are the most deplorable folly. Now as the restoring the *Lasum principium*, the broken mind to its sound state, whereby it is able to consider, discern and conclude of things according to their nature, such is the action of God's Spirit upon the corrupt mind, clarifying and enlightening it, so that it receives full conviction by the clearest marks of divine authority shining in the gospel, of the truth of all the great and precious promises therein contained, and causing it, by a steady application of the thoughts, to see the vast difference between what is temporal and eternal ; how despicably light all the vanities of this world are found, when put in the balance against the infinite inestimable happiness of the next. In short, the renewed mind knows spiritual things according to their nature and qualities, believes, esteems, and determines that they

are of eternal moment, and absolutely necessary for the happiness of man. And as when the natural faculty of seeing is perished, it is irreparable by human skill, and without a miracle can never be restored : so the intellectual faculty, when darkened by sinful lusts, without the renewing power of the Spirit, "can never know spiritual things as they ought to be known." Therefore as the blind men in the gospel who despaired of help from the physicians, hearing of the miraculous power of Christ, importunately begged his healing mercy ; so let us pray to the light and Saviour of the world, but in a more noble and higher sense, "Lord, that we may receive our sight." Let us with the most zealous affections call upon "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

2. The efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit is requisite to change the will, that with a free and full consent it may desire and prosecute the spiritual eternal good. Without this, the conviction of the mind is not powerful enough to convert the soul from the love of the world, to choose heaven. There may be an enlightened conscience without a renewed heart. Though the judgment assents that God is the Supreme Good, *yet till the heart be circumcised*, the sensuality of the affections taken away, divine love that directs the life to God as our blessed end, can never possess it. Suppose that men had a sensible and strong assurance of the eternal state hereafter, if all those who live godly in a visible manner ascended with Elias to heaven, and if all who continued in their sins visibly descended into hell, as Corah and his company were swallowed up alive by the earth before the Israelites ; if men could hear the joyful exultations of the saints above, their high praises of God, and hear the desperate cries and deep complaints of the damned : if one, according to the desire of the rich man, were sent from hell, and with his fiery tongue should relate what he had seen and suffered, and exhibit a sensible demonstration in himself of those torments ; yet this alone were not sufficient to draw off their hearts from the deceitful happiness of this world, and fasten them on the perfect and eternal happiness in the next. Indeed they could not indulge their lusts so securely, but they would be "strangers to the life of God," such an inveterate alienation of the heart is in man from real holiness. Till the sanctifying spirit by a directive persuasive light, that represents the truth and goodness of spiritual things, transforms the soul, and makes it spiritual in its valuations and affections, it is inwardly averse from grace and glory. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

OF

## HELL.

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MARK IX. 48.

*Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

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### CHAPTER I.

The opening of the text. The punishment of unreformed sinners shall be extreme and eternal. The torments in hell exceed the heaviest judgments inflicted here. They are represented in scripture, so as to instruct and terrify sinners. The soul shall be the chief mourner in hell. The apprehension shall be enlarged to all afflicting objects. The thoughts shall be fixed upon what is tormenting. All the tormenting passions will be let loose upon the guilty soul. Shame, sorrow, rage, despair, at once seize on the damned.

The words are the repetition of a powerful motive, by our blessed Saviour, to deter men from indulging temptations to sin, how grateful or useful soever to them: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out." All the occasions whereby sin insinuates itself, and inflames our inclinations, whether it bribes us with profit, or allures by pleasure, must be immediately cut off, and forever separated from us. This counsel seems very severe to the natural man, who freely converses with temptations: to do violence to himself, and tear his beloved lusts from his bosom, the carnal nature will not consent to. Our Saviour therefore urges such arguments as may move the understanding and affections, may strike sense and conscience: "For it is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, where the fire never shall be quenched." Hope and fear are the most active passions: the hope of heaven is motive enough to induce a true believer to despise and reject all the advantages and pleasures of sin that are but for a season: and the fear of an everlasting hell, is strong enough to control the vicious appe-

tites. Reason determines that when a \*gangrene that is deadly and spreading, has seized upon a member, presently to cut off an affected arm or leg, to save the rest : how much more reasonable and necessary is it to part with the most charming and favorite sin, to preserve the soul from eternal death ? It is observable, our Saviour inculcates three times, that men may take notice of it with terror, “where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched :” a worm gnawing upon the bowels, that are of the most tender and quick sense, fire that causes the most vehement pain, are fearful representations to typify the torments of the damned : and that the worm is undying, and the fire unquenchable, infinitely aggravates their punishment.

The proposition is this : that the punishment of those who will retain their pleasant or profitable sins, shall be extreme and eternal.

In the handling of this point, I will, 1. Discourse of the extremity of the punishment. 2. Of the eternity of it.

I. Of the extremity of it.

Before the particular description of the pains of the damned, I shall observe in general, that the full representation of hell is beyond all human expression ; nay, our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of it. Who knows the power of thine anger ? Psal. 90. 11. What are the prepared plagues, by infinite justice, and Almighty wrath, for obstinate sinners ? It is impossible for the most guilty and trembling conscience to enlarge its sad apprehensions according to the degrees of that misery. “The Lord will shew forth his wrath, and make his power known in the vessels fitted for destruction.” None can tell what God can do, and what man shall suffer, when made capable to endure such torments forever, as now would presently consume him. As the glory of heaven cannot be fully understood till enjoyed, so the torments of hell cannot be comprehended till felt. But we may have some discovery of those unknown terrors, by the following considerations.

The most heavy judgments of God upon sinners here, are light and tolerable, in comparison of the punishment of sinners in the next state. For,

(1.) Temporal evils, of all kinds and degrees, (as pestilence, famine, war,) are designed for the bringing of men to a sight and sense of their sins, and are common to good and bad here. And if his anger be so terrible when he chastises as a compassionate father, what is his fury when he punishes as a severe judge ? If the correcting remedies, ordered by his wisdom and love for the conversion of sinners, be so sharp, what is the deadly revenge of his irreconcilable hatred ?

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\* Ut corpus redimas, ferrum patieris et ignes ; ut valeas animo, quicquam tolerare negabis ? At pretium pars hæc corpore majus habet. *Ovid.*



(2.) The miseries of the present state are allayed with some enjoyments. None are so universally afflicted, so desolate, but something remains to sweeten the sense of their sufferings. Judgments are tempered with mercies: no man is tortured with all diseases, nor forsaken of all friends, nor utterly without comfort. And when the affliction is irremediable, yet if our grief produces sympathy in others, it is some ease to the troubled mind, and by that assistance the burden is made lighter: but in hell, the damned are surrounded with terrors, encompassed with flames, without any thing to refresh their sorrows; not a drop of water to a lake of fire. All that was esteemed felicity here, is totally withdrawn: death puts a period to their lives, and pleasures of sin, forever. For it is most just, that those objects which were abused by their lusts, and alienated their hearts from their duty and felicity, should be taken away: and which is extreme misery, in their most pitiful state, they are absolutely unpitied. Pity is the cheap and universal lenitive, not denied to the most guilty in their sufferings here; for the law of nature instructs us to pity the man, when the malefactor suffers. But even this is not afforded to the damned: all their agonies and cries cannot incline the compassion of God, and the blessed spirits in heaven, towards them; for they are not compassionate objects, their misery being the just effect of their perverse obstinate choice: and in hell, all human tender affections are extinguished forever. Now it is the perfection of misery, the excess of desolation, to be deprived of all good things pleasing to our desires, and to suffer all evils, from which we have the deepest aversion and abhorrence. As in heaven, all good is eminently comprised, and nothing but good; so in hell, all evil is in excessive degrees, and nothing but evil.

(3.) Temporal evils are inflicted by the mediation of second causes, that are of a limited power to hurt; but in the next world, he more immediately torments the damned by his absolute power. The Apostle tells us, that the wicked "are punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." What is the lashing with a few rushes, to a blow given by the hand of a giant, that strikes dead at once? This comparison is below the truth.

More particularly, the state of misery is set forth in Scripture by such representations as may powerfully instruct and terrify even the most carnal men. Nothing is more intolerably painful, than suffering the violence of fire enraged with brimstone; and hell is described by a lake of fire and brimstone, wherein the wicked are tormented. Whether the fire be material or metaphorical, the reality and intenseness of the torment is signified by it: but the ordinary fire, though mingled with the most torturing ingredients, is not an adequate representation of it: for that is prepared by men; but the fire of hell is prepared by the

wrath of God, for the devil and his angels. The divine power is illustriously manifested in that terrible preparation: so that, as some of the fathers express it, if one of the damned might pass from those flames into the fiercest fires here, it were to exchange a torment for a refreshment. The scripture speaks of the vehement heat, and fiery thirst, and outer darkness, in which the damned suffer, to satisfy the rights of justice in the torment of those senses, for the pleasure of which men wilfully broke the laws of God.

But the soul being the chief sinner, shall be the chief mourner in those regions of sorrow. An image of this we have in the agonies of spirit, which sometimes the saints themselves are in here, and which the most stubborn sinners can neither resist nor endure. Job was afflicted in that manner, that he complains, "The arrows of the Almighty are with me, the poison whereof drinks up my spirit; the terrors of God set themselves in array against me." If a spark of his displeasure falls on the guilty conscience, it tears and blows up all, as a fire-ball cast into a magazine. Solomon, who understood the frame of human nature, tells us, "The spirit of a man can bear his infirmity;" that is, the mind fortified by principles of moral counsel and constancy, can endure the assault of external evils; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" This is most insupportable, when the sting and remorse of the mind is from the sense of guilt; for then God appears an enemy, righteous and severe; and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the sharpness of his sword, and the weight of his hand, that every stroke is deadly inward. Satan, the cruel enemy of souls, exasperates the wounds: he discovers and charges sin upon the conscience, with all its killing aggravations, and conceals the divine mercy, the only lenitive and balm to the wounded spirits. What visions of horror, what spectacles of fear, what scenes of sorrow are presented to the distracted mind by the prince of darkness? And, which heightens the misery, man is a worse enemy to himself than Satan; he falls upon his own sword, and destroys himself. The guilty conscience turns "the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood:" the precious promises of the gospel, that assures favor and pardon to returning and relenting sinners, are turned into arguments of despair, by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of mercy, that the advocate in God's bosom is become the accuser. Whatever the soul-wounded sinner sees or hears, afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. All the diversions in the world, business, pleasures, merry conversation, comedies, are as ineffectual to give freedom from those stings and furies in the breast, as the sprinkling of holy water is to expel a raging Devil from a possessed person. Those who in their pride and jollity have despised serious religion, either as a fond transport and extasy towards God, or a dull melan-

choly and dejection about the soul, or an idle scrupulosity about indifferent things ; yet when God has set their sins (with all their killing circumstances) in order before their eyes, how changed, how confounded are they at that apparition ? How restless, with the dreadful expectation of the doom that attends them ! Belshazzar, in the midst of his cups and herd of concubines, by a few words written on the wall, (containing his process and judgment) was so terrified by his guilty jealous conscience, that his joints were loosed ; nature sunk under the apprehension. Now all these troubles of mind are but the beginning of sorrows, but the smoke of the infernal furnace, but earnest of that terrible sum, which divine justice will severely exact of the wicked in hell.

Indeed, these examples are rare, and not regarded by the most, and by some looked on as the effects of distraction ; but to convince the bold and careless sinners, who never felt the stings of an awakened conscience, what extreme terrors seize upon the wicked in the other world, consider,

1. The apprehension shall be more clear and enlarged, than in the present state. Now the soul is oppressed with a weight of clay, and in drowsiness and obscurity ; the great things of eternity are of little force to convince the conscience, or persuade the affections ? But then the soul shall work with the quickest activity ; the mind shall, by an irresistible light, take a full view of all afflicting objects : the most stupid and unconcerned sinners shall then see and feel their ruined state ; what a glorious felicity they have lost, what a misery they are plunged into, without any possibility of lessening it by false conceits, and receiving any relief by the error of imagination.

2. The mournful thoughts shall be always fixed upon what is tormenting. The soul, in conjunction with the body, cannot always apply itself to one sort of objects ; for the ministry of the sensible faculties is requisite to its operations, and the body must be supported by eating and drinking, and rest, which interrupt troublesome thoughts. Besides, the variety of objects and accidents here, avert the mind sometimes from what is afflicting : but the separate soul is in no dependance on the body, and after their re-union, there shall be no necessity of food or sleep, or any other animal actions to support it ; but it shall be restored to a new capacity for new torments, and preserved in that miserable state by the power of God. There will be nothing then to divert the lost soul from sad reflection upon its misery. There are no lucid intervals in hell.

3. All the tormenting passions will then be let loose at once upon the guilty creature. And if there be no single passion so weak, but heightened, will break the spirit, and render life so miserable, that a man will take sanctuary in the grave to escape ; how miserable is the condition, when the most fierce and united

passions war against the soul? This is signified by "the never dying worm," that gnaws on the tenderest parts, and of quickest sense. Shame, sorrow, despair, fury, hatred and revenge, are some of that brood of vipers that torment the damned.

1. Shame is a passion of which human nature is very sensible, and this in the highest degree of confusion shall seize on the wicked. For all the just causes of shame shall then meet: the inward source of it, is the consciousness of guilt, of turpitude and folly in the action; and all these are the inseparable adjuncts of sin. The guilty soul, by a piercing \* reflection upon its crimes, has a secret shame of its degeneracy and unworthiness: the passion is increased, when a discovery is made of vile practices that defile and debase a man, expose to contempt and infamy, before persons of high quality and eminent virtue, whom we admire and reverence, and whose esteem we value. To be surprised in an unworthy action by such a person, disorders the blood, and transfuses a color in the face, to cover it with a veil of blushing: and the more numerous the spectators are, the more the disgrace is aggravated. And if derision be joined with the ignominy, it causes extreme displeasure. O the universal confusion, the overpowering amazement, that will seize on sinners in the great day of discovery, when all the works of darkness, all their base sensualities shall be revealed before God, angels and saints! When all the covers of shame shall be taken off, the excuses and denials, to extenuate or conceal their sins, shall vanish, and their breasts be transparent to the eyes of all! How will they be ashamed of their foul and permanent deformity in the light of that glorious presence? How will they be astonished to appear in all their pollutions before that bright and immense theatre? How will they be confounded to stand in all their guilt before that sublime and severe tribunal? How will they endure the upbraidings for all the sins which they have so wickedly committed, and the derision for the punishment they so deservedly suffer? The holy Judge will "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes. The righteous also shall see, and shall laugh at them:" lo, these are the men that made not God their portion, but perishing vanities, that preferred sweet folly before severe wisdom. The Devils will reproach them for that scornful advantage they had over them, that as children are seduced for things of lustre to part with real treasures; so they were easily persuaded for the trifles of time to change eternal happiness. Whether will they cause their shame to go? Jer. 14. 12. Those black sinners that here never change color for their filthiness, that hardened by custom in sin, are impenetrable to shame, as the brute beasts that are absolutely destitute of reason; nay, they have not only overcome all

\* Tacita sudant præcordia culpa. *Juv.*

tenderness, but "glory in their shame," shall glow at the manifestation of their social lusts, their vile servilities, and be covered with confusion, and the sense of it shall be revived in their minds forever.

2. To open shame is joined the greatest inward sorrow. This passion, when violent, penetrates the soul in all its faculties, and fastens it to the afflicting object. When it dwells in the bosom, it gives an easy entrance to whatever cherishes and increases it, and rejects what might assuage and lessen the sense of the evil. The most pleasant things do not excite desire or joy, but exasperate grief. Like those animals that convert the best nourishment into their own poison; so deep sorrow receives mournful impressions from all things, and turns the sweetest comforts of life into wormwood and gall. The causes of sorrow are either the loss of some valued good, or the sense of some present evil. And the sorrow is more violent, as the cause is great in itself, and in the apprehension and tenderness of the sufferers. Now both these causes, with all the heavy circumstances that can multiply and aggravate sorrow, meet in hell the centre of misery.

The loss is inconceivably great. If Cain, when banished from the society of the saints, where God was publicly worshipped, and by spiritual revelations and visible apparitions, graciously made himself known, cried out in anguish of soul, "My punishment is greater than I can bear; from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive upon the earth:" how intolerable will the final separation from his glorious and joyful presence be? In the clear and transforming vision of his glory, and the intimate and indissoluble union with him by love, consists the perfection and satisfaction of the immortal soul. The felicity resulting from it is as entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has so often promised it in scripture. Now the damned are forever excluded from the reviving presence of God. It is often seen how tenderly and impatiently the human spirit resents the loss of a dear relation. Jacob, for the supposed death of Joseph, was so overcome with grief, that when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, and said, "I will go down mourning to the grave." Indeed this overwhelming sorrow is both a sin and a punishment. \*It is ordained by the righteous and unchangeable decree of God, that every inordinate affection in man should be his own tormenter. But if the loss of a poor frail creature for a short time be so afflicting, how unsupportable will the sorrow be for the loss of the blessed God forever? Who can fully conceive the extent and degrees of that evil? For an evil rises in proportion to the good of which it deprives us: it must therefore follow, that celestial blessedness being an infinite eternal good, the exclusion from it is proportionably evil. And as the felicity of the saints results from the

\* *Jussisti Domine, et sic est, ut poena sit sibi omnis inordinatus affectus. Aug.*

fruition of God in heaven, and from comparison with the contrary state : so the misery of the damned arises both from the thoughts of lost happiness, and from the lasting pain that torments them.

It may be replied, if this be the utmost evil that is consequent to sin, the threatenings of it is likely to deter but few from the pleasing their corrupt appetites : for carnal men have such gross and vitiated affections that are careless of spiritual happiness. They cannot "taste and see how good the Lord is."

To this a clear answer may be given : In the next state, where the wicked shall be forever without those carnal objects that here deceive and delight them, when deprived of all things that please their voluptuous senses, their apprehensions will be changed ; they shall understand what a happiness it is to enjoy God, and what a misery to be expelled from the celestial Paradise. Our Saviour tells the Jews, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out, Luke 15. 28. How will they pine with envy at the sight of that triumphant felicity, of which they shall never be partakers ? To see that blessed company entering into the sacred mansions of light, will make the loss of heaven infinitely more discernible and terrible to the wicked, who shall be cast into "outer darkness," and forever be deprived of communion with God and his saints. "Depart from me," will be as dreadful a part of the judgment, as "eternal fire."

With the loss of the most excellent good, the suffering of the most afflicting painful evil is joined. The sentence is, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire." And if an imaginary sorrow conceived in the mind without a real external cause, as in melancholy persons, when gross vapors darken and corrupt the brightness and purity of the spirits that are requisite for its cheerful operations, is often so oppressing, that nature sinks under it ; how insupportable will the sorrow of condemned sinners be, under the impression and sense of God's almighty and avenging hand, when it shall fully appear how pure and holy he is in his anger for sin, how just and dreadful in punishing sinners ? It may be, the indulgent sinner may lessen his fear of hell, by fancying the number of sufferers will assuage the sense of their misery. But this is a foolish mistake ; for the number of sufferers shall be so far from affording any relief, that the misery is aggravated by the company and communication of the miserable. Every one is surrounded with sorrows, and by the sights of woe about him, feels the universal grief. The weeping and wailing, the cries and dolorous expressions of all the damned, increase the torment and vexation of every one. As when the wind conspires with the flame, it is more fierce and spreading.

3. The concomitant of sorrow will be fury and rage against themselves as the true causes of their misery. For God will

make such a discovery of his righteous judgment, that not only the saints shall glorify his justice in the condemnation of the wicked, but they shall be so convinced of it, as not to be able to charge their judge with any defect of mercy, or excess of rigor in his proceedings against them. As the man in the parable of the marriage feast, when taxed for his presumptuous intrusion without a wedding garment, "How camest thou hither?" was speechless: so they will find no plea for their justification and defence, but must receive the eternal doom with silence and confusion. Then conscience shall revive the bitter remembrance of all the methods of divine mercy for their salvation, that were ineffectual by their contempt and obstinacy. All the compassionate calls by his word, with the holy motions of the spirit, were like the sowing of seed in the stony ground, that took no root, and never came to perfection. All his terrible threatenings were but as thunder to the deaf, or lightening to the blind, that little affects them: the bounty of his providence designed "to lead them to repentance," had the same effect as the showers of heaven upon briars and thorns, that make them grow the faster. And that a mercy so ready to pardon, did not produce in them a correspondent affection of grateful obedient love; but by the unworthy provocations they plucked down the vengeance due to obstinate rebels, will so enrage the damned against themselves, that they will be less miserable by the misery they suffer, than by the conviction of their torn minds, that they were the sole causes of it. "What repentings will be kindled within them," for the stupid neglect of "the great salvation" so dearly purchased, and earnestly offered to them? What a fiery addition to their torment, that when God was so willing to save them, they were so wilful to be damned? They will never forgive themselves, that for the short and mean pleasures of sense, which if enjoyed a thousand years, cannot recompense the loss of heaven, nor requite the pains of hell for an hour; they must be deprived of the one, and suffer the other forever.

4. The sorrow and rage will be increased by despair: for when the wretched sinner sees the evil is premeditated, and no outlet of hope, he abandons himself to the violence of sorrow, and by cruel thoughts wounds the heart more, than the fiercest furies in hell can. This misery that flows from despair, shall be more fully opened under the distinct consideration of the eternity of hell. Briefly, as the blessed are in heaven, and heaven is in them, by those holy and joyful affections that are always exercised in the divine presence; so the damned are in hell, and hell is in them by those fierce and miserable passions that continually prey upon them.

## CHAPTER II.

The eternity of misery makes it most intolerable. The justice of God cleared in the eternal punishment of sinners for temporary sins. The wisdom of God requires that the punishment threatened should be powerful to preserve the commands of the law inviolable. There is an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of men here, and their condition forever. The damned are unqualified for any favor. The immense guilt of sin requires a proportion in the punishment.

II. The eternity of their misery makes it above all other considerations intolerable. Our Saviour repeats it thrice in the space of a few verses, to terrify those who spare some favorite corruption, "that in hell their worm dies not, and the fire is never quenched." God will never reverse his sentence, and they shall never change their state. How willingly would carnal men raise the word *Eternal* out of the scriptures; but to their grief they find it joined with the felicity of heaven, and the torments of hell. The second death has all the terrible qualities of the first, but not the ease and end it brings to misery. All the tears of those forlorn wretches shall never quench one spark of the fire. Where are the delicious fare, the music, the purple, and all the carnal delights of the rich man? They are all changed into a contrary state of misery; and that state is fixed forever. From his vanishing paradise he descended into an everlasting hell. In this the vengeance of God is infinitely more heavy than the most terrible execution from men. Human justice and power can inflict but one death (that will be soon dispatched) upon a malefactor worthy to suffer a hundred deaths; if he be condemned to the fire, they cannot make him live and die together, to burn and not be consumed. But God will so far support the damned in their torments, that they shall always have strength to feel, though no strength patiently to endure them. Those extreme torments which would extinguish the present life in a moment, shall be suffered forever. This consideration infinitely aggravates the misery; for the lost soul, racked with the fearful contemplation of what it must suffer forever, feels, as it were at once, all the evils that shall torment it in its whole duration. The perpetuity of the misery is always felt by prevision. This is as the cruel breaking of the bones upon the wheel, when the soul is tormented by the foresight of misery, that without allays shall continue in the circulation of eternal ages. To make this more



sensible, let us consider, that pain makes the mind observant of the passing of the hours. In pleasures, time with a quick and silent motion insensibly slides away; but in troubles, the hours are tedious; in violent pains we reckon the minutes as long. It is observable how passionately the afflicted Psalmist complains, Will the Lord cast off forever? Will he be favorable no more? Doth his promise fail forevermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Psal. 77. 7. In what various pathetic forms does he express the same affection? Though he had assurance that the gracious God would not be always severe, yet his anguish forced from him complaints, as if the moment of his trouble were an eternity. But what strains of sorrow are among the damned, who besides the present sense of misery, have always in their thoughts the vast eternity their wherein they must suffer it.

When three terrible evils were propounded to David's choice, pining famine for three years, or bloody war for three months, or devouring pestilence of three days; he chose the shortest, though in itself the heaviest evil.

Many sad days must pass under the other judgments, where death by anticipation in such variety of shapes would be presented to the mind, that the lingering expectation of it would afflict more than the sudden stroke; whereas the fury of the pestilence would be soon over. But the damned have not this relief, "but shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." How earnestly do they seek for death, but cannot find it? What a favor would they esteem it to be annihilated? For certainly, if when the evils in the present state are so multiplied, that no comfort is left; or so violent, that the afflicted person cannot enjoy them, and refresh his sorrowful spirit, death is chosen rather than life; it cannot be imagined that in the future state, where the misery is extreme, and nothing remains to allay it, that the damned should be in love with the unhappy good of simple being, and not choose an absolute extinction, if it might be.

If any one should be so foolish to think that custom would render that state more tolerable, he will find a terrible confutation of his vain fancy. Indeed, continuance under light evils may arm the mind with patience to bear them; but in great extremities it makes the evil more ponderous and intolerable. He that is tortured with the stone, or on the rack, the longer the torture continues, the less able he is to sustain it. In short, as the joy of heaven is infinitely more ravishing; that the blessed are without fear of losing it; so the misery of hell is proportionably tormenting, that the damned are absolutely destitute of hopes of release. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," who lives forever, and will punish forever incorrigible sinners!

There are some who strongly fancy, it is not consistent with divine justice to inflict an eternal punishment for temporary sins.

Therefore they soften the sentence, by interpreting the words of Christ, "These shall go into everlasting punishment," of the annihilation of impenitent sinners; that is, they shall be forever deprived of heaven, but not suffer torments forever.

To this there is a clear answer: 1. The direct opposition between *everlasting punishment*, and *everlasting life*, in the words of Christ, is a convincing argument they are to be understood in the same extent for an absolute eternity. And the words in the revelation are so express, that they admit no mollifying interpretation, "They are tormented day and night, forever and ever:" which necessarily infer, the tormented have life and sense forever. Now that in Scripture it is evident, that God hath decreed and denounced eternal punishment to obstinate sinners, is sufficient to satisfy all inquiries about the justice of it: for divine justice is the correspondence of God's will and actions with the perfections of his holy nature. From hence we may infer with invincible evidence, that whatever he pronounces in judgment, and consequently inflicts, is most righteous. The truth is, we may as easily conceive there is no God, as that God is unjust; because absolute rectitude is an inseparable perfection of his nature. Thus the Apostle with abhorrence rejects the question, Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? Rom. 3. 5, 6. That were to deny him to be God, who is the creator, and king, and judge of the world. It is a full reply to all the pitiful shifts that are made use of to elude the plain meaning of the eternal judgment that will pass upon the wicked: Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Job 4. 17. The reprobates have now some bold advocates, that plead those things for favor to them, which they will not dare to plead for themselves at the last day. The holy judge will then cut off all their excuses, and reduce them to a defenceless silence, before he cuts them off. "God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he judgeth."

The righteousness of the proceedings at the last day, in determining the wicked to a state of everlasting torments, has been considered in the discourse of Judgment, and will farther appear by the following considerations.

1. The wisdom of God requires, that the punishment threatened in his law, as it must be so firmly decreed, that all obstinate rebels shall of necessity undergo it; so it must incomparably exceed all temporal evils, to which men may be exposed for their obedience to the divine commands, otherwise the threatening would not be an effectual restraint from sin: for the propinquity of an evil makes a strong impression on the mind, and a present fear makes a person solicitous to avoid the incursion of what is ready to seize on him, without forecasting to prevent an evil looked on at a distance. Therefore that the sanction of the di-

vine law may preserve the precepts inviolable, that there may be a continual reverence of it, and a fixed resolution in the heart not to transgress, the penalty threatened must be in its own nature so terrible, that the fear of it may conquer the apprehension of all present evils that can be inflicted to constrain us to sin. Therefore our Saviour warns his disciples, "Fear not them that can kill the body (make that part die that is mortal) but fear him that after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Now if the threatening of an everlasting hell, through infidelity and inconsideration, be not effectual in the minds of men to restrain them from sin; if temporary torments in the next state were only threatened, which are infinitely more easy and tolerable, carnal sinners would follow the swing of their corrupt appetites, and commit iniquity with greediness: this would seem to reflect upon the wisdom of the lawgiver, as if he were defective in not binding his subjects firmly to their duty, and the ends of government would not be obtained.

2. God, as the sovereign Ruler of the world, has established an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of men here, and their future condition forever. The promised reward of obedience is so excellent and eternal, that all the allurements of the world vanish in comparison with it: and there is such an infallible assurance of this reward in the word of God, that all, and only those who sincerely obey his commands, shall enjoy it in the future state; that a serious believer who ponders things, cannot be diverted from his duty by present temptations. Besides, by a chain of consequences sinful pleasures are linked with eternal punishment threatened in the divine law; and he that will enjoy forbidden pleasures, binds himself to suffer all the pains annexed to them. Now when God has, from his excellent goodness and undeserved mercy, assured men of the glory and joys of heaven that are unspeakable and eternal, upon the gracious terms of the gospel; and, upon their despising it, threatened eternal misery, if men absolutely neglect so great salvation; how reasonable is it they should inherit their own choice? Those who do not seek the kingdom of heaven, cannot escape hell, but by eternal consequence it will be their portion. There is no middle state in the next world, no tolerable mediocrity, but two contrary states; yet alike in this, that the happiness and misery are equally eternal: and it is just, that all who neglect eternal life, should suffer eternal death; for it is the natural and necessary consequence of their option; therefore sinners are charged with extreme madness, to wrong their own souls, and to love death, Prov. 8. 36.

3. It will appear how unqualified the damned are for the least favor, if we consider their continual hatred and blasphemies of God. The seeds of this are in wicked obstinate sinners here,

who are styled "haters of God;" but in the damned this enmity is direct and explicit, the fever is heightened into a frenzy, the blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversation. Our Saviour tells us, that in hell there "is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" extreme sorrow, and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and are wicked and stubborn, they are irritated by their misery, and foam out blasphemies against the righteous judge. If their rage could extend to him, and their power were equal to their desires, they would dethrone the most high. Hatred takes pleasure in revenge, either real or imaginary: and although God is infinitely above the transports of their fury, and all their rancorous imprecations are reflexively pernicious to themselves, like arrows shot against the sun, that fall down upon their heads that shot them; yet they are always venting their malice against the just power that torments them. It is said of the worshippers of the beast, that they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains, Rev. 16. 10, 11. The torment and blasphemies of those impenitent idolaters, are a true representation of the state of the damned. From hence it appears they are the proper objects of revenging justice. How can we reasonably conceive, that God, in favor to the reprobates, should cross the established order of creation? For two ranks of beings were made, the material of perishing principles, the spiritual of an immortal duration: and will God withdraw his conservative power of the guilty soul in its immortality, and to put an end to its deserved misery, and self-tormenting reflections, annihilate it? If a criminal were justly condemned to a severe punishment, and should contumeliously and fiercely reproach the prince, by whose authority he was condemned, could it be expected there should be a mitigation of the sentence? And is it a thought consistent with the reasonable mind, that the righteous judge of the world will reverse or mitigate the sentence against the damned, who blaspheme his majesty and justice? And if they were as omnipotent to effect as they are malicious to desire, would destroy his being. It is true, the divine threatening does not bind God to a rigorous execution of it upon sinners: he has declared, if sinners will turn from their evil ways, he will repent of the evil he purposed to do unto them, Jer. 26. 3. But when threatenings are part of the laws whereby men are governed, it is congruous to the wisdom and justice of the lawgiver to execute them in their full force upon the obstinate offenders; withal considering the inflicting of them is so far from working any ingenuous change in those rebels, that thereby they become more fierce and obdurate.

Lastly, The immense guilt that adheres to sin, requires a pro-

portion in the punishment. It is a rule in all courts of judicature, that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity of the person offended. Now the majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. This is the reason of the sentence, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The curse threatened, includes the first and second death. What a dishonor is it to the God of glory, that proud dust should fly in his face, and control his authority? What a provocation, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the divine law and lawgiver? Though carnal minds alleviate the guilt of sin, yet weighed "in the scales of the sanctuary," it is found so heavy, that no punishment inflicted on sinners exceeds, either in the degrees or duration, the desert of sin.

God's justice is not satisfied in depriving them of heaven, but inflicts the most heavy punishment upon sense and conscience in the damned: for as the soul and body in their state of union in this life were both guilty, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin; so it is equal, when reunited, they should feel the penal effects of it. Sinners shall then be tormented wherein they were most delighted; they shall be invested with those objects that will cause the most dolorous perception in their sensitive faculties. The "Lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness forever," are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery: the punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessory in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and centered upon damned spirits: the fire without is not so tormenting as the fire within them. How will the tormenting passions be inflamed? What rancor, reluctance, and rage against the just power that sentenced them to hell? What impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful sins, the just cause of it? How will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction, as the final remedy of their misery? But all their ardent wishes are in vain; for the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell; as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear an hour.

### CHAPTER III.

**Practical Inferences.** The tender mercies of God to men, in revealing the prepared plagues for sinners, to prevent their misery. Carnal men are more capable of conceiving the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. They are more apt to be moved by them. The desperate folly of sinners, to choose the pleasures of sin, notwithstanding the dreadful and everlasting torments that follow sin. The steadfast belief and serious consideration of eternal death, the wages of sin, is a prevailing motive to abhor and forsake it. Our dear obligations to our Saviour, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I shall now draw some practical inferences, and conclude this subject.

[1.] From the revelation in scripture of the dreadful, punishment prepared for unreformed sinners in the next state, we may understand the tender mercies of God to men; how willingly he is they should be saved; who are so wilful to be damned. Hell is represented to them by the most violent figures, to terrify their imaginations, and strongly affect their minds, "they may flee from the wrath to come." God counsels, commands, intreats, urges sinners to be wise, to foresee and prevent the evil that every hour is approaching to them; and with compassion and indignation laments their misery, and reproaches their folly in bringing it upon themselves. The divine mercy is as eminently and apparently declared to men in the present corrupt state, in threatening hell to excite their fear, as in promising heaven to allure their hopes. For if carnal indulgent sinners are not roused by a quick apprehension of hell, they will securely enjoy their pernicious pleasures, and despise the blessed reward, and heaven would be as empty of human souls, as it is full of glory.

(1.) Because they are more capable to conceive of the torments of hell than the joys of heaven; storms and darkness are more easily drawn by a pencil, than a clear calm day. Fire mixed with brimstone, is very painful to sense; and the fancy strongly represents its vehemence in tormenting the body: and what misery the uncessant remorse of the guilty conscience will cause in the damned hereafter, is in part understood by the secret accusations and twinges of conscience in self-condemning sinners here. But they are absolutely strangers to the joys of the Holy Ghost, to the delights of the soul in communion with God, and the peace of conscience in his favor. They cannot without experience, "know how good the Lord is," no more than see a taste-

To discourse to them of spiritual pleasures that flow from the divine presence, of the happiness of the saints "that are before the throne of God, and serve him in his temple," is to speak with the tongue of an angel \* unintelligible things. Their minds and language are confined to sensible things. The "natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Their may be in the carnal mind a conception of heaven, as a sanctuary wherein they may be secured from the wrath of God, and some smothering confused thoughts of its felicity, as the idea of light and colors in one blind from his birth; but only "the pure in heart can see God," as in the perfect vision of glory hereafter, so in the imperfect reflection of it here.

(2.) Carnal men are more disposed to be wrought upon, by representing the torment of hell, than the joys of heaven. For we cannot love but what is known, nor enjoy but what is loved. And as the purification of the heart from vicious affections, is an excellent means to clear the mind; so the illustration of the mind is very influential to warm the heart. The true conception of heaven in its amiable excellencies, would powerfully and sweetly ravish the affections; and of this, prepared souls are only capable. But those who are sensual, are without relish and spiritual happiness, and are allured or terrified only with what is pleasant or painful to flesh.

It is recorded as the unparalleled folly of † Nero, that when he was ready to cut his own throat, to avoid the fury of the multitude, he broke forth into great expressions of sorrow, what an excellent artist he died! It was not the loss of the Roman empire that so much troubled him, as that so much skill in music died with him. He valued himself more as a fiddler, than an emperor. Thus carnal men with a folly infinitely more prodigious, when death is near, are not so much afflicted with the loss of the crown of glory, and the kingdom of heaven, as with their present leaving this world and its vanities. This makes death intolerably bitter. Till the love of God purifies the heart, the fruition of his presence is not esteemed or desired. A seraph sent from the presence of God with a flaming coal from the altar, touched the lips of the holy prophet, and his heart was presently melted into a compliance with the divine will. But if a rebel angel that burns with another fire than of divine love, were dispatched from hell with a coal from that altar, where so many victims are offered to divine justice as there are damned souls, and touched obdurate sinners, that they might have a lively

\* Si frigido loquar, nescit quod loquor. *Aug.*

† Identidem dictitans, qualis artifex pereo! *Suet.*

sense what it is to burn forever, it were the most congruous and effectual means to reclaim them : like stubborn metals, they are only made pliant by the fire. From what has been said, we may observe the heavenly harmony between mercy and justice in God : he is the father of mercy, it is his natural offspring, his primary inclination to the creature ; and the threatening of vengeance against sinners, is a gracious design to constrain them with humility and repenting affections to seek his favor. Briefly, his severity and flaming displeasure never destroys sinners, but to revenge the abuse of his neglected benignity and clemency.

[2.] This shews the woful depravation of the minds and wills of men, that choose sin, when thinly painted over with pleasure, notwithstanding the most dreadful and durable torment, the certain consequences of it. Desperate folly ! either they believe, or do not, the eternal torment of hell. If they do not, how prodigious is their impiety ? If they do, it is more prodigious they dare indulge their vicious affections. A wicked believer is more monstrous and guilty than a wicked infidel.

In some there is atheism full of folly, or folly full of atheism, that they will not believe the prepared plagues for the wicked in the next state, because they have no sensible proof of them. Reason, assisted by divine revelation, affords so clear an evidence of the future state, and rewards and punishments in it, that if any sincerely apply themselves to consider things, he will receive the most affective conviction of them. It is true, there is not sensible evidence ; for God will try our faith, before he satisfies our sight ; partly, that we may honor his veracity, by yielding a firm assent to his word, before the actual accomplishment of what is promised or threatened ; and partly, that our obedience may be voluntary and unconstrained, that his goodness may take its rise to reward us. But these presumptuous infidels live as if they had no spirit, nothing of understanding in them : they are wholly under the dominion of sense, as if they were free and lawless, independent and unaccountable ; as if the most high governor of the world were an inferior being, without power and justice to vindicate the honor of his despised deity. They do not fear hell, but are afraid they should be fearful of it. This is such a piece of folly (but infinitely more woful) as that of the West Indians, who at their first invasion by the Spaniards, were so terrified by their glittering swords, that they presently fled, and very considerably resolved to hide themselves in the day, and assault their enemies in the night. They were fearful to see their danger, and rash to encounter it ; and fighting in the dark, were killed in the dark. The threatenings of eternal death, are the brandishing of God's "glittering sword" before he strikes ; and sensual infidels are afraid, lest the belief of those terrible truths should pierce into their breasts ; therefore are utterly averse from due considering their danger, and will



not foresee what they shall certainly suffer. It is in vain to offer arguments to convince them ; for they are as deaf as adders to the wisest instructions, till sense extort an acknowledgment from them : they have hardened their hearts and faces against all reproofs, and by an open contempt of scripture threatenings, are past reclaiming. They are now fearless of that judgment, the thoughts whereof make the devils tremble ; but the time will shortly come, when the word of the righteous God, which now they despise, shall irresistibly and immediately (like lightning shot from heaven) destroy them. There are many degrees of sin, many steps in the descent to hell ; but the lowest and nearest the gate of that infernal prison, is the scornful derision of God's dreadful preparations for the wicked.

Others in the christian church, who profess and presume they are true believers, yet by living indulgently in their pleasant or profitable sins, discover their faith is counterfeit, such a superficial assent to the truth of God's word that is without efficacy, and will not avail them at the last. Unfeigned faith of the divine threatenings, produces such a fear as would make men circumspect over their hearts and ways : the fear of a present destructive evil, controls the most eager appetites. It is recorded, that when the army of Israel was in pursuit of the Philistines, Saul (to complete his victory) forbade, upon pain of death, that any should taste food till the sun was down. In the chase of their enemies, they pass through a wood dropping with honey ; yet notwithstanding their hunger and faintness, and the easy provisions before them, no man so much as tasted it ; "for the people feared the king's oath." And did men truly believe and fear the law of God, threatening hell for sin, would they dare to commit it, though invited by pleasant temptations ? Nay, not only a strong fear, but the mere suspicion of great danger, will restrain the most vehement desires of nature. What person, though inflamed with thirst, would drink a glass of cool liquor, if he suspected that deadly poison were mixed with it ? And if men were persuaded that sin is attended with eternal death, would "they drink in iniquity like water ?" The Devils themselves are not able to conquer the fear of judgment to come, they "believe and tremble : " therefore when it is not active upon the conscience, it is either because men do not believe it, or they fancy that retaining their beloved lusts, they may obtain an easy absolution, and escape the damnation of hell, which the eternal Judge has declared shall be the punishment of all that will not cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, separate their dearest corruptions from them. Astonishing perverseness ! How many will not discern nor censure that folly in themselves, which they will condemn in others for extreme madness ? If one riotously lavishes away his estate, and, for the short pleasure of a few years, be reduced with the prodigal to extreme

poverty, and to loathsome imprisonment all his life after; would he not be esteemed to have been beside himself? Yet this is a very tolerable case, in comparison of exposing the soul to eternal vengeance, for the pleasures of sin that are but for a season.

[3.] Let us steadfastly believe, and frequently consider, that *eternal death is the wages of sin*, that we may renounce it with the deepest abhorrence, and forsake it forever. We are assured, from the wisdom and compassion of our Saviour, that it is a powerful means to mortify the inclination to sin, and to induce us to prevent and resist all temptations. The subtle tempter cannot present any motive, that to a rectified mind will make sin eligible. Let the scales be even, and put in one all the delights of the senses, all the pleasures and honors of the world, that are the elements of carnal felicity; how light are they against the heavenly glory? Will the gain of the world compensate the loss of the soul and salvation forever? If there were any possible comparison between deluded transient vanities, and the happiness that is substantial and satisfying forever, the choice would be more difficult, and the mistake less culpable; but they vanish into nothing in the comparison. According to the judgment of sense, would any one choose the enjoyment of the most exquisite pleasures for a year, and afterwards be content to burn in a furnace for a day, much less to enjoy them for a day, and to burn for a year? What stupid brutes are they, who for momentary delights incur the fiery indignation of God forever? Try your finger with the flame of a candle, you will soon discover your weakness. Will the remembrance of sensual delights allay the torments of the damned? When carnal lusts are most inflamed, and objects are present, pain will extinguish all the pleasure of the senses: and if actual employment cannot afford delight when the body is under a disease, will the reflections upon past pleasures in the fancy and memory refresh the damned in their extreme torments? No; the remembrance will infinitely increase their anguish, that for such seeming and short pleasures, they brought upon themselves misery intolerable, without ease or end. O that man would strip sin of its disguises, and wash off its flattering colors, and look into its odious nature, and to the consequential evils of it in the next world! O that they would consider they hang by slender strings (a little breath that expires every minute) over the bottomless pit, and that within a little while nothing will remain of the pleasures of sin, but the undying worm, and the ever-living flames! This would be a means to raise and preserve in them an invincible resolution and reluctance, against all temptations to sin and provoke God. But how hardly are men induced to exercise their minds on this terrible object? They think least of hell, who have most reason to consider it.

To this I must add, that the mere fear of hell, and the judicial impression upon conscience from it, is not sufficient to convert men to God: for that servile affection, though it may stop a temptation, and hinder the eruption of a lust into the gross act, yet does not renew the nature, and make men holy and heavenly. There may be a respective dislike of sin, with a direct affection to it. Besides, that religion that is the mere effect of fear, will be, according to the nature of its principle, with resistance and trouble, wavering and inconstant: for tormenting fear is repugnant to the human nature, and will be expelled, if possible. In short, the fear of hell may be only a natural affection, that recoils from what is painful to sense: therefore it is the great design of the gospel, by the \* fear of hell, as a powerful preparative, to make way for the love of God, who offers pardon and indemnity to all returning sinners, and for the hope of heaven, the blessed reward promised to them. No offers of mercy will prevail to make sinners to yield themselves, till they are stormed by the terrors of the Lord. But when the fear of hell has made a breach, divine grace enters, and takes possession. As the virtue of the loadstone, when encompassed and armed with iron, is increased, and draws a far greater weight than when it is naked and single; thus the attractives of heaven are more powerful to move the hearts of men, when enforced from the terrors of hell. Now the love of God, and the hope of heaven, are spiritual affections; and the obedience that flows from them is voluntary, from the entire consent of the soul, and persevering.

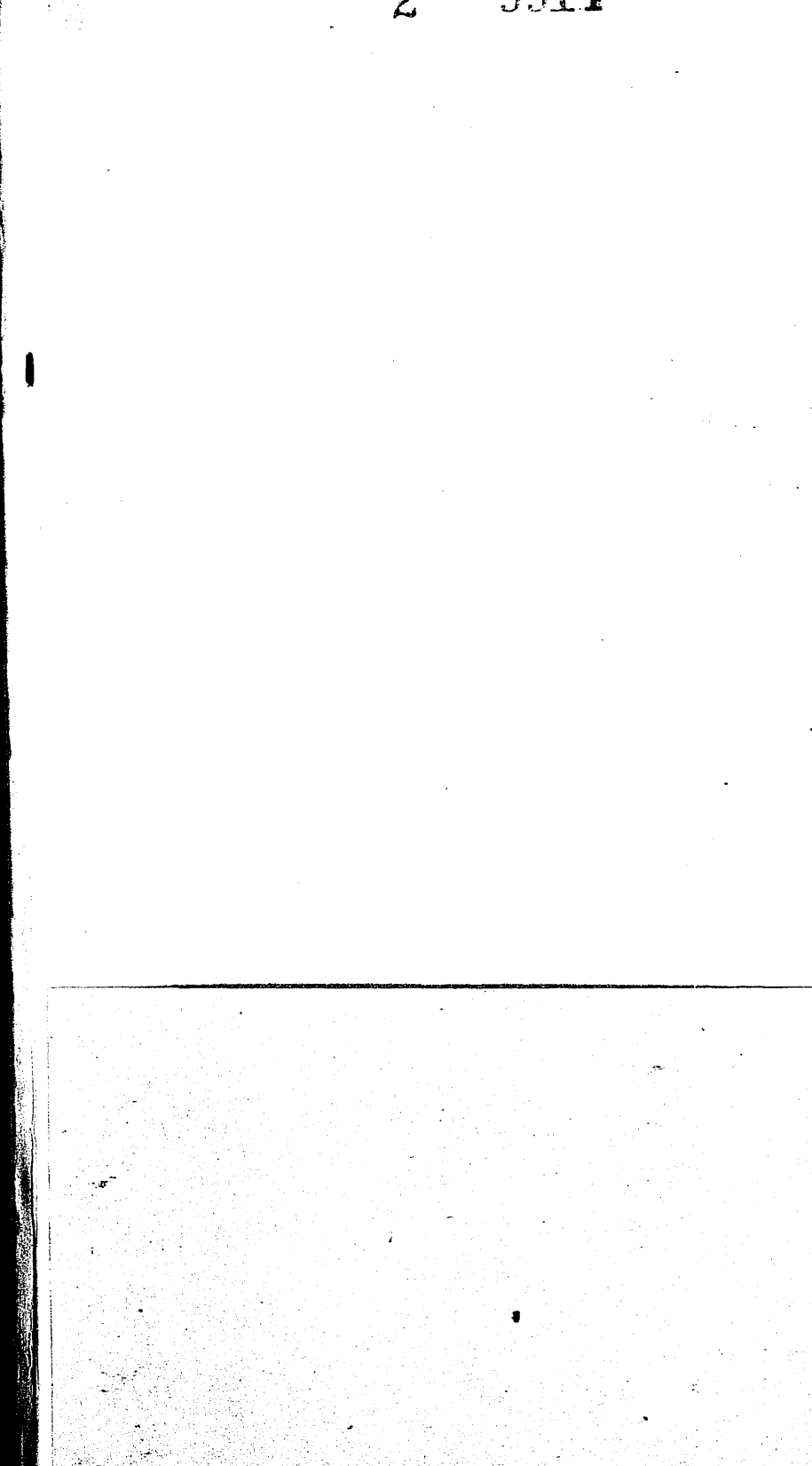
Lastly, From the consideration of the punishment determined for sin, we may understand how dear our engagements are to the Lord Jesus Christ. The rector and judge of the world would not release the guilty without a ransom, nor the surety without satisfaction; and the Son of God most willingly and compassionately gave his precious blood the price of our redemption. He obtained the spirit of holiness, to illuminate our minds, to incline our wills, to sanctify our affections; without whose omnipotent grace, neither the hopes or fears of things spiritual and future would ever have cleansed and changed our hearts and lives. We are naturally as senseless as the dead, as to what concerns our everlasting peace, blind and brutish; and without fear should plunge ourselves into destruction, if the spirit of power, and of a sound mind, did not quicken and direct us in the way to everlasting life. O that we might feel our dear obligations to him, who has "delivered us from the wrath to come," and purchased for us a felicity perfect, and without end! I would not lessen and disparage one divine work, to advance and extol another; but it is a truth that shines with its own light, and is declared by our Saviour, that our redemption from hell to heaven, is a more ex-

\* Nisi timore incipiat homo deum colere, non perveniet ad amorem. *Aug.*

cellent benefit than our creation ; in as much as our well-being is better than our being, and eternal misery is infinitely worse than mere not-being. Our Saviour speaks of Judas, "It had been better for him if he had never been born." How engaging is the love of Christ, who raised us from the bottom of hell to the bosom of God, the seat of happiness! If his perfections were not most amiable and attractive, yet that he died for us, should make him the object of our most ardent affections. "To those who believe, he is precious :'' To those who have felt their undone condition, and that by his merits and mediation are restored to the favor of God, that are freed from tormenting fears, and revived with the sweetest hopes, he is, and will be eminently and eternally precious. "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."







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