

Monergism

# DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING

FROM SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS OF  
PATIENCE UNDER AFFLICTIONS



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# **Death Disarmed of Its Sting**

## **From Several Considerations of Patience Under Afflictions**

**by Ezekiel Hopkins**

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### **OF PATIENCE UNDER AFFLICTIONS:**

**A Discourse on James 1:4**

BUT LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK, THAT YE  
MAY BE PERFECT AND ENTIRE, WANTING NOTHING. -  
JAMES 1:4

IF we consider the state and condition of those Jews, to whom the Apostle directs this Epistle, we shall find, that, as they were a dispersed, so they were an afflicted and persecuted people. There was always a most implacable hatred, in other nations, against the Jews; accounting them the most base, perverse, and infamous people under heaven. And, doubtless, though the whole body of them, which lived in Judea, were well enough secured from their affronts and injuries; yet, such parcels of them as were scattered into other countries sadly felt the effects of this natural aversion and antipathy. Yea, so low and despicable was their condition, that their own brethren, in scorn and contempt, call them the dispersed among the Gentles: John 7:35. Their ancient religion, which they had received from Moses, was so odious to the Heathen, among whom they lived, that they accounted it the most ridiculous and sordid superstition that ever was invented: and, because they firmly adhered to a way of worship, which was so contradictory to that gross idolatry which had generally obtained in the world, they both derided them as credulous, and hated them as stubborn and inflexible. There is no hatred so bitter and irreconcilable, as that, which ariseth from different religions: for, religion being avowedly the highest concern of mankind, those who differ in this cannot but mutually accuse one another of folly and madness: and this begets mutual contempt, and ends in malice and violence; whilst each seeks to take the part of his God, and to vindicate his own wisdom in choosing him, against those, who must needs he concluded to despise, because they do not worship him. And, therefore, as these scattered Jews were hated and persecuted upon the account of their own native religion, so much more, when divers of them were converted to the faith of Christ; because they then took up and professed a religion, more contrary to the Gentile impiety, than Judaism itself was. Yea, they were not only hated by the Gentiles, but by their own countrymen, the unbelieving Jews; who took all occasions to stir up the people against them, and to expose them, as the maintainers of a pestilent sect, to the fury of the enraged multitude: and we read frequently, in the Acts, what

tumults, and uproars, and persecutions, were raised against them by this means.

To these dispersed and distressed Christians, the Apostle directs this his Epistle, and exhorts them, ver. 2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: that is, when ye fall into divers tribulations; for, by temptations here, he means not the inward assaults of the Devil, but the outward assaults of his instruments. A strange command, one would think, to bid them rejoice at such a time, and in such circumstances as these! What! to rejoice when they were buffeted, reviled, spoiled, and murdered! appointed as sheep to the slaughter! enjoying their lives only at the courtesy of their enemy's malice! expecting hourly to be haled out, to suffer torments and death! Is this a proper occasion for joy? is it not rather, for sorrow and dejection? No, saith the Apostle: although your trials be great and manifold, yet account it joy; yea, count it all joy when ye fall into these divers temptations: v. 2.

But, certainly, so strange an exhortation as this, which seems so quite contrary to the inclinations of nature, had need be backed by some strong motive to enforce it. And that the Apostle gives them in the third verse: Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience: and, therefore, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations.

Now, in this are included Two things, which should mightily further their joy.

First. That all their sufferings and afflictions are for the Trial of their Faith.

God, by these, tries whether your faith be well-grounded and saving, or whether it be only temporary and flitting: he tries, whether it be weak or strong; whether it be able to stay and support itself only upon a promise, or wants the crutches of sense and visible enjoyments to bear it up; whether it be a faith that is wrought in you only by conviction, or a faith that hath wrought in you a thorough conversion; whether it be a faith wrought in you only by evidence of the truth, or a faith that is accompanied with a sincere love of the

truth. And, therefore, rejoice in your sufferings and afflictions; for these will help you to determine this great and important question. If your faith be such as can overcome the world; if it can persuade you to esteem the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of the world; if it respect more the promises of God than the threatenings of men, and future rewards more than present advantages; if it can bear both the anvil and the furnace: this is a faith, that is true and genuine; and, when it is thus tried, it shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. 1:7. Such a faith as this, that can endure the fire and lose nothing of its weight and substance, is truly precious; more precious than gold that perisheth: such a faith, that can bring you to die for Christ, will certainly bring you to live with Christ. And, have you not great cause, then, to rejoice in afflictions, which afford you a means to know, whether your graces be genuine or spurious? whether they be such as will bear his judgment and trial hereafter, by bearing afflictions and chastisements here? Certainly, that Christian hath great reason to suspect himself, who cannot rejoice that he is going to heaven, though God sends a fiery chariot to fetch him. And,

Secondly. This trial of their faith worketh Patience.

The more a Christian bears, the more he is enabled to bear: his nerves and his sinews knit and grow strong under his burdens. And, therefore also, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations. For patience is, of itself, such a Christian excellency and perfection, that all trials and afflictions, which tend to increase this, are to be reckoned by us as gain and advantage. If thy sorrows and troubles add any degree of fortitude to thy patience, thou hast far more reason to rejoice, than to repine: for nothing in this present life is to be accounted good or evil, but only as it respects the advantage or disadvantage which our graces receive by it. Now, if God confirm and augment thy patience under sufferings, sufferings are mercies, afflictions are favours: he blesseth thee by chastisements; and crowneth thee with glory, even while he seems to crown thee with thorns. And wilt thou not triumph at this, O Christian! especially, considering the end of thy patience, which is Hope, Peace, and Eternal Life? See that excellent place to this purpose, Rom. 5:3, 4, 5.

We glory, saith the Apostle, in tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed. Here is true cause of glory, indeed; when our patience shall cause us to ascend through these degrees, to the top and perfection of all Christian attainments.

And, from this, we may observe, by the way, That it is far better to have patience under afflictions, than to be freed from them: it is more cause of joy, to suffer the hand and will of God patiently, than not to suffer at all.

But, having spoken such great things concerning patience, the Apostle comes, in the text, to caution us about it: and tells us what qualifications it must have, to make even our afflictions the matter of our joy and comfort. Let patience have her perfect work; and then you shall have cause to rejoice. Let her go on to finish and accomplish what is begun and undertaken; and then shall ye be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. It is not enough, O Christians! that ye can bear some afflictions, and that only for some time: but, if you will be perfect, as you must do the whole will of God, and that with constancy and perseverance unto the end; so you must suffer the whole will of God, and put no earlier period to your patience than to your obedience; and to neither, till God shall be pleased to put a full period to your lives. Patience ought not to prescribe, either to the kind, measure, or degree of our sufferings. Say not, therefore, "I could easily bear such or such an affliction: but this, which I now lie under, is altogether intolerable:" or, "I could cheerfully bear it, if I could see any issue out of it: but this is endless, and remediless." Believe it; this is but an imperfect patience, and will never perfect you in grace and glory. A perfect patience stoops to the heaviest burdens; and carries them as long as God shall please, without murmuring or repining: and, if that be to the grave, it knows that what is now a load, shall then be found to be a treasure. A Christian doth but carry his own wealth, his crown, and his sceptre; which, though here they be burdensome, shall hereafter be eternally glorious.

From the words, we may observe these Two Propositions:

First. That a Christian's patience ought to finish and accomplish all the work that is proper for it, while he lies under troubles and afflictions: Let patience have her perfect work.

Secondly. That the perfection of patience is the perfection of a Christian: That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

It is the first of these, of which I shall at present speak.

And, herein, I shall propound and prosecute this method.

Shew what Patience is.

What is the proper Work of patience.

When it is that patience hath its Perfect Work.

And, lastly, I shall close up all with Application.

I. WHAT IS this PATIENCE, which a Christian ought to exercise and to accomplish, when he is under sufferings?

You may take this description of it.

It is a grace of God's Spirit, wrought in the heart of a true Christian, whereby he is sweetly inclined, quietly and willingly to submit to whatsoever the Lord shall think fit to lay upon him; calming all the passions, which are apt to rise up in him against God's dispensations, with the consideration and acknowledgment of his infinite sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and mercy, in those afflictions and chastisements which he is pleased to bring upon him.

This, in the general, is this excellent Grace of Patience, which so much tends to the perfection and completing of a Christian.

Now, a little more to explain this, I shall lay down some particulars both negative and positive, in which may be more fully seen what this grace of patience is.

i. NEGATIVELY.



1. Patience is not a stoical apathy, or a senseless stupidity, under the hand of God.

It is no narcotic virtue, to stupify us, and take away the sense and feeling of afflictions. If it had any such opiate quality in it, it were not commendable, nor praiseworthy: for that is no suffering, which is not felt; and if patience were only to deprive a man of the feeling of his sorrows and sufferings, it would only destroy its own object, and so cease to be any longer patience. And therefore those, who are stupified and insensible under the hand of God, and who take no notice of his judgments when his hand is stretched out against them, are no more to be accounted patient, than a block is, when it is hewn and cut: or, than the drunkard, of whom the Wise Man speaks; who, when he was stricken, was not sick; when he was beaten, felt it not. Nay, patience is so far from taking away the sense of sufferings, that it rather quickens it: there is no man, that more feels an affliction, than a Christian doth; for he refers his chastisements to his deserts: he looks inwardly, and sees his own guilt and sin, as that, which provokes God to afflict him; and this adds a great deal of gall and wormwood to the bitter cup, and makes every affliction to touch his soul and his conscience, as well as his outward man: he cannot but with grief of heart consider, that ever he should incense his Heavenly Father to use such severe discipline towards him. But a wicked man looks only upon what he suffers: he makes no reflections upon his demerits; and troubles himself no farther than God is pleased to force trouble upon him: and so he bears it, cursing his ill fate; but never complaining of his sins, that provoked the just God so to punish him.

2. Patience doth not stifle all modest complaints and moderate sorrow\*.

A patient Christian may be well allowed this vent for his grief to work out at. Grace never destroys, but only regulates and corrects nature. It will permit thee to shed tears, so long as they run clear, and the course of them doth not stir up the mud of thy sinful passions and violent affections. It will permit thee to complain of what thou sufferest, so long as it keeps thee from complaining of that God, from whom thou sufferest. Thou mayest lawfully, without any wrong done

to patience, express thy grief in all the outward and natural signs of it; only beware, lest this agitation make it exceed its due bounds and measures. We find that holy Job, who is commended to us as the mirror and great example of patience, when he had received the sad messages of the loss of his estate and of his children, rent his mantle, and lay grovelling upon the ground: Job. 1:20: and, that we might not think this a piece of his impatience, it is added, v. 22. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. The primitive disciples are said to make great lamentation over Stephen; though by his death and martyrdom he highly glorified God: Acts 8:2. Patience chiefly consists in a due tranquillity and composure of the mind: and those may be very impatient persons, and fret and estuate within, who yet may express but little emotion in their outward demeanour: like those latent and lurking fevers, that prey upon the spirits, when there appears but little intemperate heat in the outward limbs. And, again, a patient Christian may make use of all the doleful signs of sorrow, which God hath allowed, and nature exacts; and yet his spirit not be moved beyond its due temper and consistency: like a tree, whose boughs are agitated by every gust and storm of wind, when yet the root remains fixed and unmoved in the earth.

3. Patience doth not oblige us to continue under afflictions, when we may lawfully and warrantably free and release ourselves from them.

It doth not require us to court or solicit troubles. It is a sign of a vitiated and corrupted palate, if our physic taste not somewhat nauseous and displeasing to us; and of an obstinate and incorrigible mind, if we be not careful to shun the discipline of the rod. When God lays sore and heavy afflictions upon us, we are bound, upon principles of self-preservation, to endeavour, what we may, to free ourselves from them; otherwise, we sin against nature, and the God of Nature. Therefore, if God reduce thee to poverty, by some stroke depriving thee of thy estate, it is not patience, but a lax and retchless carelessness, to sit still with thy hand in thy bosom, neglecting all honest industry to procure a comfortable subsistence, pretending that thou art willing to submit to the will and dispensations of God. If God bring sore, and perhaps mortal diseases upon thee, it is not patience, but presumption and impiety, to refuse the means which are proper for thy recovery, under pretence that thou art willing to

bear whatsoever it pleaseth God to lay upon thee. And, generally, whatsoever calamity thou liest under, it is not patience, but obstinacy and contempt, to refuse deliverance, when thou mayest obtain it, without violating thy duty or God's honour.

4. Much less doth Patience oblige us to invite sufferings.

It is fortitude enough, if we manfully stand their shock, when they assault us; but it is temerity, to provoke and challenge them. This is but like the frenzy of the Circumcellions: a sect of mad Christians in Africa, about St. Austin's time; who were so fond of martyrdom, that they would, with extremities, compel others to kill them; or, for want of executioners, dispatch themselves; that they might have the renown of resolution and patience. Neither is it patience to bear those invented severities, which blind devotionists inflict upon themselves: they may soon enough lash themselves into pain, but never into patience: this is a virtue, which thongs and whipcord can never teach them: nor is at all thankworthy, to bear that pain which they themselves inflict; or, if the smart vex them, they have their revenge in their own hands, and were best whip themselves again for their folly.

And, thus, I have shewed you what Patience is not.

ii. POSITIVELY.

In Patience there must be,

1. A quiet, willing submission to the hand of God.

Which the Scripture expresseth to us, by taking up our cross: Mat. 16:24. Receiving evil at the hands of God: Job 2:10. Accepting the punishment of our iniquities: Lev. 26:41. Which all signify the ready and willing submission of the soul, under whatever God shall see fit to lay upon it.

2. A quieting of our unruly passions.

A calming of all those impetuous storms and tempests, which are apt to arise in a man's heart, when he is under any sore and heavy

sufferings. Indeed, it is impossible, but that the affections will be stirring; but patience takes off the eagerness and bitterness of them: it ought to keep them from excess, and to dulcorate and sweeten them; that the soul may not be ruffled into a tempest with them, but only gently purled with the breathings of a soft wind upon them. But, for all those turbulencies and uproars of the passions; all those violent and wild emotions, which distract reason and rend the soul to pieces, and make men unfit for the service of God and the employments of their lives: these patience ought to quell and suppress. And he, that doth not this, wants the principal part of patience; howsoever he may, possibly, command his outward expressions, and rule his actions better than he can his passions, and his body than his soul.

3. All this must be done upon right grounds.

Indeed, there is a natural patience: a patience that may be found in natural men, devoid of true grace; which is only a moral virtue, and proceeds only upon natural and moral principles.\* As, That it is folly, to strive against fate; and That it is equally folly, to torment ourselves about what we can help, and what we cannot help; and the like. But that patience, which I am now speaking of, is a Christian Grace, and proceeds not only upon such arguments and principles: no, it looks far higher; and eyes the sovereignty of God, to which it is our duty to submit: and it eyes also his wisdom and his goodness, to which it is our interest to submit. It looks off from the absolute nature of the affliction, considered as it is in itself, to the relative nature of it, as it is dispensed to us by God; and so concludes, that though the cup in itself be bitter, yet, in our Father's hand, it is salutary; and knows that it shall work for our gain and advantage, and make us partakers of God's holiness here, and of his glory hereafter.

And thus we see what this grace of Patience is.

II. The next thing is, to shew, WHAT IS THE PROPER WORK OF PATIENCE.

And that I shall endeavour to do, in these following particulars.

i. The first work of patience is, as I have told you, **THE QUIETING AND COMPOSING THE SPIRIT OF THE AFFLICTED.**

He is calm and sedate within, though his outward state and condition be full of storms and tempests; and saith, with St. Paul, when he had spoken of the bonds and afflictions that awaited him, Acts 20:24. None of these things move me. But an impatient man flies out against heaven and earth, blasphemes God and curses men, rages at his sufferings and gnaws the very chains that tie him up: and, instead of humbling himself under God's mighty hand, is exasperated by his punishment; and, with that impious king, cries out, in all his extremity and anguish, This evil is of the Lord: why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?

ii. Another work of patience is, **TO PUT A STOP TO ALL IMMODERATE COMPLAINTS.**

It puts a man to silence; and lays a check upon all the intemperate eruptions of our grief and passions. I was dumb, saith David, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it: Ps. 39:9. It dares not so much as whimper against God; nor saucily expostulate with his infinite sovereignty, why he should bring such afflictions upon us. It is God, that hath done it: and, what! shall we, vile dust and ashes, controul his proceedings, or take upon us to censure any of his dispensations? See a most notable instance of this patience, in Aaron: when his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were destroyed by a most unparalleled judgment, and Moses brings him the sad tidings; tidings, which, one would expect, should have caused him to break forth into some passionate complaint; it is said, That Aaron held his peace: Lev. 10:3 he had not a word to say: it was the Lord's doing; and, as it was wonderful, so it was just and righteous, in his eyes.

iii. Another work of patience under sufferings, is **SELF RESIGNATION TO THE SOVEREIGN WILL AND DISPOSAL OF ALMIGHTY GOD.**

It takes a man off from his own bottom; and makes him renounce his own interests and concerns, and lay down his all; all his designs, all his hopes, all his possessions and enjoyments; at the feet of God:\*

desiring his wisdom to choose for him; and to carve him out that portion, which he knows to be most fitting and convenient.

This is the chief and most principal work of patience.

And there be two notable ingredients, which go to the composition of it; Self-Denial, and Submission.

1. Patience works the soul to a self-denying frame and temper.

Fretfulness and impatience do always proceed from self-love. When we are deeply engaged in an eager pursuit of that which we think advantageous to us, we are presently apt to storm and tumultuate, if any cross providence interpose, to entangle our designs and defeat our expectations: for, whilst we set up ourselves as our highest and utmost end, and seek only our own temporal profit and commodity, we must needs take it immoderately, if any thing succeed contrary to our hopes and desires. A cross lies very heavy, and is an unsupportable load, upon a selfish man. And he, that makes this world his all, must needs look upon himself as utterly ruined and undone, if God take from him that, wherein he placeth his highest felicity: and, therefore, no wonder, if he break out into passionate and intemperate exclamations: as Micah justified his outcries after the children of Dan; Ye have taken away my gods ... and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? so, exhort a selfish man to patience under any affliction, or loss, or calamity, that God hath brought upon him; alas! his earthly comforts are his gods: they are his all; and he cannot but account it a strange unreasonableness, that you should blame him for his passion, when his idols, his gods, and that, wherein he placed his only content and confidence, is taken from him. But a truly patient soul puts a lower rate and estimate upon these things: he values them, indeed, as comforts; otherwise, there could be no trial, and so no patience in the loss of them: but he values them not as his chief nor his only good; otherwise, he could have no patience in sustaining the loss of them: let God sequester his estate and reduce him to extreme poverty, scourge his body and lay upon him all the most racking pains and languishing diseases that life can subsist under, snatch away his friends and mow down all his nearest and dearest relations round

about him, cut off all his props and worldly dependencies; yet, still, he looks not upon himself as undone: still he hath his God, and his Christ, and his grace left: his treasure is secure; and all the loss, that he sustains, is but in his accessory good things, which he never otherwise received, but with condition and under the burden to part with them freely and quietly whensoever it should please the Great Proprietor of all things to call for them. Patience works a man to a great indifferency to these worldly enjoyments: if God be pleased to spare them, he accepts it with thankfulness; or, if he see good to deprive him of them, he quarrels not at his Father's providence; for, still, God leaves him more than he takes, so long as he leaves him himself: they are but his smaller concernments, that God toucheth him in; and, what matter of importance is it, if God prune off his excrescencies, when as this tends only to make him more beautiful and more fruitful? God doth but deny him that, wherein he hath learned to deny himself. And,

2. As patience works the soul to a self-denying, so it does likewise to a submissive frame and temper.

When it hath brought a man to renounce his own will, it then resolves him into the will of God: it takes him out of his own hand, and puts him into God's. Here patience finds its footing, in the deepest waters of affliction: upon this ground it stands, and upon this it fixeth: "It is the will and good pleasure of my Father, that thus and thus it shall be with me; and, therefore, so be it." Indeed, all religion lies in conforming our wills to the will of God: that there should be but one will between God and us; and that this should be his most wise and righteous will. The Will of his Precept he hath made known unto us by his Word; and to that we ought to submit our wills, by a cheerful performance of what he hath commanded. The Will of his Purpose he makes known unto us by his Providence; and to that we ought to submit, by a quiet bearing of whatsoever he shall see good to inflict. Art thou poor, or despised, or diseased, afflicted by God, or persecuted by men? set patience on work: and this will lighten thy burden, and ease thee of thy sorrows; by reflecting, That it is the will of God to have it so: yea, and thy will shall run into, and mingle with his; so that thou shalt suffer willingly whatsoever he shall please to bring upon thee. Indeed, we ought not

so to will and affect sufferings, as causelessly to involve ourselves in them: we may abhor them, as they are in themselves considered; and, by all lawful means, seek to secure or free ourselves from them. But, yet, a patient Christian wills them, though not absolutely, yet conditionally: he wills that the will of God should take place, and have its accomplishment. And, indeed, there is great reason he should do so; for he knows that the issue will be to his exceeding great gain and advantage. And, therefore, if the Lord will, he dare not gainsay; but, with a holy meekness, gives in his vote, and surrenders up his will, as no longer his, but melted and resolved into the will of his Father. It was a most divine and heavenly speech of the Heathen Philosopher Epictetus: "I will say unto God, Did I ever find fault, or accuse thy government of affairs? I was sick, because thou wouldest: others also have been sick, but I willingly. I was poor, because thou wouldest; but therefore joyful in my poverty, since it was thy pleasure. I never was in authority, because thou wouldest not; and thou knowest, that therefore I never desired authority. Did I ever appear before thee with a sad and dejected countenance, as one, that had suffered a repulse, or been defeated of his hopes? Behold, I am ready to obey whatever thou shalt enjoin: if it be to quit the stage, I go. But, before I leave the world, I render unto thee my most humble thanks, that thou hast been pleased to admit me into the theatre, to be a spectator and admirer of thy works."\* This was the profession of a Heathen. See the practice of this excellent patience, in some Scripture Examples. When Samuel had delivered to Eli the sad doom, which God had pronounced against his house, It is the Lord, saith that good old man: let him do what seemeth him good: 1 Sam. 3:18: it is the Lord, whose sovereignty, whose wisdom and goodness are infinite; and, therefore, though his present ways seem dark and obscure to me, I resign up myself wholly unto him: let him do whatsoever seemeth him good. And so, likewise, David delivers himself up unto God: 2 Sam. 15:25, 26. If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me the ark and place of his habitation: But, if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him. And thus, likewise, a far greater than both these, even our Lord Jesus Christ, yields up himself wholly to his Father's will and pleasure: Luke 22:42. Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. Christ is willing not to



have his own will: and so every patient Christian brings his will to this submission; that it is his will, that not his, but God's will should be fulfilled.

That is, therefore, a Third Work of Patience; Self-Resignation to the Will and Disposal of God.

iv. Another work of patience, is, A HOLY ENDEARING OF OUR AFFLICTIONS TO US; when it brings us to account them precious, and to reckon them as choice mercies and favours bestowed upon us.

Patience will make the soul thankful for corrections; esteeming it a token of God's special regard and condescension towards us, that he will vouchsafe to afflict us. We are all prone to think, that God never minds us, but when he is continually heaping new mercies and enjoyments upon us; and if any cross or calamity befall us, we presently fear, that God hath forgotten us: but patience teacheth a Christian to believe, that, in every affliction, whatsoever it be, God doth most particularly regard our concerns; that he is as mindful of us, when he chastises, as when he favours us. And, therefore, we should account afflictions as dear a pledge of God's love, as prosperity and indulgence. Nay, indeed, we have as much need of the one, as of the other: for, as we are apt to be too much dejected, if we see none but black and luring days; so we are, on the other side, apt to be puffed up with a continual uninterrupted course of prosperity, to grow wanton and secure, to forget ourselves and the God of all our mercies. And, as weeds grow fastest in a fat and rank soil, so our corruptions grow and thrive, and are ready to overrun our souls, when our outward state and condition is most prosperous and successful: and, therefore, God's love and care of us constrain him sometimes to use severe discipline, to nip those luxuriances, and to cut us short in our temporal enjoyments; which else, he sees, we should only turn into provision for our lusts. And, did we but seriously consider the great improvements we might make of afflictions and the great advantages we might gain, how they serve for the exercise of our graces, the confirming of our hope, the evidence of our inheritance, the seed of future joys; patience would not only account them tolerable but comfortable, and advance from being patience to be rejoicing and triumph. Therefore the Apostle,

speaking of persecuted saints, saith, they took joyfully, the spoiling of their goods; knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance: Heb. 10:34. And thus David (as once his Jonathan) tastes honey from the top of the rod: Ps. 23:4. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me: not only God's staff to support him, but even his rod to chastise and correct him, were sweet and comfortable to him.

That is a Fourth Work of Patience, to endear and sweeten Afflictions to us.

v. Another work of patience is, **THE RECONCILING OF A MAN TO THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS SUFFERINGS**: to make him willing to forgive them himself; and to pray to God for their pardon and forgiveness, who is far more offended by them than we can be.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, who is set forth to us in Scripture, as the great example of all grace, but especially of this of patience, pours out his prayers for those who were pouring out his blood: Luke 23:34. Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And his holy martyr, St. Stephen, when his murderers were pelting him with stones, pelts not them with curses and imprecations, as an impatient man would do; but, with Christian meekness, kneels upon that ground to which they were beating him, and prays, that God would not lay that sin to their charge: Acts 7:60. And, by this one effect of patience, we may easily perceive, that it is a grace very rare to be found in our days: we look upon it as too phlegmatic a piece of Christianity, to pass by an injury unrevenged: we are grown testy and choleric; and, when we apprehend ourselves in the least wronged, if we draw not our swords, yet we draw our tongues, which are full as sharp and trenchant; and shoot out our arrows, even bitter words; and nourish an implacable enmity in our hearts, against all whom we apprehend to have been the causes or occasions of those wrongs and sufferings which we undergo. What doth this argue, but that we look not at God in our sufferings? we eye not his hand, nor his providence, in bringing them upon us: we consider not, that their malice is overruled by his wisdom; and that he makes use of it, to accomplish his own purposes and designs: and so, while, like dogs, we bite and snarl at the stones that are thrown at us, we do but

interpretatively fly at him that casts them; and would even rend him in pieces, were he within our reach and power. Whereas\*, a truly patient spirit looks above and beyond the wickedness and malice of men, to the justice and wisdom of God: and this suppresseth the ebullitions of his passions and all attempts of revenge, which else his wrath and corrupt nature would prompt him to take. See a notable instance of this in David, 2 Sam. 16:10 when Shimei came out, like a man distracted with rage and passion, and flung dust and curses confusedly into the air together: Let him curse, saith David, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: he represseth his own and his captain's revenge upon that wretch, and maintaineth the peace and tranquillity of his patience, because he looked beyond the instrument, unto God, who righteously makes use of the wickedness of men for his own ends.

That is a Fifth Work of Patience.

vi. Another work of patience is, TO OBSTRUCT ALL DISHONOURABLE OR UNLAWFUL WAYS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THOSE SUFFERINGS UNDER WHICH WE LIE.

Patience will not suffer a man to accept of deliverance, if he cannot free the honour of God and the purity of his own conscience from stain, as well as his outward man from trouble: he will not make such an unworthy commutation, as to leave his God or his conscience to suffer in his stead: no; rather let bonds, reproach, afflictions, and death do their worst upon him, than that he should hazard his soul, to save his skin: if he cannot break through a sad and entangling providence but by breaking a command, let the worst come that can come, he keeps his station; and will not move one foot without the compass of the word, though he might thereby escape all his sorrows and sufferings: he is resolved that the Devil shall never bail him; nor will he, by any unlawful arts and methods, wrest himself out of God's hands, to put himself into Satan's. This patience it was, that made the holy martyrs, spoken of Heb. 11 generously scorn to accept of deliverance, when it was tendered to them upon unworthy and unwarrantable terms: they were not so stupid, nor so profuse and lavish of their lives, as to cast them away, could they have saved both them and their religion too; but, when the condition of their

temporal safety was their eternal destruction, when they could no longer live here unless they consented to die for ever, welcome then death and torments, the rack and the fire, welcome the prison or the stake, to which the laws of God fastened them more straitly than even their fetters and their chains. But impatience puts a man upon any base and wicked means, to free himself from his present sufferings: thus Saul's impatience in waiting for Samuel forceth him, first, to offer sacrifice, whereby he forfeited his kingdom; and, afterwards, his impatience to know the success of his affairs drives him to consult with a witch, whereby he lost his life. And, how many forlorn wretches are there, who, through impatience under the temporal evils which they suffer, desperately cut off their own lives, and thereby plunge themselves into eternal torments!

And thus, in these Six particulars, you see what is the proper Work of Patience. It is: to quiet and compose the spirits of the afflicted: to put a stop to all immoderate and murmuring complaints: to make men willingly resign up themselves unto the sovereign will and disposal of God: to sweeten and endear afflictions to them: to render them placable and reconcilable to the instruments of their sufferings: and, lastly, to obstruct all dishonourable and unlawful ways of deliverance.

And that is the Second General propounded.

III. The Third General is, to shew, WHEN IT IS, that Patience hath its Perfect Work.

To this I answer:

i. Patience hath then its perfect work, WHEN IT IS PROPORTIONABLE TO THE SUFFERINGS AND AFFLICTIONS UNDER WHICH WE LIE; and that, both in Duration and Fortitude.

And therefore,

1. If thy afflictions and sorrows be of long continuance, thy patience, that it may be perfect, must be prolonged.

It must be lengthened out according to the affliction; nor must we faint, till it shall please God to put a period to his chastisements and our sufferings. If thy patience wear off one day before thy trouble doth, it hath not its perfect work. Sometimes, God doth bring such afflictions and trials upon his people, as shall hold them work all their days, and scarce afford them any intermission and breathing-time: and, if it prove so with thee, know, that thy patience ought to run parallel with thy trouble. If God will not take thy burden off, but make thee travel with it till the evening, till thou liest down to take thy rest in the grave, thy patience must hold out till then, if thou wouldst have it perfect. And, though the Apostle speaks of our light afflictions, which are but for a moment: yet remember, that, as they are light only in comparison with the intolerable torments of hell; so, likewise, they are many time short, only in comparison with eternity: they are short, only because they are not endless; but, yet, this short moment may hold out as long as thy whole life. Now, then, O Christian! look upon thyself as a traveller; and make account, that whatsoever burden God is pleased to lay upon thee, he may perhaps not take it off till thou comest to thy inn, to take up thy lodging in the grave. If he discharge thee of it sooner, acknowledge his mercy; but be sure thou discharge not thy patience, before God dischargeth thy burden.

2. Sometimes our sorrows and sufferings are very deep, our burdens very heavy and pressing: and God brings upon us not only long, but sharp and severe sufferings; such as he threatened, Deut. 28:59. Great plagues, and of long continuance; and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. He may give thee a deep draught of the bitter cup, and squeeze into it the very spirit and quintessence of gall and wormwood. Now, in this case, that thy patience may be perfect, it must be strong, as well as lasting: it must have nerves and sinews in it, to bear weighty burdens. When thou canst take up the heaviest load and go away roundly with it, when thou canst endure the sharpest methods of cauters and incisions with a manly spirit, then is thy patience perfect. But, If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is but small; Prov. 24:10.

ii. That our patience may be perfect, **IT MUST BE PROPORTIONABLE, ALSO, TO THE NEED OF THE SUFFERER.**

For then hath patience its perfect work, when a man bears whatsoever is necessary for him. We suffer, as a sick man takes physic: though the potion be bitter, yet he must take such a quantity as is prescribed for the cure of his disease. Truly, our afflictions are but medicines for our souls: it may be, a small quantity, or a few doses, is not sufficient to work out the malignity of our distemper; and, therefore, we must continue and submit, until our Great Physician hath perfected his cure upon us; and then is our patience perfect. Possibly, God sees thee proud and arrogant in thy prosperity; and, therefore, he brings some sharp affliction upon thee, that may lance the swelling tumor of thy mind, and let out thy corruption: perhaps, he sees thy disease is covetousness, and too much love of this world; and, therefore, to cure this dropsy in thee, he deals with thee as physicians do with hydropic patients; takes from thee that, which, though it please thy appetite, yet miserably increaseth thy distemper: perhaps, he sees thou art falling asleep in carnal security; and, therefore, to awaken and rouze thee out of this lethargy, he makes use of incisions and cauters. Now, both the cure and thy patience are then perfect, when, of a proud and high-minded person, he hath brought thee to an humble and meek spirit; when, of a worldly and self-seeking person, he hath made thee a public-spirited and self-denying Christian; when, of a drowsy and secure, he hath made thee a vigilant, zealous, and active Christian.

iii. That thy patience may be perfect, IT MUST BE A JOYFUL PATIENCE.

Thou must not suffer, and repine: this is only patience extorted, and by force: but suffer, and rejoice\*; and bless and thank that God, taking from thee; whom thou didst bless, giving to thee. And, as we have the greatest cause of joy, so we should then, especially, shew it, if at any time we may suffer for the testimony of Jesus, and the sake of a good conscience. It is said, Acts 5:41 the Apostles rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer ... for his name.

And thus I have, in brief, shewed, when it is that patience hath her perfect work.

IV. That, which remains, is only to ENFORCE upon you this exhortation of the Apostle: that all, who name the name of Christ, the great Example of Patience, would strive to get; and, having got, to exercise; and, by exercise, to strengthen and perfect, this most excellent grace.

And, in prosecuting this, I shall observe the following method.

Give several Motives and Inducements unto patience.

Shew the several distempers of a man's spirit, which are great Hindrances of patience.

Give the Cure of these; and lay down some Means, that may be helpful to advance and strengthen patience in us.

i. For the MOTIVES to patience: they are many and powerful.

And such, indeed, they had need be, to persuade our fretful and frowny natures to the exercise of so hard a grace. There are none of us, who at all reflect upon the working of our own spirits, but find it a difficult matter to keep down the estuasions of our unruly passions. When a cross providence intervenes, either to frustrate our expectations or deprive us of our present enjoyments, they will mutiny and rebel: so that it is almost as easy an undertaking, to persuade the sea into a calm, when winds and storms beat boisterously upon it; as it is to compose the minds of men into a smooth and equal temper, when they are assaulted with any tempestuous providences.

Yet grace can work those wonders, which nature cannot: and that God, to whom all things are possible, can make our hearts calm, when our outward condition is tempestuous; and, though he lets forth his winds upon us, can keep us from being discomposed and ruffled by them; and lay the same command upon our passions, as Christ did upon the waves; Peace, be still.

And there be several Considerations, that will tend mightily to hush all the disturbances of our spirits, under all our sorrows and sufferings. As,

1. That there is nothing more necessary for a Christian, in the whole conduct of his life, than the work and exercise of patience.

What saith the Apostle, Heb. 10:36? Ye have need of patience; that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. It is a most necessary grace for a Christian: not only as all other graces are necessary to make him such, for so we have need of them all, at least, in the root and habit, and in the proper seasons for the exercise of them; but the Apostle speaks it signanter, and by way of special remark, Ye have Need of patience: need of the continual exercise, strength, and perfection of this grace.

And this especial necessity of patience will appear, if we consider,

(1) That our whole life is but a scene of sorrows and troubles.

They spring up thick about us, and surround us in every condition: put thyself in what posture and state of life thou wilt, still thou shalt find something to molest and disquiet thee; for our rest is not here. Who can recount the personal, domestical, or more public sorrows, which he undergoes; as if breath were only given unto us, to spend it in sighs and groans? The truth is, we pass through the world, as men that run the gauntlet, and must receive a lash and stripe every step we take. Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward: Job. 5:7: he is born to it: it is his inheritance and portion, that descends to him from his father Adam; entailed upon him by the curse of the Law annexed to our first transgression: and born unto it, as the sparks fly upward; that is, our troubles come upon us naturally and spontaneously, as is the ascending motion of sparks; and they are as thick and fiery, as those sons of the burning coal, as the original expression hath it. Now, if sorrow and sufferings do thus make up the greatest part of our lives, is it not absolutely necessary to fortify our hearts with patience, quietly and meekly to bear whatsoever it shall seem good to the all-wise providence of God to inflict upon us? Afflictions are necessary for us. If need be, saith the Apostle, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 1 Pet. 1:6: more necessary and more advantageous than prosperity; to nip our luxuriances, to rouse our sloth, and awaken our security; to make us remember God and ourselves. And, shall afflictions be thus necessary for us, and not



patience to undergo them? while thou livest in this world, thou sailest upon a rough sea: the waves and the billows work high: and wilt thou expose thyself to these storms, like a forlorn vessel without helm, or tackling, or ballast, to be tossed up and down upon the back of every wave, ready to be swallowed up every moment, or dashed against every rock in thy way? Patience is the ballast of the soul, that will keep it from rolling and tumbling in the greatest storms: and he, that will venture out without this to make him sail even and steady, will certainly make shipwreck, and drown himself; first, in the cares and sorrows of this world; and, then, in perdition.

(2) Consider, that patience is necessary to alleviate and lighten the afflictions we suffer.

The same burden shall not, by this means, have the same weight in it. There is a certain skill in taking up our load upon us, to make it sit handsome and easy; whereas, others, that take it up untowardly, find it most cumbersome and oppressive: let the very same affliction befall two persons; the one, a patient, meek, and self-resigning soul; the other, a proud, fretful wretch, that repines and murmurs at every cross and every disappointment; and, with how much more ease shall the one bear it, than the other! the burden is the very same, but only the one is sound and whole, and it doth not wring nor pinch him; but the other's impatience hath galled him, and every burden is more grievous and intolerable to him, because it lies upon a raw and sore spirit. And, therefore, since afflictions and sufferings are unavoidable in this life, which is a vale of misery and tears, if thou wouldst make thy sufferings easy and supportable, fret not thyself at any dispensation of the Divine Providence: keep thy spirit sound; and, whatsoever burden it shall please God to lay upon thee, add not to it by thy impatience: be not ingenious to torment thyself, by thy own troublesome thoughts and reflections; nor to find out circumstances to aggravate thy sufferings: swallow down the bitter draught, that God puts into thy hand, without straining it through thy teeth; for so the trouble will be sooner over and less distasteful. It is not so much the wearing, as the striving with our yoke, that wrings and galls us: and, as it is with beasts caught in a snare, so is it with impatient men; the more they struggle, the closer and faster they draw the knot, and make their sufferings more uneasy and their

escape more impossible. But patience gives the soul some kind of scope, and liberty under afflictions: they may surround him; but at some distance: he may be troubled on every side; but yet he is not distressed: he may be God's prisoner; but yet he is not cast into gyves and fetters: and, though the affliction come very close to his outward man and his temporal estate, yet, so long as patience hath her perfect work, it can never corrode or eat into his spirit: in this sense, the iron enters not into his soul.

That is, therefore, the First Motive to Patience: it is a most necessary grace, because it is necessary in this life that we should suffer; and nothing doth more alleviate and mitigate our sufferings, than a patient bearing of them.

2. Another motive to patience may be, to consider, who is the Author and Inflicter of all the sufferings which thou undergoest.

Possibly, when thou eyst only the instruments of thy sufferings, their disingenuous, unworthy, and spiteful way of proceeding, thy impatience may take advantage to fret and torment thee: but, if thou wouldst look up to the principal cause, thou wouldst find abundant reason meekly to submit; for it is the hand and dispensation of God.

There are many things in this reflection, that should quiet and stablish our minds, under all the afflictions and trials which we are exercised with. As,

(1) Consider, That God is the absolute and uncontrollable Sovereign of all the World.

He doth whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven, and in earth, and with all things: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Dan. 4:35. It is in vain to strive with him; for he giveth not account of any of his matters: Job 33:13. Consider, you are in God's hands, but as so much clay in the hands of the potter: and wilt thou, O arrogant man, dispute with him, why he hath so formed thee? or, why he thus breaks thee? Satisfy thyself, that it is fit and reasonable it should be with thee as it is: for so is the sovereign will of God; and his will being the first and supreme cause, must needs be the highest

reason in the world. Canst thou contend with the Almighty? or wrest either his scepter or his rod out of his hand? if not, what folly and madness is it, to vex and fret thyself at the accomplishment of that will upon thee, which never was, never can be frustrated? We may impotently, in both senses of the word, wish and desire this or that to come to pass: but, alas! where is our power, where is our authority, to effect it? Shall thy designs give laws to his purposes? or, will the course of second causes stoop to thy appointment, or run according to thy arbitration? It will only be our torture to struggle, when it is not in our power to dispose. And know, that thou dost insolently invade the prerogative of the Almighty, when thou repinest at any of his dispensations: for it shews a rebellious will in thee, to rescind his decrees, and disturb the method and order of his administration of affairs.

(2) Consider, That God is not only our Sovereign, but he is our Proprietor.

All our comforts and enjoyments, yea our very selves, are infinitely more God's, than they are ours: he hath but lent them to us, for our present use and service; but the title and propriety are still his own. And what hath busy and pragmatistical man to do, to intermeddle with that, wherein he is least of all concerned? Thy children, thy estate, thy liberty, yea thy life itself, whatsoever is dearest to thee and most prized by thee, is not so much thine, as it is God's. And what presumption then is it, to prescribe unto him, or to murmur against him, for disposing as he pleaseth, what so entirely appertains unto him! may he not do what he will with his own? Certainly, this consideration alone, were it well wrought into our hearts, would be sufficient to allay all our impatience, and to silence all our repining thoughts: That, since all is God's, we ought rather to bless him, and gratefully to acknowledge his goodness, that he hath spared us any comforts thus long, than to complain of his rigour and severity, that he is pleased again to call for them from us, and to require again what he only lent but never alienated.

(3) Consider the Relation, wherein God stands unto thee.

He is not only thy Sovereign and Proprietor, which are titles of awe and majesty; but he is thy Father, which is the most sweet and endearing title of love and mercy: a Father, whose bowels yearn and roll towards thee, while he is correcting thee: Jer. 31:20. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord: he undertakes this work of correction unwillingly; and, as it were, by constraint; For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men: Lam. 3:33: were it not that he sees this discipline of the rod is necessary for thee, thou shouldst never have other from him, but smiles and favours. Nay, God hath given us the highest expression of his tenderness, that ever could proceed from the heart of the most affectionate and compassionate father: Isa. 63:9. In all their affliction, he was afflicted: as a tender-hearted father chastiseth his children, with as much grief and regret as they themselves feel it; so doth God. And, should not this, then, be a prevailing motive unto patience, to consider, That it is our Father who chastiseth us; a Father, who is infinitely gracious and merciful, and whose mercy and pity alone put him upon this his strange and unwelcome work? shall I murmur and fret, because his goodness takes this necessary way of expressing itself towards me? because he is not so cruel, as to destroy me, by sparing me; and eternally to damn me, rather than, if need be, for a short time to cross and grieve me? Certainly, if there be any childlike ingenuity in us, we ought rather to kiss the rod, and the hand that lays it on; to bless and praise God, that he expresseth so much of a Father as to correct us. The Apostle strongly enforceth this argument: Heb. 12:9, 10. Our earthly fathers correct us, and we give them reverence: how much more shall we be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits, since he never chastiseth us out of passion and humour, as earthly parents often do, but for our profit? When we can thus look off from the absolute, to the relative nature of our afflictions; from them, as they are evil in themselves, to them, as they are in the hand and dispose of our Heavenly Father; we shall find more cause of joy and comfort, than of sorrow and repining. Thus, our Blessed Saviour supports himself: John 18:11. The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink thereof? Though we loath the cup of afflictions, in itself considered, as it hath many bitter ingredients in it; yet, when we look upon it, as it is held out to us in

the hand of God, this will sweeten that bitter potion, and make us look upon every dispensation as a mercy.

(4) Consider, again; That it is an infinitely Wise God that afflicts thee; and, therefore, thou mayest well acquiesce in his providences.

Indeed, if afflictions did only befall us by blind chance; if they sprung up only out of the dust, as occurrences merely casual and contingent, without any intelligent nature to overrule and guide them; we might possibly give vent to our impatience, by exclaiming against ill-hap and bad fortune; and be, if not more reasonable, yet, at least, less impious: but, when all events are eternally scanned and premeditated; when infinite wisdom hath sat in council, and maturely deliberated every minute circumstance of our lives; when there is not the least dust that falls into our eye, not the least trip or wrench of thy foot, but Infinite Wisdom foresaw and consulted about it, whether it should so fall out or no, infinite ages before the foundations of the world were laid; it is very foolish, as well as very wicked, for us, blind men, to find fault with the resolutions and conduct of divine wisdom and fore-knowledge. God's providence is described, by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. 1 to be a great wheel, full of eyes: now, though he bring this wheel over thee, and crush thee by it; yet know, O Christian! that it sees its way. All thy sorrows and sufferings are chosen out for thee, by that God, who doth inflict them.

[1] He knows the just Proportion of what thou art to undergo.

He is the Wise Physician, that knows what ingredients, and what quantities of each, are fittest for thee to take; and will so temper them, both for measure and time, as shall be most proper and healthful for thee. And, if he prescribe thee a large and a bitter draught, appease thyself, and quiet the tumults of thy passions, with this consideration, That it was his infinite skill and art, that directed him so to do.

[2] He knows and considers the Events and the Consequences of things, which are hid in a profound obscurity from us shortsighted creatures.

Possibly, he intends thee the greatest mercy, when he brings the sorest trials upon thee; and, by pruning and lopping thee, designs only, that thou shalt grow the more stately and beautiful. His wisdom often so manageth our affairs, as to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life itself out of death: and that, of which at present we cannot conceive otherwise but that it tends to our ruin, proves afterwards the only means of our safety and preservation. And, therefore, since we ourselves are so infinitely foolish and God so infinitely wise, we may well, with patience and thankfulness, give up the dispose and government of ourselves unto him: for, believe it; undoubtedly, if God should model his providences according to our methods and contrivances, he need take no other way to curse and ruin us. Again,

(5) Consider, God is a Faithful God.

And this should be another encouragement, patiently to bear whatsoever he shall lay upon us. Thus the Apostle urgeth it, 1 Pet. 4:19. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. He is faithful to his word and promise, which he will certainly fulfil, in his due and appointed season.

Now, as there is no condition that needs more, so there is no condition that hath more promises made to it, than an afflicted and suffering condition.

[1] He hath promised a Moderation of all our afflictions.

1 Cor. 10:13. God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. He will proportion our burden to our strength, and not lay heavy loads upon weak shoulders.

[2] He hath promised his Presence with, and his Comforts and Assistance to, the afflicted.

Isa. 43:2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. And, certainly, the presence and the consolations of God are such, as can sweeten the most bitter condition, and make the waters of Marah pleasant and refreshing.

[3] He hath promised to rescue thee out of all thy Dangers, and to deliver thee out of all thy Sorrows and Troubles.

Job 5:19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven, and there shall no evil touch thee. However,

[4] He hath made thee that universal promise, which shines among all the rest, as the sun in the firmament, and were enough, if there were no other besides, to give light and comfort to a believing soul, under the saddest circumstances; That all our sorrows and sufferings shall, in the end, evaporate to our Gain and Advantage.

Rom. 8:28. All things shall work together for good, to them that love God. He can make the top of the rod yield us honey, and the eater meat: for he is almighty, and he will do it; for he is faithful, who hath promised. And, what folly then is it, to murmur and complain of our afflictions, when as our very afflictions are our great advantages! and could we, with a wish, transform our condition, and make it such as we fancy and desire, yet it would be far worse with us than now it is.

Well then, O Christian! though thou mayst be troubled when thou lookest to second causes, and to the instruments and occasions of thy afflictions; yet, look unto God, the great Guide and Governor of all things: consider his Sovereignty, his Propriety, his Wisdom, his Fatherly Mercy, and his Faithfulness; and, if impatience hath not tainted thy very reason, and fretted thee out of all use of serious thoughts and reflections, thou wilt find abundant cause to bear all thy burdens, not only with submission, but with thankfulness.

(6) To this let me add one consideration more concerning God; and that is, that he is the God of Patience.

So he is styled, Rom. 15:5. The God of Patience. And that, not only as he is the God, that requires patience from us; not only as he is the God, that gives patience to us; not only as he is the God, that doth own and crown patience in us: but as he is the God, that doth himself exercise infinite patience towards us. He bears more from us, than we can possibly bear from him. He bears our sins, whereas we only bear his chastisements: and sin is infinitely more contrary to God's nature, than suffering can be unto ours. And what strange disingenuity is it, when we daily offer many horrid affronts and indignities against his Divine Majesty, and yet expect that he should put them up and pass them by with patience; yet, that we should murmur and fret, and cannot quietly bear the least correction from the hand of God! Certainly, we allow ourselves strange privilege and advantage, that we can be content, the Great God of Heaven and Earth should daily suffer by our sins; and yet cannot be content, when we suffer a little by his chastisement.

Thus, did we but well consider the Author and Inflicter of all our sufferings, it would much help us patiently to undergo them.

That is a Second Motive.

### 3. Consider what thou hast deserved.

And this will be a most unanswerable argument for patience under what thou feelest. If God should extract the very spirit and quintessence out of all the most bitter things in the world, and put this potion in thy cup, and make thee drink of it all thy days; yet, all this is nothing to what thou hast deserved. When thou liest under any pain or sickness, or whatsoever misery and affliction it be, think with thyself, "This is nothing, to one gripe of hell-torments; much less, to an eternity of them." Think with thyself, "Though this be grievous which I now suffer; yet, how happy is it for me, that I am not now in hell! If I now feel so much pain, when I am but a little touched with his finger; oh! what intolerable anguish should I have felt, had I now lain under the furious strokes of his almighty arm! And shall I howl, and fret, and be impatient, when I have infinitely more reason to bless God, that it is no worse with me, than to complain, that it is thus?" Thus, I say, compare your sorrows and



sufferings with your deserts; and this will be a most effectual means to excite you to a patient bearing of them.

4. A fourth motive to patience may be the consideration of the great Benefits and Advantages, that accrue to us by afflictions.

It is true, that afflictions, in themselves considered, can have no great encomiums made of them: for, so, they are rather pernicious and destructive, than any way conducive unto the welfare of those that suffer them: that man must have worne off all impressions of natural good and evil, whoever shall think, that pains and sorrows are but delights and recreations: after all the grave dictates of philosophy, pains will be pains; and diseases, diseases, still: and, if reason should presume to teach sense to judge what is pleasant and what is grievous, it would exceed its due bounds, and grow very profoundly ridiculous: it is work enough for patience to bear them as they are; it is not required, that we should account them pleasures and divertisements; and those, who are of such a cynical humour, deserve enough of such blessings. But, though afflictions be in themselves evil, yet are they capable of such excellent improvements, that the good, which shall spring from them, will more than compensate the pain and grief of our present sufferings. To this accords that of the Apostle, Heb. 12:11. No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but rather grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. As the ploughing up of a field seems utterly to spoil the beauty of it, when its smoothness and verdure are turned into rough and unsightly furrows, and all its herbs and flowers buried under deformed clods of earth; but yet, afterwards, in the days of harvest, when the fields laugh and sing for joy, when the furrows stand thick with corn and look like a boundless sea and inundation of plenty, they yield an incomparable delight to the eyes of the beholders, and welcome sheaves into the bosom of the reapers: so, when God ploughs up any of his children and makes long furrows upon their backs, it may possibly seem somewhat a strange method of his husbandry, thus to deform the flourishing of their present condition; but yet, afterwards, when the seed, which he casts into these furrows, is sprung up; when it shall overspread their souls, and shake like Lebanon; both the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence will

be made apparent, in thus converting a barren prosperity into a more fruitful adversity; and, though they go forth weeping, yet they shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them; as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. 126:6. And, therefore, since afflictions may be thus improved to so great an advantage, impatience and fretfulness under them may be justly censured, not only as impiety, but folly.

Now, there are Four sorts of Improvements and Advantages, that we may make of our afflictions.

(1) As they are the Exercise of our Graces, so they keep them lively and active.

Exercise, you know, though it weary and tire the body for the present, yet conduceth to its health and soundness. Now afflictions are the soul's exercise, by which God keeps our graces in breath, which else would languish and be choked up. And, though this exercise may sometimes be very violent, so as to make the soul pant and run down with sweat; yet this tends to better its constitution, and to remove that sluggish phlegm, which otherwise would obstruct and oppress it. And, therefore, O Christian! whatsoever thy present troubles and afflictions be, know, that God brings them upon thee, only to breathe thy graces, and make them the more healthful and vigorous. Possibly, he takes from thee all thy outward props and dependencies, to try thy Faith; whether it can lean firmly upon a promise, and be confident enough to take his word without a pawn. Possibly, he lets loose all his winds and his waves upon thee: the whole face of heaven may be muffled with clouds; and, for many days, thou mayest see neither sun nor star, no other light but those flashes which are more terrible and dismal than darkness itself: and all this, only to try the temper of thy Hope; whether that anchor be strong enough to hold out in a storm. And, if ever Providence should call thee to lay down thy secular enjoyments, or thy life itself, for the profession of the name of Christ, this is only to try the ardency of thy Love and Zeal, how much thou canst forego and undergo for his sake; whether thou canst espouse a naked Truth, a destitute and forsaken Christ, when reproaches, revilings, persecutions, and martyrdom, are the only dowry thou canst here expect. Thus, I say,

God often brings afflictions upon his people, that their graces may be exercised; and, upon trial, be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, when their faith shall appear victorious, their hope tenacious, and their love sincere, in the midst of troubles, dangers, distresses, yea and death itself. As spices send forth their most fragrant scents, when they are most bruised; so are the graces of God's people more sweet and redolent, when they are crushed and bruised under the pressure of heavy afflictions. Now, as the trial and exercise of our strength is a natural means to encrease it; so, this exercise of grace by afflictions is a proper means to get great strength and perfection of grace: all habits are confirmed in us by frequent acts: and, therefore, O Christian! if thy afflictions put thee upon the acting of faith, and hope, and a generous unbiassed love of God, and self-denial, and humility; know, that thou art a great gainer by thy very losses, and happy in thy greatest troubles. Nay, if by suffering thou only learnest how to suffer, and growest more expert in patience, this alone is a sufficient recompense for all thy sorrows: it will be motive enough to any one, who knows the excellency of this divine grace, to suffer patiently, that he may be patient: see that remarkable place of the Apostle, Rom. 5:3, 4. We glory in tribulations: we esteem them our privilege and advantage: why so? because tribulation worketh patience: we rejoyce to have our patience tried, so long as the product of it is still patience: and patience worketh experience: we hereby grow to be experienced Christians; and, by long custom, find, that those troubles are not so dreadful, nor insupportable, when we come to grapple with them, as we thought, when we stood at a distance. Indeed, experience and custom facilitate all things; and make that very easy, which before we accounted difficult, if not impossible. All birds, when they are first caught and put into their cage, fly wildly up and down, and beat themselves against their little prison; but, within two or three days, sit quietly upon their perch, and sing their usual notes, with their usual melody: so it fares with us: when God first brings us into straits, we wildly flutter up and down, and beat and tire ourselves, with striving to get free; but, at length, custom and experience will make our narrow confinement spacious enough for us; and, though our feet should be in the stocks, yet shall we, with the Apostles, be able, even there, to sing praises to our God. And experience, saith the Apostle, worketh hope; inasmuch as having formerly undergone the like afflictions, we may, with the more

confidence, expect either the like support, or the like deliverance. And, lastly, hope maketh not ashamed: for the expectation of the righteous shall not be disappointed, but God will certainly deliver them, either from or by, all their sufferings and miseries. What a prevalent argument should this be unto patience under afflictions, since a true Christian makes such great improvements of his afflictions, that he would be an infinite loser, should he part with his advantages to be rid of his afflictions! That is the first benefit we gain by afflictions; they exercise and strengthen our graces.

(2) Another advantage of afflictions is this: that they are Physic to the Soul, to expel and purge out its corruptions.

And, therefore, though the potion be bitter; yet, when it is administered to such an end, this should reconcile our antipathy, correct our nauseating, and make us swallow it down without repining or murmuring. See that notable place, Isa. 27:9. By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all his fruit, to take away his sin. And this afflictions do, sometimes, by cutting off those provisions, which a more prosperous condition laid in, for the fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh: when we cannot have such large supplies for those vanities and follies, which before too much alienated our hearts from God. Sometimes, they work more kindly and ingenuously, in a moral way; as they put men upon serious reflections, and cause them to consider their ways and doings: those, who were never pensive nor thoughtful before, will be so, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them: then, they begin to examine and ransack their consciences; and, as mariners, in a storm, throw overboard their freight to lighten the vessel; so these, when they are in a tempestuous condition, cast out this and that sin to lighten their souls, that the tempest may the sooner cease, or they the better out-ride it. And this is the very reason, why there is no place so holy as a sick-bed: have you never been conversant with those, who have been cast thereon, when their vessel hath sprung a plank, and death hath been leaking in on every side? have you never observed, how they have then wholly applied themselves to prayer, and confession, and heavenly discourses? they are deadened to all the joys and vanities of the world; and detest their own folly, for ever loving and prizing them. And so is it, proportionably, in all other

afflictions, that God brings upon us: they all tend to make us sober and considerative: for it is a natural impression upon the minds of men, that all our sufferings are for sin: and this cannot but engage us against those sins, the smart of which we so sensibly feel; and, having had such experience of the bitter effects of sin, we are, afterwards, made more capable of the counsel of our Saviour, to sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us. Now, O Christian! if this be the fruit of thy afflictions, to purge thee from thy sins, wilt thou complain, that God deals too severely with thee, when he intends thee so great a blessing? canst thou patiently suffer incisions, caustics, searings, amputations, and cutting-off of whole limbs, and all the merciful torture that the art of the physician puts thee to, for the recovery of thy bodily health? and, yet, wilt thou murmur against the Great Physician, when he takes those methods, which, though they are grievous, yet are safest for the cure of thy spiritual diseases, which are infinitely more dangerous and destructive than any corporal maladies can be? certainly, thou either distrustest his skill, or foolishly preferrest thy present ease before thy eternal safety; and wouldst rather go down to hell, having two eyes and two hands, than enter into heaven halt and maimed. Possibly, God sees, that thou hast taken a dangerous surfeit of worldly comforts: and wilt thou vex and fret, that he gives thee a medicine to cast up what thou canst not digest, and to rid thee of what was a load and oppression to thy soul and conscience? Perhaps, he sees thy mind is lifted up, and swells with the tumor of pride and vain-glory, in a continued course of prosperity; and, therefore, the method of his goodness constrains him to lance thee: and wilt thou complain, that he wounds thee, when it is only to let out that purulency and corruption, which else might fester and gangrene, and prove thy utter bane and ruin? Could we but bring our untoward hearts to believe, that all our afflictions are but the prescriptions of our Great Physician; that he designs good to us by them; that, as much of our earthly enjoyments as he takes from us, as much blood as he lets, so much of our corruption and peccant humours run out together with it; common reason would easily persuade us, to bear that with patience, which will so vastly redound to our benefit and advantage.

(3) A patient bearing of afflictions is a clear Evidence of our Adoption.

Indeed, our sufferings only prove us to be the sons of Adam, on whom the curse is entailed through his primitive transgression: but our patience under sufferings, is a strong proof and evidence, that we are the sons of God. All metals may be melted in the furnace; but it is the property of gold only, to endure the fire, and lose nothing of its weight or worth. The Apostle makes this the trial of our legitimation: Heb. 12:7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: and, v. 8. If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons: and, again, v. 6. Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth. It is true, we cannot argue, that we are the children of God, merely because he scourgeth us; for God dispenseth afflictions, both as he is a Judge and as he is a Father: as he is a Judge, so he deals with wicked and ungodly men, often scourging them with rods, even in this life; and, afterwards, he eternally scourgeth them with scorpions in hell: but, then may we comfortably conclude, that he chasteneth us as a Father, when he gives us patience to bear his rebukes, and works in us a holy submission unto his divine will and pleasure: by this, he doth but set his mark upon thee; and, though it doth burn thee, yet this will be thy perpetual comfort, That, by this, he will own thee, and thou mayest know thyself to be his: so the Apostle tells us, Gal. 6:17 that he bare in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus; that is, all the persecutions and tribulations which he underwent, as they did conform him to a resemblance with the Lord Jesus, so likewise they were so many characters imprinted upon him, declaring to whom he did belong. And now, O Christian! is there any affliction so grievous, as such an evidence is comfortable? will not this abundantly recompense the pain and smart of all thy sufferings, when thy patience in bearing them shall give thee in a testimony that thou art a child of God, and fill thy inward sense as full of joy as thy outward can be of trouble and sorrow; yea, a joy unspeakable and glorious, that shall swallow up all the afflictions which thou feelest, and make them inconsiderable nothings? As St. Stephen was so wholly wrapped up with his heavenly vision, that, though the Jews gnashed upon him with their teeth, and dragged him forth to stone him; yet he was so wholly fixed and intent upon the glory of that unexampled sight, that he regarded not their threats, nor the stones they threw at him, which, he knew, would but pitch his way to heaven: so, truly, when it pleaseth God to open heaven in a man's

soul and to ravish his heart with the dear sense of his eternal love, all outward sorrows and troubles are not of force sufficient to disturb his thoughts; but he is wholly possessed with the consolations of God: he retreats inward, and enjoys himself in peace and unspeakable comfort, in that retirement where afflictions and tribulations cannot reach him; and they can no more embitter his joys, than one drop of gall can embitter the whole sea, when it is let fall into it. Now God never affords such large and overflowing measures of his consolations, as in an afflicted condition: he gives his strongest cordials, when the spirits are most apt to fail and sink. And, therefore, thou, who hast laboured and prayed long for assurance, and wouldest esteem it a felicity next to the possession of heaven to know thy undoubted right unto it, set patience on work in all thy trials and afflictions: bear them quietly and submissively; and see, whether thou canst not read evidences enough for heaven, in the very print of the rod; see, whether God will not this way give thee in so much comfort, as shall turn thy patience into joy and triumph.

(4) Consider, that a patient suffering of afflictions will make rich Additions to the Weight and Splendour of thy Crown of Glory.

And wilt thou then, O Christian! murmur and repine at the weight of thy burden, when, at last, it will be all found to be gems and diadems, and all to be thine own? See what the Apostle saith, 2 Cor. 4:17. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: methinks, this consideration alone should be so effectual to teach us patience, that we should scarce have patience to hear any more: shall our glory superabound, as our sorrows have abounded? shall our eternal refreshings be measured out unto us, by the cup of afflictions which we have here drank of? doth God beat and hammer us, only that he may make us vessels of honour? shall all sighing and sorrow fly away, and everlasting and unmeasurable joy be upon our heads? Wherefore then, O Christian! these impatient complaints, these fretful vexations? dost thou do well to be angry? to fume and estuate, because God takes the course to make thee too glorious? art thou likely to be happier than thou wouldst be? or, doth God do thee an injury, to fit thee for a higher place in heaven, than, perhaps, thou carest to possess? Believe it, thou art the greatest enemy to thyself:

and, if thou wouldst have thy good things here, thou dischargest God from his obligation: thy impatience can free thee from no other weight but one; and that is, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Thus, therefore, if we consider the great benefits and advantages, that will accrue to us by a patient bearing of afflictions; that it is exercise to our graces, physic for our souls, an evidence of our adoption, and an addition, to our future glory; we should soon be convinced, that it is much more our interest to be patient, than it is, not to be afflicted.

That is, therefore, the Fourth Motive.

5. Another motive may be this: that a patient bearing, of afflictions is a very great Honour, both to Ourselves, and to God.

(1) To Ourselves.

Consult 1 Pet. 4:14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. It is for the honour of your faith, and hope, and all the rest of your graces, 1 Pet. 1:7. that the trial of your faith, which is more precious than of gold ... though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory. There is nothing more honourable than fortitude and magnanimity. Now, it is the heroic gallantry of a Christian spirit, not to be out-baffled by afflictions: but, when his body or estate are broken by them; yet to keep his soul sound and entire, and, in the greatest agonies of sorrows from God, with an undaunted meekness, to say, "Strike, Lord, for thy servant beareth:" and, in the greatest rage of persecutions from men, to scorn their weak attempts, and shew a courage able to endure far more than they are able to inflict. Thus the Primitive Christians tormented their tormentors; and, by their conquering patience, turned their despite against themselves, to gnaw and fret their own bowels.

(2) It brings in a great revenue of glory unto God.



For what can reflect a greater honour upon God, than that, though we suffer from him or for him, yet we can bear it patiently, because it is his hand that inflicts it? Cassian relates a story to this purpose: That a Christian, being injured and tormented by the Heathens and afterwards cast into prison, being asked by one, what miracles Christ had ever wrought, answered him, "The same that you now see, viz. that though I have been thus ill-handled by you, yet I am not moved with it." When the Devil had obtained of God to afflict Job, who would be sure to do it with all the spite and malice of hell, and yet could not alter the resolution of his patience and constancy; see, how God upbraids the Devil, and glories in his servant's fortitude: Job 2:3. Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man; one, that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. God, as it were, pawns and engages his honour upon the patience of his servants: he calls forth his champions to the combat; and sets men and devils against them: if they flinch, his honour suffers for it; but if they keep their ground, and, whatsoever troubles and trials befall them, maintain the temper and constancy of an even sedate soul, this erects a lasting trophy to the glory of God; when they see so much excellency in God and in his ways, that they can prefer piety, with all the afflictions and tribulations that attend it, before the pomp and allurements of this present world, and esteem the very reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. And, therefore, O Christians! if you would glorify God, maintain your spirits in patience under all adversities: for this shews your most high esteem and veneration of him; when you can cleave to him as your chief good, though he bring evil upon you; and resolve to trust in him, though he slay you. This will shame and defeat the Devil; when he sees himself so hated and rejected, though he bring all the baits of pleasure and advantage to recommend his temptations; and God and godliness so esteemed and loved, though they expose their followers to much distress and misery. And, indeed, this way of glorifying God, by patient suffering, is a privilege and advantage, that we have above the angels: the good angels glorify God, by doing his will; but they cannot suffer: and the evil angels, indeed, suffer; but they cannot suffer patiently. Herein we outstrip them: since, by nature, we are made passive; and, by grace, patient.

6. Consider, that patience under afflictions is the best way to be freed from afflictions.

And that, whether they be immediately from Men, or from God.

(1) If they be immediately from Men; patience is of such a sweet winning nature, that, unless they have quite divested humanity, they cannot long persevere in a causeless wronging of those, who quietly bear and pass by their former injuries.

Veterem ferendo injuriam, vites novam, was the old saying\*: "By putting up old wrongs, you will not so much invite, as avoid, new ones." Where no wood is, the fire goeth out, saith Solomon. Patience subtracts and withdraws fuel from wrath: it finds no new occasion to stir up strife by opposition. Whereas, if there happen a controversy and difference between two impatient men, it is but like clapping the burning ends of two firebrands together: they mutually help to inflame one another, till, it may be, both are consumed: and, while the one doth the wrong and the other retaliates it, they both think they have just cause to keep up an immortal feud. Certainly, nothing sooner damps an injury, than yielding; as a woolsack will sooner damp and deaden a bullet, than a stone-wall. Resistance gives, if not a right, yet a pretence and colour to farther injuries: for those, who did the first, will think themselves as much affronted by our revenge, as we did by the first wrong; and so both are mutually exasperated, and there can be no end of violence and outrage. Whereas, a patient, meek-spirited man, who passeth by many provocations that are given him, presently cuts off the long genealogy and succession of wrongs; and finds it much easier to endure some without revenge, than to draw upon himself a great many by revenging them. This sweet temper of spirit, which the Gospel so highly recommends, must needs, at length, win upon our adversaries to forbear their unjust prosecutions; and to cease harming us, when they see us innocent, and followers of that which is good: this effect it will have upon them, if they be not altogether fierce and brutish; or, if they be, it will prevail with God to restrain their malice, and to take us, as his clients, under his own protection.

(2) If our sufferings be immediately from God, a patient bearing of them will the sooner put a period to them; because, usually, one great end why God doth afflict us, is to teach us patience.

And, therefore, the sooner we learn this hard lesson, the sooner we make the affliction needless; and God will not chastise any, unless need be. His design is not to break, but only to bow and humble thee: and, when he hath effected this, he will soon withdraw his chastisements, and cast away his rod; it being a work altogether as displeasing and irksome to him, as it can be unto thee. Rev. 3:10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience: i.e. because thou hast been patient according to my word, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Now, when you are under afflictions, what is it that you most passionately desire? is it not, that God would take off his hand? that he would spare a little, and give some respite? that he would free you from your sorrows and sufferings? Believe it, the most infallible and compendious method to obtain this, is, to bear the indignation of the Lord with a submissive patience; for then, commonly, the affliction is no longer useful, as having obtained its end: but, while thou frettest and ragest against God's dispensations, know, that it is not for his honour to let thee go out of his hands; for such a temper will never be brought to acknowledge him in the deliverance, which will not submit to him in the affliction.

7. Consider, that all thy sufferings in this life are, in themselves, tolerable.

They are but the infirmities of a man, which the spirit of a man may bear. For,

(1) They are only Partial.

Thou art afflicted only in some few of thy concerns: never was any, in all: and yet all are alike subject to the same God, and to the same Providence. And, what! wilt thou murmur and repine, when thou sufferest only in one or two interests, when all the rest escape; whereas, thou mightest have suffered universally in every faculty of

thy soul, and every member of thy body, and every thing that belongs unto thee?

(2) All thy afflictions and sufferings have a great mixture of Mercy in them.

There is no one of us, but, if impatience did not blind him, might see much more cause of thankfulness in every estate, than of fretting and repining. The truth is, when we are under any affliction, we are generally troubled with a malicious kind of melancholy: we only dwell and pore upon the sad and dark occurrences of Providence; but never take notice of the more benign and bright ones. Our way, in this world, is like a walk under a row of trees, checkered with light and shade: and, because we cannot all along walk in the sunshine, we therefore perversely fix only upon the darker passages, and so lose all the comfort of our comforts. We are like froward children, who, if you take but one of their playthings from them, throw away all the rest in spite. Now, O Christian! recollect thyself: consider how many mercies thou enjoyest with thy afflictions: yea, consider how much mercy is in thy afflictions; in that they are not so extreme and rigorous, as thy sins deserved, and could have prepared: they are such, as might easily enough be borne, didst not thou thyself greaten and aggravate them, by thy impatience. The truth is, men dress up their afflictions in a black, hideous shape; and then are frighted at what they themselves have made so formidable. For shame, then, never whine nor complain at God's dealings with thee; lest God, to punish thee for thy impatience and murmuring, under more gentle and easy afflictions, prepare such for thee, whose little finger shall be heavier than their loins; and whereas, before, he chastised thee with rods, henceforth he chastise thee with scorpions.

8. Consider how many thousands, in the world, are in a far worse condition than yourselves; and would account themselves happy, were they in your circumstances.

And how unreasonable, then, is it, to complain of God's dispensations! Do we think, that God is more indebted unto us, than he is to them? or, that he wrongs us, if he doth not bestow more upon us, than upon all the world beside? Thou art, possibly, impatient at

the loss of a child, or of some near relation: but, how many are there in the world, to whom these are given, as the greatest crosses and burdens of their lives! Thou liest, perhaps, under racking and tormenting pains, or languishest under lingering and consuming diseases, and frettest thyself with impatience! though, possibly, thou mayest have all accommodations of means and attendance to ease and solace thee: but, canst thou find none that suffer the same pains, the same diseases, and, it may be, in a far more sharp and severe measure, and yet are destitute of all the other comforts thou enjoyest; and have no where to breathe out their sighs and their sorrows, but in the open air, or at the threshold of thy door? Certainly, were all the evils and miseries, that mankind endure, amassed together, and brought into one common stock and store, and then distributed by equal shares among all men, thy lot and thy portion of them would, perhaps, be much greater than now it is: and, therefore, it is very unjust and unreasonable for thee to complain, since God hath been more kind and more favourable to thee, than to thousands of others. But, the misery is, that pride and self-love make us always take our measures from those that are above us: and, if we see any more prosperous than ourselves, we presently murmur and quarrel at God's proceedings; and are apt to think that he deals rigidly with us, because he deals more favourably with some: whereas, were we humble enough to look below ourselves, we should, every where, find miserable objects; and see abundant cause to bless and praise God, that it is not with us, as with them. Art thou Poor? yet, even among that rank of men, are there none reduced to a more pinching and tyrannous necessity, than thyself? look about thee in the world; and, I believe, there are few or none, that will read this, but may find some whom they can relieve, and are fit objects of their pity and charity. Art thou Diseased, or tormented with Pains? but canst thou find no Lazarus, no Job, in the world, in comparison with whom, thy diseases themselves are health, and thy pains pleasure? thou art not yet brought into that extremity, that a potsherd or a dog's tongue should be thy only ease and comfort. Hast thou sustained Losses in thy estate, or in thy relations? but canst thou find none, who can make thee such doleful complaints, and tell thee such sad stories of these things, as to make thee forget thine own sorrows, and mingle thy tears, not of impatience, but compassion, with theirs? Certainly, we have all of us abundant cause

to be thankful to God, that we are not the most forlorn and wretched creatures in the world: for that very sovereignty and dominion of his, which hath made others so, might have allotted us the same portion. And, yet, these miserable creatures themselves have no reason for impatience, upon many accounts and considerations before mentioned; and how much less hast thou, whom, perhaps, they envy as happy and prosperous, whilst thou art still complaining, that thy condition is wretched and deplorable!

9. As another motive to patience, consider of how short duration and continuance all the troubles and afflictions of this life are.

Though your way be thorny and miry, yet it is but short. A few sighs more may bring you to heaven, where all sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and everlasting joy succeed these temporal miseries. Long afflictions are not beyond our sufferance. They must of necessity be light burdens, that a man carries far. Sore and heavy troubles usually give in bail to their own arrest; they spend, together with the subject that beareth them; and must, like fire, go out at last, for want of fuel. So that whatsoever your afflictions are, yet still, in the very nature of them, you may find ground enough for patience: if they be light and ordinary, it is but effeminacy and a weakness of spirit, to complain of what you may well support: if they be grievous and intolerable, a little time will serve to deliver you from the sense of them: and, as Antoninus said well\*, Αφορητον εξαγει, χρονιζον φορητον. "That, which is intolerable, is not durable: that, which is lingering, is not intolerable:" thou mayest easily bear the one; and the other will soon wear out thee. And, what! cannot thy patience stand out one hard brunt; and endure a short shock, though it be fierce and violent? It is but a storm, that will quickly blow over; and thou mayest live to see serene and bright days again; if not in this world, yet then, when thou shalt be got above these clouds and this region of tempests, into that mansion of bliss and joy, where never sorrows nor sufferings durst appear. Indeed, impatience is a great prolonger of torment: it is not our pain, but our impatience, that makes the time seem long and tedious to us: both sense and reason tell us, that the sun riseth over a sick man's bed as over the healthy and vigorous, and that the hours roll away as fast over the miserable as the prosperous; yet, how swift are our days spent in ease and pleasure! the hours seem to overtake,

and to crowd one into another. And yet, certainly, thy sad and thy cheerful days have both one and the same measure: the shadow creeps as fast about the dial of a miserable man, as of the happy. The odds lies only within thyself. Impatience, fretfulness, repining, a raw and eager spirit, fond hopes and impotent desires, make short afflictions seem long, and long ones endless. But, were these cured, thou wouldst find it altogether unreasonable to complain of the length of thy afflictions; when yet they are whirled away and pass with the same fleetness, which makes others complain that their pleasures and their lives are too short.

However, here consider,

(1) Let thy afflictions be as grievous as thy passion can describe them, yet doth God afford thee no lucid intervals? Hast thou no intermission from thy sorrows? no breathing-space afforded thee?

This is mercy: and this time of thy ease and refreshment ought not to be reckoned into the suffering; as, commonly, it is. Indeed, men have got an art of making their sorrows longer than they are: ask one, who labours under a chronical distemper, how long he hath been troubled with it: straight he will tell you, for so many months, or for so many years: when yet, perhaps, the greater part of that time he enjoyed ease and freedom, between the returning periods of his disease. Certainly, the affliction can be no longer than it lies upon thee; and that, usually, is but a very inconsiderable time, compared to that, wherein God relieves and comforts thee. Job complains, that God brought his sorrows so thick and fast upon him, that he would not suffer him to take his breath: Job 9:18: he was like a man shipwrecked in a tempest, where the surges and billows broke so fast upon him, that he had not time so much as to lift his head above water to take breath. But hath God dealt so with thee? hast thou not had a morning, as well as an evening, to make up thy day? Though the clouds return again after the rain, and the same pain or disease, or whatsoever affliction it be, recurs; yet, it is mercy, that God hath interrupted the course of it; that he hath given thee an interstitium of ease: and, then, thou canst no more, with truth, say, that thou hast so long had thy disease, than that thou hast had thy health. And,

(2) If thou hast been long under afflictions, yet, perhaps, they have been varied.

Even this is mercy, that he will not strike long upon one place, nor scourge thee where thou art sore already. But, suppose,

(3) The affliction, that God brings upon thee, were to continue as long as thy life itself continues, without either change or intermission; yet consider, that it is most unreasonable to complain of thy sorrows, as long, when thou art still complaining of thy life, as short.

If thou art not relieved sooner, yet it cannot be long ere death will put an end to thy temporal miseries; and the last sigh and groan thou shalt give, will be that, which shall discharge thy soul from thy body, and thee from all thy present sorrows and sufferings. And, therefore, though the days of thy pilgrimage be evil, yet, since they are but few, this may recompense for the other, and persuade thee to bear patiently, what thou art not to bear long. Think with thyself, "It is but a few days or a few years more, that I shall be in a suffering, in an afflicted condition. I am travelling through a vale of miseries, but my grave is within view: there I shall throw down all this load of care and trouble; and sweetly take a profound rest, where none of the vexations of this life shall ever disturb me: There the weary be at rest: and, what! shall I faint under my burdens, when I am to bear them but so short a time? Take courage, O soul! that happy hour is hastening on, as fast as the wings of time can speed it, which shall give ease to thy pain, and rest to thy weariness. Death will shortly come in to thy relief, take off thy load, and lay thee to sleep in thy grave." But,

(4) All our troubles and afflictions are infinitely short, and nothing, in comparison with eternity.

If, at any time, the greatness, and soreness, and long continuance of them tempt thee to impatience, cast but thine eye upon eternity, and they will all so shrink and vanish under that comparison, that they will scarce deserve the name of afflictions. This great ball of earth on which we live, if we consider it in its own dimensions, how huge a



mass and globe is it! but, yet, if compared to the vast expansion of the heavens, it is but a small, invisible point; and bears no more proportion to it, than one poor drop of water to the whole ocean. And, so, take all the long flux of time, from the creation of the world to this present moment, and we reckon it by hundreds and thousands of years: it seems to us a mighty while: but, then, lay all this time, which is stretched out thus long, lay it to eternity, and it presently shrinks up to nothing: it is lost and swallowed up in that bottomless gulf. Yea, the smallest drop of water is infinitely more considerable to the great ocean, than thousands of years, though they should be multiplied again by thousands of thousands, are to an eternal duration.

Thou, therefore, who complainest of thy long and endless troubles, consider,

[1] That these take up but a very small and inconsiderable part of thy life.

Most of thy days have been crowned with mercy, and God's candle hath shone upon thy tabernacle almost as often as the sun.

[2] Consider, that thy life takes up but a very small and inconsiderable part of time.

It is but like a little pattern cut thee off from the great piece. And,

[3] Consider also, that time itself, though it should be stretched out to as many ages as there have been minutes in it, yet bears no proportion to eternity.

And art thou not ashamed, then, to complain of the length and continuance of thy afflictions, since they are as nothing, in comparison with the rest of thy life; and thy life itself nothing, in comparison with the rest of time; and time itself nothing, in comparison with eternity? And, certainly, could our meditations dwell more upon that eternal state that awaits us, either of joy unspeakable or of unsufferable woe and torments, the consideration of this would enable us to bear our present short afflictions with a

heroic and generous patience; and we should scorn to think them either long or grievous. For,

1st. What is it for us to suffer a few short days, when we consider the bitter and the eternal torments, that thousands of wretched creatures suffer in hell?

Look but into that great Shop of Woe: observe all the instruments and engines of torture that are there prepared, which God will use against them with his greatest skill and his almighty power: Their worm never dies, and their fire never goeth out: they have no rest day nor night, but the smoke of their furnace ascends up for ever and ever: and, when they have felt more exquisite and racking tortures than you can now fancy, for millions of millions of years, yet still it is but the beginning of their sorrows; still it is as far to the bottom of eternity, as it was the very first moment. These, indeed, are sufferings that might well make a man impatient: but, for you to vex, and fret, and be impatient, whose sufferings are but for a few days or hours, who have so many mercies and comforts mingled with all your afflictions, it shews a weak, sordid, low spirit: for you to be impatient under those little crosses that God lays upon you here, whereas he might righteously have plunged you into hell, and there have given you cause indeed to roar, and howl, and toss in eternal flames and never-ceasing woes, it argues a base, disingenuous, and ungrateful spirit. And,

2dly. What is it for us to suffer a few short days, when we consider that everlasting bliss and joy, which is prepared for us in heaven?

The happiness of heaven may well comfort us, in respect of all our miseries here upon earth. What saith the Apostle, Rom. 8:18? I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Christians! think but seriously with yourselves, that, though your way be rugged and tiresome, yet it is a way that leads unto your Father's house: and, though you come there all wet and weary, wet with your tears and wearied with your burdens; yet there you shall be surely welcome, and enjoy an eternity of rest: there, you shall sit down; and, with everlasting joy, recount to your brethren, a whole ring of

surrounding saints, all the wonderful methods of Divine Providence, which brought you thither; and, with infinite satisfaction, see the necessity and mercy of those afflictions, which you have here endured: there, your garments of heaviness shall be changed into garments of praise, and your crown of thorns into a crown of glory: there, you shall for ever rest your tired souls in the bosom of Jesus Christ; and for ever enjoy so great a felicity, that it were infinitely worth suffering all the miseries and afflictions which this life can bear, to have but one momentary taste and relish of it. Didst thou know what the glory of heaven is, thou wouldst be content to lie upon the rack, to endure the sharpest paroxysms of the most torturing and cruel pains all thy life long, and account them easy and short, if these could purchase for thee one hour's enjoyment of the ineffable glory and happiness of heaven. And, wilt thou then be fretful and impatient under thy present sufferings, when these are prepared to be the inlet into thy eternal reward? when thou shalt be for ever confirmed in the possession of all good? when thou shalt never more be in a possibility of suffering; nor know, what a sad thought, or a sad moment, means? And, canst thou think any affliction long, when thou thus reflectest upon the everlasting recompence that shall be made thee? Certainly, did we more dwell upon the thoughts and meditations of eternity, we should not be so irrational, as to judge that long, which takes up but a very little part of that time, which, of itself, is nothing, compared to an eternal duration.

(5) Consider, again, what brief measures the Scripture gives us, of our temporal afflictions.

It is called a Season: 1 Pet. 1:6. Now, for a Season, if need be, ye are in heaviness: and seasons, you know, are of no long continuance, but have their periods and revolutions. Yea, to cut it shorter yet, the Scripture calls it a Day of Adversity: Prov. 24:10. If thou faint in the Day of Adversity, thy strength is small: small, indeed, if it cannot weather out one bad day! and so, likewise, a Night of Weeping: Ps. 30:5. Weeping may endure for a Night, but joy cometh in the morning. Nay, if this yet seem too long to our impatient and fretful spirits, the Scripture still shortens it, and calls it but the Hour of Temptation: Rev. 3:10. I will keep thee from the Hour of Temptation: and, shall not our patience be able to endure an hour's affliction? Or,

would you desire it shorter yet? see it then contracted into a moment: 2 Cor. 4:17. Our light affliction, which is but for a Moment: and what is a moment, but an indivisible point of time, that hath no parts nor succession in it; a mere twinkle of time? Innumerable of them are gone, while we are speaking the word, Moment. And, yet, all these afflictions, which thou so grievously complainest of, are light for their burden, and momentary for their duration, if that can be called a duration: These light afflictions, which are but for a moment. As one of the martyrs said, "It is but winking, and I shall be in heaven:" so, truly, these short afflictions are past and gone in the cast, in the twinkling of an eye. Let us, then, be persuaded to bear them with patience. It is much below the spirit of a man, to murmur and complain of that, which a little time will ease him of; and much more, of a Christian. If thou canst not bear a season, a day, or night of affliction, an hour, a moment of affliction; wherefore art thou a Christian? Hast thou hope only in this life? if so, reckon thyself among the number of those, whose portion is only in this life: but, if thou wilt own the name of a Christian, thou oughtest to enlarge thyself infinitely beyond this present time: thou oughtest to take eternity into thy life; and not to account that thy life, which thou ledest here upon earth; but that, which thou livest by faith, and expectest with a cheerful hope, the everlasting life of glory and happiness in heaven. And, what is it to this life of thine, what thou sufferest here? do poverty, disgrace, pains, and diseases, losses, and crosses; do these reach into eternity? or, do they at all taint that better life, which thou livest? This here is not thy life. As we reckon not the age of children, from the time they have been conceived in the womb, but from the time of their birth: so, truly, this present life is but the conception of a Christian: in this world, we are but in the womb: then we begin to live, when we are brought forth into the clear light of heaven, and breathe the air of eternity: and, therefore, the days, on which martyrs suffered, were called their Natalitia. And, if any sorrows and afflictions could reach thither, thou hadst some reason to be impatient: but none at all, for these transitory troubles, which quickly pass away with our days; and for which, thou wilt in heaven be no more concerned, than now thou art, for the pains and inconveniences which thou feltest in the womb, before thou wert born.

That is a Ninth Motive to Patience: the consideration of the Short Continuance of all the Afflictions of this Life.

10. The tenth and last motive to patience, which ought to be very effectual with all true Christians, shall be taken from the Example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Apostle commands us, Heb. 12:2, 3, 4 to look unto Jesus; and to consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied, and faint in our minds: and, again, 1 Pet. 2:21 we are told, that Christ suffered for us; leaving us an example, that we should follow the steps of his patience and submission. And, certainly, he is so great an example of patience, that, when we consider the indignities which he endured, and the infinite meekness with which he bore them, it may well shame us out of our fretfulness and impatience.

And there be Two considerations, which do mightily enhance this, and tend to make it a most prevalent and effectual motive to arm us with meekness and patience.

(1) Consider, that his sufferings were infinitely greater, than any that we can possibly undergo.

From his cratch to his cross, we find his way strewed all along with miseries. Born of a poor and suspected mother; acquainted with all the hardships of a mean and laborious life; his doctrine reproached to be blasphemy, and his miracles to be sorcery; having no shelter, no sustenance, not so much as the little conveniences of birds and foxes: he conflicts with his Father's wrath, till it strained his soul into an agony; and the apprehensions of that bitter cup, presented to him, squeezed drops of clotted blood from him. We see him exposed to the insulting scoffs of barbarous ruffians; crowned with thorns, scourged, buffeted, and spit upon; and, by the drops of his blood, we may trace him to his cross: see him hanging there, a ruthless spectacle both to men and angels; the greatest scene of dolours and miseries, that ever was represented to the world. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to

the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. And,

(2) Consider, that all his unknown sufferings were not for his own, but for our offences.

It is some motive to patience, when we suffer the effects of our own deserts. So thought the Penitent Thief, when he checked the blasphemous reproaches of his fellow-offender: Luke 23:40. Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. There was no iniquity in him, neither was guile found in his mouth: yet, notwithstanding his infinite purity and innocence, notwithstanding that all his actions were pleasing to God and beneficial to man; yet, he suffers all the wrath that the one, and indignities that the other, could load him with. And, what! do we find his passions estuate? doth he murmur against God, or meditate revenge against men? No; we find him meekly resigning up his will to his Father's: Not mine, but thy will be done: and, under all the rage and affronts of men, he pours out his prayer, together with his blood, for them: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Now, O Christians! imitate this pattern of your Blessed Saviour: let it powerfully persuade you to patience and submission, under all your sufferings. Ours are all but the least desert of our own sins: his were only the desert of ours. Ours are only some sprinklings of that cup, the very bottom and dregs of which he drank off: and shall we be any longer impatient against God, or revengeful against men? shall we fret, and fume, and be exasperated, and fly out into all the extremities of passion and violence, when our Lord Christ himself, the infinitely holy and glorious God, calmly endured such pains, such shame, such wrath, that the very utmost we can suffer in this life is scarce a fit shadow and resemblance of them?

And thus we see this exhortation of the Apostle pressed upon us, by these Ten Motives; which if we would bring under the view of our serious consideration, we shall find enough in them, to incline the most peevish and fretful nature to a meek and quiet submission to the hand and will of God. For, it is a most Necessary Grace for a Christian, in the whole conduct of his life, which is full of troubles

and afflictions; and nothing can so alleviate them, as patience; the Author and Inflicter of all thy sufferings is God, who is absolute in his sovereignty; our Proprietor, as our Lord; infinitely gracious and merciful, as our Father; infinitely faithful to his word, whereby he hath promised; and infinitely wise and skilful, whereby he is able to work all things for our good and benefit: again, if we consider what we have Deserved, this will prevail with us patiently to bear what we feel: and consider the great Benefits and Advantages, that accrue to us by afflictions; as they are exercise to our graces, physic to our souls, evidences of our adoption, and additions to our future glory: consider, again, the patient bearing of afflictions is a very great Honour, both to Ourselves and to God: it is, likewise, the best and readiest Way to be Freed from afflictions: that no affliction befalls us, but what is Tolerable, and common to men; how many in the world are in a far Worse Condition than ourselves; and that all our afflictions are but Short and Momentary: and, lastly, consider the Pattern and Example of Christ's Patience, which will powerfully sway us to patience under those sorrows we suffer, which are both less in themselves and more deserved by us.

Thus I have given the Motives to Patience.

ii. The next thing, in order, is, to shew those Distempers of Spirit which are great HINDRANCES of Patience; and give a very great advantage to every cross and trouble, to ruffle and discompose it. And, with these, I shall also annex and prescribe the CURES.

And they are such as these.

1. An effeminate Softness and Delicacy of Spirit; when the mind is lax and fluid, and hath not its due consistency.

We may observe some persons to be of such a nice complexion, that every alteration injures them: let them but change their diet, or air, or set and accustomed hours, and they suffer grand inconvenience by it: whereas, others, that are more robust and vigorous, undergo these and greater changes, without change. And the like difference there is in the constitution of men's souls, as in their bodies: some are of such feeble and languishing spirits, that they are utterly disordered

by those accidents, which scarce move those that are of a more hardy temper. And these are, usually, men of very prone passions and affections, easily excited and set on work by every thing that occurs: so that it is a wonder to see, how they are agitated by every small and trivial object which presents itself; like chaff or straw, that the least breath of wind whirls about: sometimes, they immoderately rejoice; sometimes, they tenderly commiserate; sometimes, they vex, and rage, and fly out into all extremities of choler, at those petty circumstances that would not stir another, of a solid and masculine spirit. But these are men of too soft and tender a constitution. And, as a light stroke makes a deep wound upon a soft subject; so every light affliction enters deep, and cuts these men's souls to the very quick.

Now, to these let me recommend that admirable exhortation of the Wise Man, Prov. 3:11 and urged by the Apostle, Heb. 12:5. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. Here we have a most excellent temper set forth to us; as a mean, between stupidity and desponding impatience. We ought to be affected with the hand of God; and not to demean ourselves under afflictions, as though we felt no smart, neither valued what God doth against us, but rather defied him to do his worst. It is a sign of desperate incorrigibleness, when we are grown to a dedolency; and are so far past feeling, as to despise the smart and correction of the rod. Moderate passions are allowed us; and God, when he afflicts us, would have us shew ourselves to be men; not such brutish Leviathans, as to laugh at the shaking of his spear, and to account his darts and arrows no more formidable than stubble\*. But then again, on the other hand, beware, that, as thou dost not despise, so thou dost not despond under the corrections of thy Heavenly Father. Fortify thy spirit, and arm it with all the arguments that are proper to encourage thee, in a suffering condition. Do not permit it to grow too tender; and, instead of being sensible, to be sore and fretful.

Consider,

(1) The Indecency and Unbecomingness of Impatience.



It sits ill upon a man, and renders him contemptible and ridiculous. We do never so much unman ourselves, as by peevishness and fretful humours. We degrade ourselves in the esteem of others, as a company of weak things, who must, like children, be humoured, to keep them quiet. Impatience always proceeds from weakness; and, while we toss, and tumultuate, and express the eagerness of an ulcerated mind, in all the intemperate language and actions that passion suggests, we are but a grief to some, a sport to others, and fall under the scorn and contempt of all. Let us think with ourselves, how unseemly is the wild and extravagant fury of a distracted person! why, an impatient man is distracted; and, like such, he flings abroad, at random, firebrands, arrows, and death. And, therefore, our Saviour Christ exhorts us, Luke 21:19. In your patience, possess ye your souls; intimating to us, that an impatient person hath lost the possession of himself: he is a man bereft of his reason; and, as we use to say, besides himself.

(2) Consider the Vanity and Folly of Impatience.

To what purpose is it, that thou vexest and torturest thyself? Couldst thou ease or relieve thyself by it, this might be some plea and reasonable pretence. But, was it ever heard, that the body was cured of a fever, by putting the soul into one? was it ever heard, that the disordering of the mind composed a man's estate? or, that raising a tempest within, should lay a tempest without? Nay, rather, impatience adds a mighty weight to our burdens, while we must bear both them and it too.

(3) Consider, that Impatience is not only unseemly and foolish, but it is Unchristian too.

There is nothing more directly contrary to the true spirit and genius of Christianity, than murmuring and repining: for, what is Religion, what is Christianity, but only a due resignation of our wills unto the sovereign and holy will of God? now, for us to vex and fret at the accomplishment of his will and purposes upon us, what is this else, but so far to renounce Christianity, to rebel against God, and to withdraw ourselves from under his dominion and jurisdiction? And, therefore, I beseech you, O Christians! as you would approve

yourselves to be such, that you would earnestly strive against that fond niceness and delicacy of spirit, which will, else, be a great snare unto you, and tempt you to usurp upon God's prerogative, and wickedly to invade his government: for, whosoever is not content with what God allots him, would willingly ravish from him his power and sovereignty, and set himself in the throne; he doth but tacitly upbraid God, that he wants either wisdom, or goodness, or both. And, therefore, confirm and harden your minds against all adversities that may befall you: fix your resolutions, that thus it ought to be, and that thus it is best for you: and, whatsoever portion God carves out to you, receive it with thankfulness: if it be prosperous, as your food; if adverse, as your physic.

2. Another great hindrance of patience, is a fond Love and Admiration of these Creature-Enjoyments.

Indeed, were these things certain and durable, they would only be perpetual comforts to us: but we see, by every day's experience, that they are transitory, and mutable, and of no continuance: and, therefore, when we eagerly set our hearts and affections upon them, to be sure, we shall, either in the loss of our enjoyments or the disappointment of our hopes, find cause enough for grief, and temptations enough to impatience. Let the comforts we prize thus immoderately, be what they will, we shall find it a very difficult labour to keep ourselves from murmuring against God, when he is pleased to cross us in them: for all the passions of the soul take their measures from love: that is the master and leading affection: and, therefore, according to the intenseness of your love, such will be your sorrow, and your anger, and the fretfulness of a discontented soul, when God takes away the object of your fond love from you. So it is said of Jonah, chap. 4:6 that he was exceeding glad of the gourd: he mightily pleased himself in the shade and the shelter, that it afforded him: and, therefore, when God had prepared a worm to smite and wither it, you presently see what a violent and exorbitant passion he falls into: and, when God graciously condescended to expostulate with him, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? is this fit for thy reason, or religion, or profession, to be so transported for the fading of so small a thing, as this gourd, the mean offspring of the earth?" we see, that discontent and passion so blinded him, that he

flies in the very face of God himself, and gives the Almighty the most saucy peremptory answer, that certainly ever proceeded out of the mouth of a good man: v. 9 he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death: alas, peevish man! that so little a matter, as the withering of a poor shrub or weed, should put him into so violent a passion! But, so it is, when we immoderately prize the enjoyment of any comfort on earth, we shall likewise immoderately bear the loss of it: when God comes to touch us there, all within us is presently in an uproar; we estuate, and fume, and exclaim against men, and quarrel at Providence; accuse one, and revenge ourselves upon another; and, in the turbulency of our passion, can scarce abstain from God himself.

Now, to cure and remove this cause of impatience, let me beseech you to sit loose from the things of this world. Let them not congregate with your hearts; for, believe it, if once the soul and affections be glued to these earthly concernments, whenever God shall take them from you, it will be a violent tearing and rending of your very hearts, to part with them. Bring yourselves into a holy indifferency of all things here below; and, then, whatsoever happens, nothing can fall out much amiss. If you have no vehement affections for the enjoyment of these things, you will have no violent passions stirring in you for their loss. If thou didst truly estimate what this world is, how vain, how empty and insignificant, how vexatious and cumbersome, thou wouldst find abundant reason to conclude, that it is not much material, whether thou be high or low, rich or poor, persecuted or favoured, despised or honoured: for, all these things are but dreams; and, as dreams, they vanish and pass away. Our true interest lies not here, but in peace of conscience, serenity of mind, staid and sedate affections, a generous virtue, and a pious life; and if these were thy care, crosses and afflictions would be less thy troubles. Think with thyself, how momentary thy life is: thou wert but of yesterday, and mayst not be to-morrow: when it is stretched out to the uttermost, it is but a span long: and what needst thou, then, trouble and perplex thyself about so many concernments and such a multitude of affairs, and engage all the strength and vigour of thy affections about such vain things, that continue not, nor canst thou continue to use them? What need so much provision for so short a journey? Let us take the Apostle's direction, 1 Cor. 7:29, 30, 31. The time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they, that

have wives, be as though they had none; And they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as those that purchased not; And they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. And, certainly, could we but bring ourselves to this excellent indifferency, we should not be much molested, nor grow fretful and impatient, for any losses or disappointments in things which we look upon as of no great concernment.

3. Another great hindrance to patience, is Pride and Self-Love.

For, while we are fond of ourselves, we shall be shrewdly tempted to murmur at whatsoever crosses and thwarts our appetites or our interests. Those, that are great admirers of themselves, think that all things are due to them: and, if any thing fall out contrary to their expectations and overweening conceits, they presently judge themselves wronged; and storm and rage, as if their bitterest passions were but just resentments of the injury done them. Never was there a proud person in the world, but he was also impatient; for it is the very nature of pride, not to endure to be crossed; and those, who are inordinate lovers and admirers of themselves, must needs take it for a mighty injury, if all things go not according to their mind and will.

And there is a Twofold Pride, which is the cause and root of all our impatience: a Natural and a Spiritual Pride.

(1) A Natural Pride.

When we think ourselves eminent for some natural gifts and endowments; and, thereupon, expect, that all others should say as we say, and do as we would have them: and, if any presume to do otherwise, we look upon ourselves as affronted, and cannot bear such a contumely; but presently burn in choler, and seek to wreak our revenge and spleen upon them. A proud man is his own idol, and his own idolater: and, as Nebuchadnezzar grew wroth and furious, hot as his fiery furnace seven times heated, when the three heroes refused to fall down and worship the image which he had set up; so these proud persons grow presently enraged, if all do not bow and fall

down before them. If they meet with any so stubborn, as to thwart and oppose them, presently their Diana is despised; and all their passions are in an uproar and a tumult, to vindicate their honour. Only from pride, saith the Wise Man, cometh contention: Prov. 13:10 and wherever contention is found, impatience is first the mother of it.

(2) There is a Spiritual Pride, which is the root of impatience.

And this spiritual pride may be, where yet there is a great deal of natural modesty and weakness. Now, this pride consists in having an unbroken and unhumbled heart for sin; when we have never been deeply affected with our guilt and vileness, and that most wretched and deplorable condition in which we all are. And, therefore, whensoever God afflicts such a proud person as this, he is apt to think himself punished beyond his desert; and to question and quarrel at the equity and justice of God, in bringing such heavy and sore sufferings upon him, who thinks himself a very innocent and righteous person. And this spiritual haughtiness and pride makes him fret against God's dispensations; and makes him think that God himself turns persecutor, when he afflicts him.

Thus you see, that all our Impatience is from Pride; whether our sufferings be immediately from man, or from God himself: for, proud flesh is very tender, and cannot endure the least touch.

Now, the only Cure for this distemper of soul, is Self-Denial and Humility. That man is most secure from impatience, who entertains but mean and low thoughts of himself: for, what strong temptation can there be to any great excess of impatience, so long as we suffer only in that, which we do not highly value? Why should I vex or fret myself, that such a man speaks ill of me? alas! he speaks not worse of me, than I speak and think of myself: shall I be discomposed, because he hath done me such an injury? why I shall but gratify him by that means; and, perhaps, he did it with that very design: and, besides, he hath far more injured himself than me, so long as I can keep my patience entire. Or, shall I murmur and repine, because God hath brought upon me such a calamity? alas! this is a favour and mercy, in respect of what I have deserved at his hands: when I

consider, what I have done against him, all that he hath done against me is nothing: my sins merit no less than eternal death and eternal damnation; and, certainly, I have no reason to complain, so long as I am out of hell: God were infinitely gracious and merciful to me, though he should redouble his strokes, multiply my sorrows, and increase my sufferings; and I were the most ungrateful wretch alive, if I should repine at bearing so little, when I have deserved so much. Thus, I say, humility, a contrite and broken frame of spirit, will preserve us from being fretful and impatient, whether we lie under injuries from men, or afflictions from God.

4. Reflecting too much upon the Instruments of our Sufferings, is oftentimes a mighty hindrance to the composure and patience of our spirits.

For this frequently puts a sting and aggravation into them, to think, that we suffer from such or such. And many will be ready to say, "This cross I could bear well enough: the affliction, though it be in itself heavy, yet is it supportable: but, when I consider the occasion of my sufferings, the unworthiness and base disingenuity of those that have had a hand in it, this makes it intolerable; and, it wounds me to the very heart, that ever such and such a person should deal thus with me."

(1) And there are usually these Three Considerations, that grate upon our spirits, and make us impatient under sufferings.

[1] The Meanness and contemptible Vileness of the Instrument.

What! to be affronted and abused by the lees and dregs of the people! If a lion had rent me, there had been some solace in the honour of my sufferings: but, to be eaten up with vermin, the ignominy of it is far worse than the pains. Thus, I say, impatience takes occasion to exasperate itself from the baseness of the instrument. And, truly, the most patient have much ado to keep their passions from souring upon this reflection. Thus, Job at large aggravates his miseries, from this consideration: Job. 30:1, 8, 9: They, that are younger than I, have me in derision: whose fathers I would have disdained to ... set with the dogs of my flock.... They were children of fools; yea, children

of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song; and their by-word. And,

[2] It heightens impatience, when we reflect upon the Nearness of those, who are the occasions and instruments of our sufferings.

What! to have a part of ourselves, a parcel of our own bowels, rebel against us, and contrive our hurt and ruin! those, who have their beings from us, to conspire our destruction! or those, whom we have made intimate and familiar with us; and could never have had the advantage of doing us mischief, had not our friendship and kindness put them into the capacity! And, thus, David aggravates his sufferings: Ps. 55:12, 13. It was not an enemy, that reproached me: then could I have borne it. Neither was it he, that hated me, that magnified himself against me ... But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and my companion.

[3] It many times heightens impatience, to reflect upon the base Ingratitude and foul Disingenuity of those, from whom we suffer.

Persons, perhaps, whom we have obliged, by the greatest respects imaginable: such, who, we thought, had as much reason to love us, as themselves; and would have been as far from doing us an injury, as their own natures. Yet, for such as these to violate all bonds of friendship, and all laws of gratitude; for such frozen snakes to fly at us, and sting us, whom we have warmed and cherished in our own bosoms, and who, without our support, could not have had the power to mischief us: this, saith Impatience, makes the injury altogether insufferable; and the highest revenge, that I can take upon them, can scarce expiate it.

(2) But, to cure this fretful distemper of thy spirit, be sure that thou look off from the instruments of thy sufferings, unto God, who is the principal inflicter of them. And, then, if thou wilt but consider the Three foregoing Reflections, thou wilt find, that thine own cannon will be turned against thee; and those, which were provocations to impatience, when thou lookest to men, will prove strong and most forcible arguments for patience, if thou lookest to God.

[1] Thou growest impatient, when thou lookest upon the Meanness and Baseness of those that injure thee: and, wilt thou not be patient, O man! when thou considerest thine own Vileness and Baseness, who yet hast infinitely wronged and injured thy God?

Who, or what, art thou, but breathing dust, a lump of animated mire, the very sediment and dregs of nature? and, yet, how often hast thou daringly provoked and affronted the great and glorious God of Heaven and Earth! Every the least sin thou hast committed, the least vain and unworthy thought, the least idle and impertinent word, is a far greater injury done to God, than the most unjust and violent outrage can be against thee. It is thy fellow-creature, that wrongs thee; one, whose nature and being is altogether as considerable as thine; and, in this respect, differs no more from thee, than two units, in a number, from one another: but thou sinnest against the Infinite Majesty of thy Almighty Creator; in comparison with whom, thou, and all nations of the earth, are less than nothing and vanity; more nothing, than nothing itself is. And, wilt not thou be patient under the petulant affronts of thy inferiors, when as thou, who art infinitely inferior unto God, yet livest, and art yet out of hell, only through his patience towards thee?

[2] Thou art impatient, when thou considerest the Nearness of the Relation, wherein those, that wrong thee, stand unto thee: but, wilt not thou rather be patient, when thou considerest, in what a Near Relation thou standest unto God, and yet ceasest not daily to affront and injure him?

Thou art his creature; and that is so near, as it challengeth from thee all possible respect and duty: nay, more; thou art his son, or at least hopest and pretendest so, and yet rebellest against thy Heavenly Father. And, is it much, that thine rebel against thee, since thou thyself rebellest against thine? And,

[3] Thou art impatient, when thou considerest the Ingratitude of those, from whom thou sufferest: but, alas, O man! dost thou never consider thine own towards God?



Is not thy whole dependence upon him? doth not he maintain thee, at his own cost and charges? hath he not educated, and brought thee up, as one of his family and household? doth he not daily provide for thee? doth he not heap his blessings upon thee, and load thee every day with his benefits? And yet, O ungrateful man! thou art daily and hourly wronging and provoking him. And, therefore, if he doth at last chastise and afflict thee, thou hast no reason to murmur and complain: for, it seems, it is but thine own law: it is no otherwise, than thou wouldst thyself deal with thy fellow-creature, over whom thou hast no such right; and from whom thou hast not suffered, by infinite proportions, so much as thy God hath done from thee.

Thus, I say, by turning off our eyes from the instruments, to the principal cause of our sufferings, we may cure and remove that impatience, which is apt to grate upon and exasperate our spirits.

5. Reflecting upon a former more prosperous condition, is oftentimes a great provocation unto impatience under our present sufferings.

Nothing puts a sharper edge upon our afflictions, than to compare present miseries with past felicities. But, in this, we may see very much of the perverseness of our nature, in turning that, which ought to be an engagement to our thankfulness, into an occasion of murmuring. For, either thy former prosperity was a mercy, or not: if not, thou hast no cause to complain for the change: if it were, certainly, thou hast a reason rather to bless God, than to repine that he hath blessed thee.

And thus I have finished the consideration of those generals, which I propounded. I hope, I need not press any thing more, than what hath already been offered. And, if the serious review of what arguments and motives have been mentioned, will not suffice to compose the mind, it is much to be doubted, whether such men's spirits be not ulcerous beyond all cure.

Only, let me add this for our encouragement, that this hard and difficult duty will be but for a little while incumbent upon us. Whatsoever is irksome in religion, will shortly be over: and, when we are passed through this vale of tears and misery, as our faith shall be

turned into vision, our hope into fruition, so our patience shall be turned into joy and triumph.

This was the consideration, which St. Paul himself used, under all his sufferings; and shall be the subject of my next discourse.

**OF THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR  
FUTURE STATE,  
AS THE BEST REMEDY AGAINST  
AFFLICTIONS**

WHILE WE LOOK NOT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN,  
BUT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN: FOR THE  
THINGS, WHICH ARE SEEN, ARE TEMPORAL; BUT THE  
THINGS, WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, ARE ETERNAL. - 2 COR.  
4:18

THESE words are a strange paradox; and are brought in by the Apostle, to confirm a position, which, to most men, may seem as much a paradox as themselves.

In the precedent verses, he asserts afflictions to be advantageous, and losses beneficial; that we improve by our decays, and may reckon our sorrows and troubles to be our gain and interest.

And this he makes good to us, whether we consider Grace or Glory.

As to Grace, he tells us, v. 16. Though our outward man decay, yet our inward man is renewed daily. As sharp and nipping winters do to the earth, so do afflictions to the heart: they mellow it, and make it fruitful. These goads in our sides, as troublesome as they are, yet serve to quicken us to our work, and make us mend our pace to heaven: for Christians are like clocks; the more weight is hung upon them, the faster they go.

And, then, as for Glory, he tells us, in the verse immediately foregoing my text, that their afflictions do but work out this. The cross stands in the highway to the crown. It was by this, that our Lord himself obtained it; and he hath since ordained, that all his followers should pass the same way. We must, through many

tribulations, enter into glory: Acts 14:22. This is the pathway to heaven, which is strewn all along with thorns. And, though the Scripture asks, Do men gather grapes of thorns? yet, certainly, these thorns shall yield a plentiful and a pleasant vintage. Poverty, reproach, persecution, imprisonment, sickness, yea death itself, take whatsoever is most stern and most dreadful to human nature, though they may seem to be oppressing tyrants, yet they are, indeed, but faithful and laborious servants: they are working out glory for us: and if, in doing their work, they break either our bodies or estates in pieces; yet, so long as out of that rubbish they work and mould a mass of glory, we may rest ourselves well satisfied in such an advantageous loss. This is an abundant encouragement to bear afflictions, not only with patience, but with joy too: for, God having promised that all things shall work together for our good, it is the greatest folly in the world, to complain that the potion is not pleasant, which the skill of the Great Physician hath tempered for our health; and let us rest confidently assured of it, that as much as we wish our condition otherwise than it is, so much we wish it should be worse with us than it is.

But, yet, the frailty of human nature being such, that it is ready to sink under every burden which God lays upon it, it cannot have too many supports. The Apostle, therefore, not only assures them, that their afflictions work for their glory and happiness; but, moreover, makes a comparison, wherein he shews them, how infinitely their reward shall surpass their sufferings.

And this comparison stands upon a Twofold Antithesis, or opposition of the one to the other.

The afflictions, which they here endure, are but light afflictions; but the glory, which they shall receive hereafter, is an exceeding weight: Το καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν βάρους: an exceeding, excessive weight of glory. He labours, you see, to express it; and he expresseth it so great, as if he must again labour to bear it. Their crown of glory shall be so massy and ponderous, that it will be as much as the soul will be able to stand under: it is a weight, a load of glory.

But then, again, he compares them in duration, as well as weight. Their afflictions are but short and momentary; but the glory, that shall be revealed, is durable and eternal: Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Now, it is a very difficult thing to persuade wretched and miserable men, that their afflictions are but light and short. Every little pressure is a load, and every hour an age. We reckon our time by quite different measures, when we are in adversity, from those which we use when we are happy and prosperous. In prosperity, time imparts its wings, and flies away apace, before us: life, we think, glides along too fast in a smooth and even way. But, when the way is rugged and miry, the hours then seem slow-paced and loitering: and, quite contrary to the course of nature, our summer and sun-shine days are the shortest, and our winter are the only long and tedious ones.

What, then, makes the Apostle here give in such a different account concerning afflictions, from that of other men? that, when they reckon the least and shortest to be long and heavy, he should here determine quite contrary, and assert the greatest to be but light and momentary? He satisfies us in the reason of this strange and paradoxical assertion, in the words of the text; and tells us, that we shall account all the afflictions of this life light and short, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

But this may seem to be no better, than the resolving of a question by propounding a riddle. For, to look at things not seen, to see things invisible, can appear no other than a perplexing riddle to most men, who live more by sense than they do by faith.

I shall, therefore, first clear the words from the doubtfulness and ambiguity of the phrase: and then collect from them the principal subject, on which I intend to insist at present.

I. We have, IN THESE WORDS, the Apostle's practice, and the reason of it. His practice: We look not at things seen, but at things not seen: the reason, because things seen are temporal, but things not seen are eternal.

Here let us briefly enquire,

What is meant by things seen.

What, by things not seen.

What, by looking both at the one and the other.

As for the other two expressions, that things seen are temporal, but things not seen are eternal; I suppose them known to all who have but a notion of the difference of time from eternity. Briefly, the one have their original, continuance, and period, in the revolution of time, and are measured by days and years: the other never had beginning, or, at least, never shall have end; and so, are exempt, either one way or both, from the jurisdiction of time and change.

i. By THINGS SEEN, may be well understood, all sublunary occurrences, whether prosperous or adverse, good or evil. And these, not taken so restrainedly, as to be limited to our bodily sight, as if things seen should only be those objected to our eyes; but, more largely, whatsoever is any way sensible or present to us, that may be here reckoned among things seen. For, because it is necessary to our corporeal sight, that objects be present; therefore, the Apostle expresseth things present by the notion of being seen. And, indeed, it bears the same latitude with that common expression of the Wise Man, All things under the sun: all things under the sun being, as it were, illustrated by his light, may be said to be things seen. But here, accommodating this expression to the drift of the Apostle in the context, we must take these things seen, for the more severe occurrences of our lives; for the miseries, afflictions, and troubles we are exposed unto; for the dark and gloomy side of those objects, that are presented unto us: Our light affliction ... worketh for us an exceeding ... weight of glory, while we look not at things seen: they conduce to our happiness, while we look not on the grim and direful aspect of our sufferings, so as to be frightened by them from our duty and obedience.

ii. Though THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, may be of several sorts; as things distant, things future, things spiritual, may all of

them be unseen, and each of them may have several kinds under it: yet, here, according to the symmetry of the Apostle's discourse, are meant those future things, which constitute our final and everlasting estate; and they may be referred either to heaven or hell, to our glory or condemnation. These are the things not seen, which a true Christian looks at. We look not at the visible enjoyments, the honours, profits, pleasures of this world; no, nor yet at the loss of all these: but at those things, which are of infinite and everlasting consequence; at the insufferable pains and torments of hell, with care how we may escape that condemnation; and at the infinite and endless joys of heaven, with earnest desires and suitable endeavours to obtain them.

iii. To LOOK AT these, denotes not here any act of the sense; but, as often elsewhere in Scripture, of the understanding and affections. There is an eye of the soul, as well as of the body; and that is the understanding. Now, because, when we consider and ponder any object presented to our bodily eyes, we usually look intently upon it; therefore, also, when the understanding seriously regards those objects which are not visible by our bodily eyes, we may be said to look upon them.

So that the sense is: We regard not, we mind not the things which are seen; the world, nor any of its frowns or favours; our thoughts are pitched upon other objects; and fly a strain above, and beyond this world; we regard that endless state that is to come, more than all those vain and empty things that lie before us. And, while we do so, we find a great deal of reason to account all our afflictions light and momentary, which shortsighted men, who pore only upon what is present, groan under, as long and burdensome. And it is, indeed, but reason, that we should thus overlook what is present, and fix our regard upon what is future. For present things are but temporal: once they were not: and, if they be good things, when God hath turned over a few more days and years, either they shall not be, or we shall not be here to enjoy them; or, if they be evil things, either they must shortly perish, or we must perish from under them: or, as Antoninus, the emperor, speaks well, Το μεν αφορητον εξαγει, το δε χρονιζον φορητον: "Whatsoever befalls us in this life, if it be intolerable, it cannot be lasting, and we shall soon fail under it; or, if

it be lasting, it cannot be intolerable, but we may endure it." But, the things, which are future and not seen, are eternal: to that state we are all hasting, that is of perpetual duration; where woe and torments, or joy and bliss, shall have no end for ever. And, therefore, it is but reasonable, rather to consider, how we shall be entertained there, than how we are used here.

And thus I have, as briefly as well I could, given the scope and meaning of the words.

II. From them, we may COLLECT Two Propositions.

i. That THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF OUR FUTURE ETERNAL STATE WILL MAKE US OVERLOOK, AND, WITH A HOLY GENEROUSNESS, DESPISE ALL THE PRESENT TROUBLES AND AFFLICTIONS, THAT WE MEET WITH IN THIS LIFE.

To despise them, I say, not indeed as they are the chastenings of the Lord, for so we are forbidden it, Prov. 3:11 but as they accidentally prove to be temptations to us, to desert the service of God, which exposeth us to the scorn and opposition, of the world, to embrace the more profitable or creditable service of sin and the Devil: to despise them so, as not to make any great reckoning, whether we be afflicted or no. And, thus to despise them, is the right means not to faint, when we are corrected. We see how this wrought upon the Apostle: Rom. 8:18. I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. As the earth, if we consider it alone, in its own proper dimensions, appears to be of a vast circumference and magnitude; but, compare it to the larger circuit of the heavens, and then, in respect of their unmeasurable expansion, this whole globe is but a small speck and indivisible point: so the Apostle institutes the comparison between temporal afflictions and eternal glory. Afflictions, indeed, to those, who look no farther than upon their present sufferings, may appear great, and heavy, and endless; but, when we compare earth with heaven, the afflictions here with the glory hereafter, they are light, inconsiderable nothings. It is but as if a man should be troubled that he is hungry, when he is just sitting down to a feast; or, as if he



should think much of it, that he must kneel to have an honour conferred upon him. Yea, our Apostle so compares, present sufferings with future glory, that he plainly tells us, there is no comparison between them: they are not worthy to be compared. But, I shall wave this, at present,

ii. The second observable, that I collect from the text, is this, that **THERE IS NOTHING WORTH THE REGARD OF A CHRISTIAN, BUT HIS ETERNAL STATE.** We look not at things present, for they are but temporal; but at things future, for they are eternal.

In prosecuting, this, I shall, first, lay down some Demonstrations of the proposition; and, then, reflect upon the wretched Temper of most men, who regard every thing but their souls and their eternal state.

The Demonstrations are briefly these:

1. This is the End of our Lives, to provide for our Eternal State.

There is a Twofold great end of man: one, in respect of God; and that is, the promoting of his glory: the other, in respect of ourselves; and that is, the promoting of our own happiness. Upon these very designs hath God sent us into the world, that we might glorify him, and save our own souls: and he hath been graciously pleased so to entwist these two together, that, in glorifying him, we do but glorify ourselves, and, in working for him, we do but work for our own interests and advantage. Yea, indeed, no man can glorify God, but he, who is careful and industrious to promote his own salvation and happiness: and, therefore, saith our Saviour, John 15:8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: but, to whom is this fruit beneficial? not to God, but to ourselves: it is such fruit, as the Apostle speaks of, Phil. 4:17. Fruit, that may abound to their account. This is that, which differenceth the great end of man, from that of beasts: they were all created, that they might, in their several kinds, honour and glorify God, as well as man; but they have no immortal part, as man hath, for whose everlasting happiness they should be obliged to provide. Self-preservation is the utmost natural end of all creatures; and such as their self is, such will be their endeavours to preserve it: brute creatures, whose self is only temporal, seek only their temporal

preservation, as best accommodated to their natures and principles; but, in man, the self is immortal, eternal: and, therefore, unless our care be laid out about our eternal concerns, we fall far short of our end; and, in seeking the things of this world, we seek only a temporal preservation; that is, we infinitely degrade ourselves, and act only upon the principles and for the ends of brute beasts.

2. We ought chiefly to regard our eternal state, our everlasting happiness and welfare, because this is the only thing, which our care can secure to us in this world.

Nothing else can here be made sure, but our future inheritance of life and glory. We are not certain of any worldly comforts, which we enjoy in possession: much less are we certain of any in reversion. Change and vicissitude are written in capital letters upon all things under the sun. There is no stability in any condition, here on earth. He, who stands highest, stands but upon ice: his footing is but uncertain, and his fall will be but the more desperate. But things eternal are sure in themselves; and they may be made sure to us: they are sure in themselves; and, therefore, called by the Apostle, Heb. 10:34 a better and an enduring substance: and they may be made sure to us; as certain as the word of God is true, and the seal of his Spirit inviolable. A Christian is a man wholly made up of paradoxes: he is poor, and yet maketh many rich: he hath nothing, and yet possesseth all things: he is sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: things not seen, are the things that he looks at: and, contrary to the guise of other men, he is surest of the things, which he doth not see; and those, which he hath in his hands and in his sight, he accounts the most uncertain and deceitful. Again,

3. As nothing else can be made sure to us, besides our eternal state; so, indeed, there is nothing else worth making sure, but only that: and, therefore, a Christian's care about things eternal, is most rational and becoming.

If I could lay an arrest upon the mutability of affairs, and drive such a pin into the wheel of Providence as should keep it from turning; if I could give laws to fate, and prescribe to myself the measures of mine own prosperity: yet, alas! what great matter were all this, since, when

we give in a true account of all these temporal things, which we call by so many names and set down so many items for, it amounts, in the sum, to no more but this, meat for the belly, and clothes for the back! hunger and nakedness are the only necessities of life: and, certainly, he, who takes care for more than will just supply these, than will serve to satisfy hunger and cover nakedness, he doth but take care for diseases or burdens. To what purpose is it, therefore, O Worldling! that thou amassest together such heaps of riches? for things that are necessary, so much needs not; and, for things unnecessary, thou needest not them. I have read of a philosopher, who, passing through a well-stored market and casting his eyes upon the plenty and abundance of all sorts of provision that were there brought to be sold, blessed himself with this reflection: "Oh!" saith he, "how many things are there here, that I do not want!" Yea, those few things, which are barely necessary to life, yet are not worth our anxious and solicitous care: so our Saviour assures us, Mat. 6:25. I say unto you. Take no care for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: food and raiment themselves ought not to be carked for; these necessaries of life, whether we have them or no, yet we shall not long want them: if they be denied to us, we shall, in a very short time, be in a condition, wherein we shall no more need such poor supplies; where our life shall not be so feeble, as to need support from the staff of bread; and where a coverlet of dust and worms will be as well as a royal robe. Of what worth are those things, over which death hath the dominion? What will it be to any of us, one age hence, that we have been rich, or great, or honourable? that we have lived a-top of the world, and enjoyed all things in it at wish? Certainly, our dust will know no heraldry: dead bones will keep no distance: all our prerogatives will be levelled in the grave; and all those little differences which we put between ourselves and others, our style, our titles, and our names, will be all blotted in that dust that buries us. Why, then, should we be so vain, as to lay out our care, and our time, and our strength, upon those things, which can go no farther with us than to the brink of the grave, when as the soul is to live infinite ages afterwards? Life, should it reach to that which we call extreme old age, yet is it all but the childhood of man: and, it is as great a folly to busy ourselves about the things which belong to this temporal life, as it were to lay up the playthings of childhood to be the comfort and solace of age.

4. Nothing in this world is truly satisfactory.

And, therefore, there is great reason, we should look beyond temporal things which are seen, unto things eternal which are not seen. Here, when our real wants are supplied, as indeed a very little will suffice to do that, yet our craving desires are boundless, and will still torment us: but, in a blessed eternity, we shall neither want any thing which we should have, nor desire any thing but what we have. But I must hasten.

5. Because eternity is an unchangeable state.

There, is no repenting, not amending of errors, nor recalling of mistakes. It will be too late then, to desire forgiveness or to hope for mercy. If these things be not now done in this world, alas! it will be for ever too late, when once you are entered into an unchangeable condition. It is not so in earthly concernments: if, by imprudence, we have brought ourselves into any straits or difficulties, we may afterwards correct our miscarriages, and redeem ourselves from those inconveniencies. But our eternal state stands fixed and immutable, for ever. Death delivers us over to judgment, in the same condition in which it finds us; and judgment delivers us up, either to glory or to condemnation, both unalterable. This life is the only time allotted us, to make provision for eternity. Every day, and hour, wears away a considerable part of our lives; yea, we are nearer to eternity, while we are speaking this. We are all of us hastening to our last abode; and a few days will determine our everlasting condition. And, therefore, it principally concerns us, chiefly to mind how we may obtain that glory which is unalterable, and escape that damnation which will be remediless.

That is a Fifth Demonstration.

6. And, lastly, (together with which, I shall give you some reflections on the folly of most men, who regard every thing but their souls and their eternal state:) because nothing, but what is eternal, can bear any proportion to the soul; and, therefore, nothing, besides that, is worth our regards.

Indeed, were man only made up of dust and clay, were his constitution wholly material, temporal things might well suit so gross and sordid a composure. But there is in him a divine spark, an ethereal and spiritual substance, by which he is of kin to the angels, yea, and bears some resemblance of God himself: yea, indeed, it is not so much in him, as it is himself: the soul is the greatest and chief part of man: the body is but his garment, or his utensil. Now, nothing temporal is proportioned to this soul, which is immortal, and shall survive the death of the world, when heaven and earth and all things shall fall in their last funeral flames. And, oh! what will become of thy immortal soul, if thou hast laid up for thyself no better things than these, which thou canst never rake from out of the ashes of the universe, nor redeem from the general consumption that God will bring upon them? Whosoever lies down on these, thinking here to take his rest, doth but, as the Prophet speaks, stretch himself upon a bed that is too short for him, infinitely too short: the greater part of himself lies over and beyond these temporal things, and reaches as far as into eternity. And, yet, as short a date as the world itself bears, still it is more lasting than thy present life: death will soon snatch us from all these dear and precious vanities, that we set our hearts upon: they cannot go one step with us, beyond this present life: they, like the rest of our friends, may attend on us as far as the grave, but there must leave us. And, oh! what a sad parting hour will it be, when the soul must be hurried away into another world, and leave all its provisions behind in this, and have nothing to support, nothing to cherish it, to all eternity! Do but seriously consider, what a boundless and infinite state eternity is: it is a duration, that overwhelms all our thoughts; and, though they can, at one glance, pierce both earth and heaven, and make an axis to the world, yet, when we attempt to measure out the unwearied stretch of eternity, they grow giddy, and sink, and leave us nothing but confusion, disorder, and astonishment: when we have reckoned up all the ages that arithmetic can sum, yet, these are but the threshold to eternity; for, it is a state, wherein ages, yea millions of ages, make no difference. Now, tell me, doth it not strike a chill horror through you, to consider, that, within a few days, or, it may be, hours, you must enter upon that unalterable condition, wherein days, and years, and ages, are swallowed up as nothing, nor allowed to be so much as points of that duration? and this incomprehensible eternity, to be either

inconceivably glorious, or insufferably wretched and tormenting? And, what! shall we, who may be in this very state, ere our breath returns to us again, or our pulses beat once more; shall we be so stupid, and brutish, as to be affected only with these present things which perish with the using, and neglect that state which is of eternal duration and infinite concernment? Certainly, one would think, that men had some very great business to do upon earth, that they can neither afford time nor thoughts about heaven and their eternal interests: well, what are these mighty affairs, that so employ them? why truly, poor, vile, vain trifles: some are devising their pleasures, how they may melt away their days in luxury: others are scraping together muck and thick clay; others dangerously aspiring to dignity and honour: this is the great business and employment of the world; which, when I seriously reflect upon, seems to me as vain and sottish, as if a man, in a shipwreck, should only take care to preserve his clothes from wetting, when he himself is drowning. Vain men! death is at your heels; and, at its, judgment and eternity. Is it time for you to mind every trifle of this life? how to make a compliment or a visit, when you are just splitting against the rock of ages, and plunging into the lake of fire and brimstone? Is it time for you now to pursue your pleasures, when everlasting burnings are kindling upon you? in which, unless you be here persuaded to embrace the severities of a holy life, you must for ever wallow; for ever, without ease or release? Is it time for thee to hoard up thy wealth, and to lay up goods for many years, when yet thou knowest not, whether God will not take away thy unprovided soul this very night? Death and eternity are coming upon us: we are all entering upon our everlasting state: and, if these temporal things be those, which we chiefly regard, they shall perish, and we perish together with them, for ever.

III. Now, then, be EXHORTED,

i. NOT TO DELAY THY PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY, ONE DAY OR HOUR LONGER.

Depend not upon the warning of a sick-bed: God doth not always afford it; but, sometimes, doth execution before he shoots off a warning-piece: and, why may it not be so with thee? Possibly, again, thy sickness may be such, as may render thee incapable of doing thy

last good office for thy soul; however, I am sure, it is the unfittest time of all thy life, then to be making up thy accounts, when thou shouldst be giving them in; then to have thy evidences to clear, when thou shouldst produce them.

ii. If thou wouldst be prepared for eternity, **LIVE EVERY DAY SO, AS IF EVERY DAY WERE THY DYING AND THY LAST DAY, AND THE VERY NEXT TO ETERNITY.**

If it be not so, it is more than thou knowest. And, therefore, since we have no assurance of an hour or day longer, it is but reason and wisdom, to look upon every one as that which may be our last.

iii. **BE CONSTANT IN THE EXERCISE OF A HOLY LIFE;** and be always doing that, which thou wouldst be content Christ should find thee doing, when he comes to judge thee.

Think with thyself, if thou wert now upon thy sick-bed, and hadst received the sentence of death, and sawest thy friends stand mourning about thee ready to close up thine eyes in a long night, what would be thy thoughts, what thy discourses. Let the same seriousness of thoughts and discourses fill up every day of thy life: for thou knowest not, whether thou art not as near death, as those, whom their friends and physicians have given over.

iv. **LABOUR FOR AN ASSURED HOPE OF GLORY.**

This will make thy passage into eternity lightsome and joyful. When thou, and all things in the world, must take leave and part for ever, then, to have the sense of the love of God, and our interest in Christ, and our title to eternal life, will sweetly bear up our hearts in a dying hour. These are things, which are as immortal as thy soul is, and will enter heaven with thee, and abide with thee to all eternity. Oh! whom will it not comfort, to think, that death will change his bottle into a spring? that, though here our waters sometimes failed us, yet, in heaven, whither we are going, we shall bathe in an infinite ocean of delight, and shall lie at the breast of an ever-flowing fountain of life and sweetness? Whosoever hath but such an assurance as this, cannot but welcome death with embraces; and, while his soul

struggles to unclasp itself and get loose from the body, cannot but, with holy panting and longing, say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

So naturally does the consideration of our future eternal state, not only make us despise the afflictions of this life, but set us above the fears of death itself: which is to be the subject of my next discourse.

## **THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH OVER DEATH**

**O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY  
VICTORY? - 1 COR. 15:55**

IN this chapter, the Apostle largely insists upon that Article of the Christian Faith, which is so far above the reach and comprehension of reason, that even those, who were the professed masters of reason, the wise Athenians, among whom both learning and civility were in their highest elevation, yet could not abstain from railing abuses, when St. Paul preached of the resurrection unto them: Acts 17:18. What will this babbler say? and, He seemeth to be a setter-forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. So strange and uncouth a doctrine did this appear, that, as they thought he recommended Jesus to them for a new God; so they thought that this ἀνάστασις, or Resurrection, was some new-invented Goddess, that Paul himself worshipped, and whose votaries he would persuade them to be. Which, howsoever, had certainly been of a better rank, than many of that rabble of deities, which they owned and worshipped: for both Cicero and Clemens Alexandrinus testify of these learned Athenians, who rejected the Resurrection as a strange and novel God, that they yet erected temples to Contumely and Impudence, Diseases and Ill-Fortune: and it is pity, they should not always have the favour and presence of those deities. There was



scarce any superstition so absurdly ridiculous, which these sages would not rather embrace, than the belief of a Future Resurrection; which they accounted a downright affront to the principles of reason and learning. They could not comprehend a possibility in the re-union of the separate soul and body; so contrary to their celebrated maxim, a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus: nor could they conceive, that dust, scattered to the four winds of heaven, and subjected to so many changes, and made the ingredients of so many other bodies, could ever be re-collected, and kneaded up again into the same body to which it did originally belong.

But I shall have no occasion presently to vindicate the possibility of the resurrection; and to demonstrate, that, though it may be above the reach of reason to conceive, yet it is not beyond the reach of omnipotence to effect.

It is more pertinent, at present, to observe, that the Apostle draws a most firm and natural consequence from the belief of the resurrection, to fortify us against the dread of death. Doth the husbandman fear to commit his grain to the earth, because it must there die and rot, and lie buried under clods and dirt; whereas he knows, that all these changes tend only to make it afterwards sprout up more flourishing and verdant, with the greater beauty and increase? So it is, saith the Apostle, with our bodies: vv. 42, 43. They are sown in corruption; but raised in incorruption: they are sown in dishonour; but raised in glory: they are sown in weakness; but raised in power: there they lie hid under the deep furrows of the grave, suffering all the debasements of stench, worms, and putrefaction; but God, the Great Husbandman of the World, doth but sow us in the ground: we shall certainly sprout up again, and appear more beautiful and glorious. These ruins of our bodies shall be made a foundation for a more stately edifice: This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality: v. 53.

Now, the certain hope and expectation of this blessed change quite disarms death, and leaves it without any venom or malignity against a believer. To what purpose is all that ghastly train, which attends this king of terrors; diseases, pains, and languors? when they have done the utmost that they are able, they can but cast him to the

earth, whence, Antæus like, he riseth again with redoubled vigour. God deals with us, as the Chinese do with their precious earth: he lays us long under ground, that we may be refined; and made fit to be vessels of honour prepared for our master's use. What a weak and impotent, adversary is this, whose assaults are our advantage, and whose conquests prove his own overthrow!

And, upon this very consideration, the Apostle doth, in my text, insult over this contemptible enemy: O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Death is here represented to us as a venomous serpent; but such a one, as hath lost his sting: so that, though it may hiss against us, yet it cannot wound us.

Where is thy sting? that is, Where is that, which threatened to convey thy noxious and baneful poison into us? where is that, which is thought so formidable, so destructive and pernicious, in death? And this very question intimates to us, that there is nothing left of this venomous quality; that now, to a faithful servant of Christ, there is nothing deadly, no not in death itself. I remember, I have somewhere read of a kind of serpent whose poison is so very virulent and of such quick dispatch, that it doth immediately dissolve the body, and reduce it to dust.

This sting, and this venom in it, death doth indeed still retain, even against the best of men; and those, whom it smites, shall certainly crumble away into dust, This sting, therefore, still remains.

And, for its victories, the grave too can boast as many, as it hath trophies erected in the monuments, inscriptions, and scattered bones of those whom it hath slain. But, when omnipotence shall rally every loose and dispersed dust into its former station; when we shall become heavenly from earth, and deathless from death; we may justly, without fear, despise the injuries of death, and tread with triumph upon the earth that must bury us.

Observe, hence, That **THE HOPE OF A BLESSED AND GLORIOUS RESURRECTION IS THE ONLY SUFFICIENT SECURITY AGAINST**

## THE DREAD OF DEATH, AND A CHRISTIAN'S MOST GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OVER THE GRAVE.

In prosecuting this, I shall only speak to these Two things.

First. I shall shew, that all other considerations are too weak and feeble, to assure the soul against the rough assaults and violent terrors of death.

Secondly. I shall shew you what there is in the hopes and expectation of a glorious resurrection, that may embolden us to despise death, as a conquered enemy; and to upbraid it with this holy scorn of the Apostle, O death, where is thy sting?

I. For the first, That ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ARE TOO WEAK TO ENCOURAGE US; let us consider those fearful and horrid notions, that nature hath imprinted upon us against its enemy; how wan and dismal it represents his visage: so that, though there be nothing more certain, by the statute law of heaven, than that we must die; yet, withal, there is nothing more difficult, than to persuade men to die willingly.

The old philosophers and wise men of all ages have ransacked the whole magazine of reason; and have put into our hands all the weapons they could there find, which they thought might embolden us to encounter this dreadful enemy. But yet, as the Lord Verulam well observes, all their great preparations, instead of diminishing its dread, only served to make it appear the more fearful: all the cost and skill, which they bestowed upon their armour, made them but the richer prey to the victor; and only served to enhance the conquests of death, that could lay such rational and argumentative heads in the dust. And, indeed, whatsoever mere natural reason can put upon us, is rather for pomp than use; more to embellish the mind, than to fortify the heart: for there is not any thing, which these grave moralists do, with so much ostentation and contempt of death, offer unto the world, that, if it be rationally scanned, can prove a solid ground for peace and comfort in a dying hour.

All, that they inculcate in their discourses on this sad theme, may be, I think, reduced to these Three heads: either

The Necessity of Dying; or,

Our Freedom by it from the Cares and Troubles of this Life. Or,

The Hopes of a future Reward.

But none of these, so far as reason alone can discover it, will be a sufficient defence against the sting of death, nor gain the victory from the grave. For,

i. What relief is it, to tell us, that DEATH IS NECESSARY? that it is the common lot of all men? that every compounded being hath those fatal principles wreathed up in it, that will certainly work its dissolution; and that therefore it becomes the reason and the spirit of a man, to entertain that fate which is unavoidable, with a constancy which is unmoveable?

This is frequently urged by Heathen philosophers, in their preparations against the fear of death. Προς την αναγκην ουκ αγριαινετα, ουδε απρονοητα ειναι τιθεται τα προς η μας, εαν το θνητον αποθνησκη, saith Hierocles. "A wise man will not fret himself at necessity, nor look upon it as some strange unexpected accident; if that, which is mortal, die; and that, which is compounded of parts, fall asunder." But, alas! what comfort is all this; since that, which they bring for our support, is the very thing that frights us? It is the inevitableness of death, that makes it so exceeding terrible: it were not so dreadful, were it avoidable. And, therefore, to arm men against the fear of death, because it is the common lot of all, is, in my judgment, to as little purpose, as if, to comfort some pitiful wretch, they should bid him be of good cheer, for that he must necessarily be miserable and wretched.

And, then,

ii. As for the FREEDOM, which they tell us death gives FROM THE CARES, SORROWS, AND TROUBLES OF THIS LIFE; that it is the safest and most secure refuge; the only port we can make, when we

are beaten with the storms and tempests of the world: though they insist on it as a principal remedy against the fear of death; yet, if this be all, that we shall no longer suffer hunger, nor cold, nor pain, nor misery; that death is a universal cure for all diseases; that it alone removes the wants which life could not supply; all this will fall very short of being a sufficient encouragement to undergo that last arrest with a becoming temper.

For this, if there be no more, is but like the changing of a fever into a lethargy: and only brings us into a gloomy quiet; in which, as we have no sense of torment, so neither shall we have any of ease and comfort. And to be thus free from the burdens and pressures of life, will be no more a solace to us after death, than it was before we were born. And I am apt to think, that there are but very few, who would not be willing to compound for their beings with their troubles: like the weary traveller in the apologue, who sinking under his burden, cried for death to come and ease him; but when he beheld him appear so very grim and meagre, asking sourly why he called for him, he meekly told him, that it was only to help him up with his load again. So, without doubt, it would fare with most men, if they had no farther hope than merely to be eased of the cares and sorrows of this life: they would rather wish to have them continue upon them to eternity, than to be eased of them at such a privative rate; since being is more dear, than sufferings are troublesome. But,

iii. What human reason alone can discover of a FUTURE REWARD, though it be infinitely mean and sordid, in comparison with those sublime and refined joys which God hath promised to us in his word; yet this, indeed, might be some antidote against the envenomed sting of death, and a support against the dread and terror of it, if reason could as well secure our right unto it, as make discovery of it.

But reason, even in Heathens themselves, hath prepared a place of punishment, as well as of bliss; and the consciences of all men do, doubtless, discover unto them every day that guilt, for which their reason alone could never yet discover a sufficient expiation: so that, instead of arming us against the fears of death, reason, if we pursue it in its closest consequences, redoubles those terrors; and, by proving us transgressors of the natural law that God hath written in every

man's heart, argues us all into torments. Hence we read of such strange lustrations, and horrid methods of expiating guilt; that, usually, they then committed the greatest crimes, when they thought to compensate for them, and their very religion was the most abominable part of their sins. If, therefore, mere reason can conclude, that there is a future state of happiness and misery to be proportioned out according to men's demerits, and their consciences tell them that their demerits are such as entitle them only to punishment; when they can find out no likely way of atonement for their guilt, this, instead of encouraging them against the dread of death, must needs make the fear thereof more tormenting and killing, than if they were not at all conscious of any such future state. Besides, all, that our natural understanding can discover to be the reward of just actions, is only a partial bliss to crown the soul of man; which, indeed, some sects of philosophers held to be immortal, and to survive the funerals of the body: but none of them ever believed the resurrection of the flesh; and so give up the one half of man to be lost and desperate. Now, who would not fear that dreadful stroke, that should quite cleave away one half of him, never to be recovered nor reunited? Who would not fear to undergo that change, after which he must be no longer a man, but only exist a bare and naked soul?

So that you see, all other considerations, which reason and philosophy can afford us, without the expectation of a glorious resurrection, cannot be a sufficient defence nor security to us against the fears of death: those things are rather flourishes of wit, than armour of proof: and that last encounter, in which we must all be engaged against that last enemy, will prove too rough and boisterous for the fineness of such formal arguments to make good. If men's consolations be no better than these; That death is necessary; That, by it, they shall be freed from the cares and miseries of this life; and, That their souls shall survive, but, whether in weal or woe, they are not well assured: if this be all, when they come to die, it will fare with them as with cunning fencers in the midst of a confused battle, they will soon be put by all their artificial play, and find that their postures and their wardings are all insignificant and useless.

Indeed, that, which alone can enable men to meet death with an undaunted boldness, must be something either much below human reason, as rashness and desperation; or, else, something vastly above it, as divine grace and revelation: and this, Christian Religion only hath made known to the world: discovering a perfect expiation for sin, in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, the Eternal Son of God; and, withal, giving us ample assurance, upon a pious and holy life, of attaining to a joyful and blessed resurrection, where the entire man shall eternally possess a full and entire happiness. By the former, it takes away the sting of death, which is sin: by the latter, it recovers the victory from the grave, and throws down all its trophies; letting those out to life and liberty, whom it detained as its captives and prisoners.

And, thus, I have finished the First thing propounded; and have shewn you, that all other considerations, besides that of a glorious and blessed Resurrection, are too feeble to assure and encourage men against the fears of death.

II. The Second is, to shew you, WHAT THERE IS IN THE HOPES AND EXPECTATION OF THIS BLESSED RESURRECTION, THAT MAY EMBOLDEN US TO DESPISE DEATH AND TO TRIUMPH OVER THE GRAVE.

And, here, I shall not speak of the glory, that shall be conferred on the whole man, which is consequent to the resurrection: but confine myself to those advantages, which we shall have in the body only.

i. It shall be raised AN ENTIRE AND PERFECT BODY.

Not a dust, not an atom, that is necessary to the integration of it, shall be lost: and, though they be scattered up and down the world, and confusedly mixed with other beings; yet, by the omnipotence of God and the ministry of angels, every dust shall be picked up again, and set in its due place and order. To this purpose Tertullian speaks well: *Si non integros suscitatur Deus, non suscitatur mortuos, &c:* "If God doth not raise us up entire, he doth not raise the dead:" for, if any part of us be not raised, as to that we are still dead.

ii. As it shall be raised up entire and perfect, so EVERY MEMBER OF IT SHALL BE MADE SUCH, AS MAY BE MOST SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOUL, AND MOST CAPABLE OF THE RECEIPT OF GLORY.

We shall not find our bodies so restive nor so unwieldy, as too often here we do. They now hang upon us as heavy clogs, and depress us when we should be soaring up to heaven. Then, we shall no longer need our Saviour's gracious excuse for our infirmities: Mat. 26:41. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak. No; this flesh of ours, in that glorified estate, shall hold out in all the rapturous exercises of the soul: and, whereas now we are dull when we hear, and drowsy when we pray, and distracted when we meditate, soon tired out in any holy performances; then, when all these dregs and phlegm shall be purged from us, our bodies themselves shall be all light and fire, brisk and sparkling, ready to attend every the least motion of the soul, without reluctance and without weariness.

Then, again,

iii. Though the body shall be thus raised entire, and perfect in all its limbs, YET SHALL THEY NOT PERFORM ANY OF THOSE SORDID OFFICES TO WHICH NOW THEY SERVE.

They shall be discharged from their offices, as the same Tertullian speaks; but yet they shall not therefore cease to be necessary in the body: for, though they lose their offices, yet must they still retain their places; being reserved for the sentence of the Righteous Judge.

1 COR. 15:56

THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN.

In the foregoing verse, we have a Christian's Triumph over Death and the Grave, in the expectation of a blessed and glorious Resurrection. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Shall our scattered dust and ashes be rallied again into the same body? shall that, which was infirm, dishonourable, and mortal, be raised up powerful and active, bright and glorious, impassible as spirits and deathless as eternity? shall we everlastingly survive our



funerals? shall we again receive these bodies out of the earth, purified from all earthy, dreggy mixtures and concretions? There can be no consequence more naturally drawn from these premises, than what our Apostle infers: to contemn death, as a feeble and impotent adversary; to trample upon this disarmed worm, without fear of hurt; and to disdain the weakness of its malice, whose greatest spite turns only to our inconceivable advantage.

In the words now before us, and in the ensuing verse, the Apostle makes use of another medium to prove the same assertion, That, to a believer, there is nothing formidable or dreadful, even in death itself.

Now, because in this argument there are many ellipses, many propositions which are silenced, and yet very necessary to be understood, before we can find out the full force of it; I shall endeavour briefly to unfold it, and shew wherein the strength and sinews of the Apostle's reasoning consist.

The great truth, which he would prove, is, That a Christian may well triumph over death.

And this he doth by Two heads of arguments.

The one, drawn from the consideration of the exceeding great advantage and glory, which shall redound even to their very bodies, by the resurrection. And this he, at large, prosecutes, in a great part of this chapter; especially in verses 42, 43, 44. It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness: it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body.

The other head of arguments is that, which now lies before us to be considered; which, if it be drawn out at length, contains in it many propositions.

First. That all the pernicious and baneful effects of death proceed from sin; which, therefore, is here called, The Sting of Death: because, as venomous creatures transmit their poison by their sting; so, likewise, that, which serves to convey into us all the mischief and

harm that death can do us, is only sin. And, hence, it is well represented unto us, under that metaphorical expression of a sting: The Sting of Death is Sin.

Secondly. That, to believers, this sting is taken out of death, and the venom taken out of that sting. They may take this cold and frozen snake into their bosoms; and, though it hiss against them, yet it cannot wound them.

And, to prove this, he asserts,

Thirdly. That all the malignity, which sin contains in it, it receives from the Law: The Strength of Sin is the Law. For it is the Law only, that gives sin its being: for the Scripture gives us this definition of sin, that it is a transgression of the Law: 1 John 3:4: and expressly tells us, that where there is no law, there is no transgression: Rom. 4:15. And it is the Law, that gives sin its condemning power, by virtue of that threatening of death and eternal destruction, which God hath denounced against all that shall dare to violate and transgress it: In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die: Gen. 2:17 and the soul, that sinneth, it shall die: Ezek. 18:4.

And, therefore, it necessarily followeth,

Fourthly. That, if the Law, which gives power and malignity to sin, be abolished, we may then confidently triumph over death, whose sting, and all whose power, consists in sin. And,

Fifthly, The Apostle concludes, v. 57. That God hath given us the victory, through Christ; for he hath abrogated the Law, so far as it gave strength to sin to condemn us. He hath taken away the damning and the cursing power of the Law, by bearing its punishments, and being made a curse for us. Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that the whole sum of the argument lies in this, That Christ hath taken away the sting of death, which is sin, because he hath abolished the Law, whence sin received all its power and virulency.

These words offer to us these Two Propositions.

That there is a Sting in death.

That this sting is Sin.

But before I can treat of either of these, I must somewhat more fully explain what is meant by that metaphor, the sting of death. It is an allusion to venomous and noxious creatures, whose power to do mischief lies in their stings: there, usually, lies the stock and treasure of their poison, which they diffuse into those, into whom they dart their stings; thereby inflaming their blood, corrupting the whole mass of their humours, causing inexpressible anguish and dolours, and sometimes death and destruction itself. So that, because the sting is the instrument, which conveys so much pain and so much mischief; because it is that, which makes those creatures so formidable and dreadful unto us that are thus naturally armed: therefore the Apostle elegantly transfers this to death; and affirms, That there is something in death, that makes it terrible, painful, and destructive to us; and this he calls the sting of death. So that, in brief, whatsoever makes death frightful and grievous to us, that is this sting of death.

## I. THERE IS A STING IN DEATH.

i. That there IS SUCH A STING IN DEATH, and that it is thus formidable and pernicious, appears from these following particulars.

l. In the horrors of wicked and ungodly men, when they come to die.

Indeed some, who, by long custom and continuance in sin, have utterly spent and wasted their consciences, go out of the world in a desperate stupidity; senseless of what they are, and careless of what they are like to be: and, with a mad rashness, daringly leap out of life, without ever considering how infinitely deep that dismal precipice is, down which they throw themselves; and that nothing is under them to receive them, but only the lake of fire and brimstone. But, take a man, who hath his sense about him and his reason awake, and who can exercise his consideration and reflection upon his present and future state; stand by the sick-bed of such a one, who hath worn out his life in the service of the Devil, and whose luxury, riot,

drunkenness, and uncleanness have been the only grand business of his life, and the diseases that these have brought upon him the causes of his death; what a sad scene of misery will be there represented to thee! how dreadfully doth he exclaim against himself! what estuasions, what outcries, what despair and blackness of horror then seize upon him, when death is haling and rending his soul out of his body! how doth he pull and struggle, and cannot yield to that, which, wretched creature, he cannot avoid! Certainly, death must needs be very terrible to those, who have so soaked and softened themselves by sensuality, that its sting enters deep into them: and, as poison operates most banefully upon them, whose blood and spirits were before heated and inflamed; so, when death comes to diffuse its venom into those, who are set on fire and inflamed with lust and intemperance, the rage and pain, the horror and despair, that it will work in such, will be unspeakably hideous and dreadful.

2. It appears likewise, in the unwillingness, even of the dearest of God's children, to undergo this last, rude, and violent shock of death.

Yea, and though they have not only comfortable hopes and persuasions, but the clearest evidence and the fullest assurance, that Christ Jesus shall be unto them, both in life and death, inconceivable gain and advantage: yet, there is such an aversation in human nature itself against this last and dreadful enemy, that it startles at its approach; and would willingly be excused from entering into the lists, and engaging in that sore conflict. Who ever enjoyed a greater plerophory than St. Paul; who was, even in his lifetime, caught up into the Third Heaven, and admitted as a spy into the Heavenly Canaan, the Land of Promise; who there saw and tasted the ineffable glory and joy, which was prepared for him? and, though he knew the full fruition of them could not otherwise be obtained than by dying, yet he tells us, 2 Cor. 5:4. We, that are in this tabernacle, do groan; being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. As we find a strong antipathy working in us, and nature itself recoiling, when we are to take some bitter potion, though we be well assured the effects of it will be salutary, and that it will conduce to our health afterwards: so, even in those who are fully assured that death will be to them an inlet into everlasting life and bliss, yet there is such a

natural antipathy against it, that, though the consideration of that eternal happiness into which they are entering makes them submit to it with patience, yet they cannot but abhor and shrink from so bitter a medicine, even when it is tempered with the strong consolations of the Spirit of God.

Yea,

3. To give the highest instance that can be of the dreadfulness of death, we find, that even our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in whom there were no disordered passions, no sinful fears, none of those weaknesses and follies which in us do too often serve only to increase and enhance the dreadfulness of death; yet even he loaths and nauseates to drink of that cup; and prays, with all fervency and importunity, that it might pass from him: Matt. 26:39. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And nothing, but his Father's will, was of power enough to reconcile him to it: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Certainly, that must needs be a very direful composition, which should make Him, who was God as well as man, so averse from taking it: that must needs be a very formidable enemy, which should make Him loth to conflict, though he were sure to conquer it; and not only restore life to himself, but to all the world. Indeed, that, which made this cup so exceeding bitter to our Lord Christ, was the wrath of God, and the curse of the Law, that were tempered in it; but, yet, the very vehicle of these, death itself, and the separation of his body and soul, was in itself very unpleasant and irksome, even unto Him whose person was divine and whose nature was innocent. And, therefore, it must needs be, that death hath in it a great deal of dread and terror.

Thus we see it demonstrated, that death is a very dreadful and tremendous enemy to human nature.

ii. Let us next consider, WHAT THERE IS IN DEATH, THAT SHOULD MAKE IT THUS DREADFUL; that should make its sting so sharp and poignant, and cause such a natural abhorrency and antipathy against it in us.

And this I shall shew, in Five particulars.

1. The harbingers, which go before it, to prepare its way.

And these are, usually, languishing diseases, or racking pains; which, as the avant-couriers of a hostile army, commonly commit little less spoil than the whole body of it: these spend the strength and waste the comfort of life; and scarce leave any thing, besides a consumed carcase, for death to prey upon And, must it not needs be terrible and irksome to nature, to conflict with these scouts of death? to be cast upon the bed of languishing; restlessly tossing to and fro in the night-season, watching for the morning; and, in the day, wishing for night, and finding no ease, no refreshment in either? when a fever shall burn us to ashes; a dropsy deluge us; and, it may be, with those floods which our own intemperance hath let in, quench the vital flame and lamp of our life? And, while we are struggling for life and gasping for breath, our assisting-friends, with their officious mournings, increase, but cannot help our grief, by theirs.

2. Death is likewise dreadful, as it deprives us of all the comforts and enjoyments of life.

If God hath blessed thee with plenty and affluence of these temporal good things; if thou enjoyest riches, honour, friends, and whatsoever thy heart can here desire to make thy life sweet and comfortable to thee; will it not grate upon thee, to think, that shortly all these must be sequestered? Thou must be haled from the embraces of thy dearest friends, degraded of thy titles, divested of thy robes, turned out of thy possessions, and must take up thy abode in the silent chambers of darkness and corruption. These are the things, which make men loth to die. And, indeed, those, who have made them their treasures and their good things, will find it a very hard task, to be willing to leave all behind them at the mouth of the grave. They can wait upon thee no farther. And oh, what a sad parting hour will it be to the poor soul, when it must be compelled to remove into another world, and leave all its good things behind in this! how will it protract and linger! how loth will it be to enter upon so great a journey, and have nothing left to defray the charge of it! how wistly will it look back upon all those dear vanities, that it had hoarded up

together! "What! cannot I carry this possession and those riches, this estate and that treasure, out of the world with me? Must we then part for ever? Yes, O soul, for ever. None of these things canst thou carry with thee." And oh, think, what a sad thing it will be for thy poor soul to be set on shore in a vast and dismal eternity, all naked and destitute; having nothing of all the superfluities and abundance of comforts, which here it made its chief good, to relieve and support it!

Or, if men's estate be low and mean in the world, exposed to many wants and miseries: yet, even to such, death is terrible; nor can they be willingly brought to part with their share of enjoyments, though it be nothing but the common air, and dear light, and their own flattering hopes that yet they may live to possess more. For hope of better for the future, is a most tenacious thing: and those, who have nothing else to live upon, yet cannot look upon death with content; because, although it put an end and period to their present miseries, yet it likewise cuts off their hopes, in which, at least, they are as rich and happy as the greatest.

3. Another thing, which is dreadful and stinging in death, is that, which truly and properly is death itself: I mean, the separation of those dear companions, the soul and body.

They are, in life, knit together by an unintelligible bond of union and friendship. There is a most secret and powerful sympathy between them; and that, which is the very life of friendship, a communication of passions and affections. They have spent many years together in perfect amity and concord; and, therefore, it may well be dreadful to think of parting at the last. And,

4. The consideration of those dishonours and disgraces, which shall befall the body upon this separation, is likewise very stinging and irksome unto nature.

There it must lie, a sad, wan, and ghastly spectacle to thy friends, and afterwards be lodged in the bed of silence and putrefaction. There, whole heaps of worms shall crawl upon thee and devour thee: and the next corpse, that wants room, may perhaps disturb thy bones, and not allow thee so much as the quiet of death, and the peaceable

possession of thy grave. Thy few remains may lie scattered about the mouth of it: and thou, who art now respected and honoured, mayst have thy only visible relics rudely and irreverently dealt with. And, certainly, there is in us all such a natural love to our bodies, that we, who think all our care and pains too little in pampering and indulging them, cannot but look upon death as a most dreadful enemy, that shall bring upon them so many contumelies and dishonours. And,

5. The most sharp and stinging consideration of all, is, That death delivers us over into eternity, which we have ten thousand times deserved should be infinitely wretched and miserable to us.

Our consciences do misgive, and presage very dreadful things against us; and often represent to our view all the woes and plagues which are stored up in hell, the treasury and magazine of all plagues. And, though the former considerations render death very frightful; as it is inflicted upon us by pains and diseases; as it deprives us of all the comforts of life; as it is the separation of soul and body; as it leaves the body under the dishonours and ghastly deformities of rottenness and putrefaction: yet, had death nothing in it more dreadful than these, it might be supportable. Yea, and we know, that many, who have been borne up by the consolations of the Holy Spirit, have opened their arms to it and embraced it: though with natural reluctance, as it is death; yet, with joy and exultation, as it is to them an admission into eternal life. But, when death shall summon us to appear before the dreadful tribunal of God, and suggest to us horrid apprehensions of woe and torments that we shall by him be adjudged unto; this is that sting, which is most sharp and piercing; that sting, the poison of which affects the soul with most inexpressible anguish and agonies.

II. And this brings me to the Second Proposition, which is the very words of the text, **THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN.**

For,

i. It was only sin, that **BROUGHT DEATH INTO THE WORLD.**



So the Apostle, expressly: Rom. 5:12. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. This serpent owes his being, as well as his sting and poison, unto man's transgression. Indeed, Adam was no more created immortal by nature, than he was impeccable: but as he had *potentiam non peccandi*, so he had likewise *potentiam non moriendi*; a power, neither to have sinned nor died; but might have prolonged his days, either to a happy eternity here upon earth, or to a blessed translation into heaven. But, as soon as sin had gotten possession of his soul, death lays in claim to his body; and sends a numerous train of grim attendants, fear, sadness, decays, troubles, pains, and diseases, to secure him from making his escape: and, by these, we must all, sooner or later, fall into his hands.

## ii. DEATH RECEIVES ITS STING AND TERRORS FROM SIN.

It is the consciousness of sin and guilt, which makes death so bitter and intolerable to us: and therefore the Apostle, Heb. 2:15. speaks of some, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage: and this bondage of fear and terrors, under which they were held, was from the scorching apprehensions of that hell and everlasting wrath, which were to follow after death. And, though now, possibly, in the jollity of thy youth and health, thou puttest far from thee all such dreadful and disturbing thoughts; though, it may be, when conscience begins to recal them, thou desperately chokest it, either by the cares of the world, or intemperance, or by wicked and lewd company, or some such hellish artifice: yet, know for certain, that it will watch its advantages to return upon thee; and, it may be, represent all the horrors and dread of these things to thee, when thou art just entering into thy eternal state, to feel them. When our souls, in the very agonies of death, are just loosening themselves from those bands that tied them to the body, they will, doubtless, then make strange discoveries of those terrible things, which now, in our health, when we are any thing serious, make our hearts ache and our consciences tremble: but, then, the terrors of them will be such, as will even cramp and confound the soul; when it shall see them all come rolling upon him, and no possibility left to escape or defer them: now, they are upon the very borders and confines of that region, where ghosts and spirits are the only inhabitants: here, a holy

and just God is summoning them to his bar, and passing an irreversible doom upon them: there, they see hell casting up black and sooty flames, and thousands of wretched souls wallowing in them: all these dreadful things, conscience will represent to convinced sinners; and make them infinitely more dreadful, by suggesting, that they all make against them, and are the preparations of divine wrath and vengeance to punish them. Now, O Sinner! how canst thou encourage thyself? how wilt thou bear up thy heart against the thoughts and fears of death? doth it not almost kill thee, only to think, that thou must die, and then have all the wrath of the Great God executed upon thee, to eternity? death is still waiting for the forfeiture of your lives; and, after death, hell and eternal torments; torments, which shall never have end or ease: under the sharpest tortures we can suffer here, we comfort ourselves, that they will shortly wear off; but, there, your tortures shall be most exquisite, and yet have no end. It is in vain to cry, as here we do, when we are under pains or diseases, "Would to God it were day!" or, "Would to God it were night!" for they have no rest day nor night, and none they can expect: but the smoke of their torments riseth up for ever and ever. Thus, it is the apprehension of future wrath and vengeance, as the due desert of our sins, which makes death so exceedingly terrible and stinging to a guilty soul.

III. I shall close up all with Three brief INFERENCES.

i. If sin and guilt be the sting of death, **LET US BEWARE, THAT WE ADD NOT MORE POISON TO THIS STING**, by adding more sins and iniquities to our past crimes.

Remember, every sin which thou committest will make thee more afraid to die. And, in what dreadful perplexities and agonies of soul wilt thou be, when thy guilt shall stare thee ruthfully in the face, and thy conscience exclaim against thee! and, yet, inexorable death will wait no longer, but cut thee off in the midst of all thy fears and horrors, and thrust thee down to hell, there to undergo more than ever thou couldst fear or imagine.

ii. If sin be the sting of death, then, certainly, **THE ONLY WAY TO DISARM DEATH, IS, BY CLEANSING THYSELF FROM SIN.**

Wash thy polluted soul, in the tears of an unfeigned repentance. Sprinkle thy guilty conscience, with that blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Then mayst thou breathe out thy soul with comfort, when all that death can do unto thee, is, to change thy hopes into full fruition and enjoyment.

**iii. HOW UNSPEAKABLY HAPPY ARE THOSE, TO WHOM THE STING OF DEATH IS TAKEN OUT BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST!**

In his body, death struck his sting so deep, that he left and lost it there: and, like some venomous creatures, that die as soon as they have stung, animámque in vulnere ponunt, that mortally wound themselves, whenever they do less wound others; so, death, darting its whole sting into Jesus Christ, to wit, the sins of all the world that believe, which were all imputed unto him when he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, hath ever since been a harmless, disarmed thing; not able to hurt them, how grim soever its aspect be. Yea, this last enemy is reconciled unto them, and become one of their party; and they may, with triumph, say, as the Apostle doth, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs: death shall do them the greatest and most real kindness which they can receive; for, as death was brought into the world by sin, so sin shall be abolished out of the world by death: yea, death itself shall abolish death; and bring us into that state, where our life shall be deathless and our holiness sinless.

And this brings me to speak of the Resurrection, by which this victory over death is completed; which will, therefore, be the subject of the ensuing discourse.

## OF THE RESURRECTION

AND, AFTER EIGHT DAYS, AGAIN HIS DISCIPLES WERE WITHIN, AND THOMAS WITH THEM. THEN CAME JESUS, THE DOORS BEING SHUT, AND STOOD IN THE MIDST, AND SAID, PEACE BE UNTO YOU. THEN SAITH HE TO THOMAS, REACH HITHER THY FINGER, AND BEHOLD MY HANDS; AND REACH HITHER THY HAND, AND THRUST IT INTO MY SIDE: AND BE NOT FAITHLESS, BUT BELIEVING. - JOHN 20:26, 27

AMONG all the Articles of our Christian Faith, there is none, that hath suffered more persecutions from corrupt reason and seeming impossibilities, than that of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, his triumph over death, and the rescue of his body from the affronts and dishonours of the grave. For, because the improbability of the thing is so great; and the arguments, drawn from nature and reason against it, are so strong to a man, who looks no higher, and believes not that miracles interpose in the series of human affairs: therefore, a doctrine, which is so strange a paradox, as that of the Resurrection, had need have very forcible arguments to prove it, that it may be able to overbear the dissent of the world, which else will, doubtless, cry it down, as absurd and impossible.

What great prejudices and importunate objections Infidelity brings against this doctrine, I have shewn more at large elsewhere\*; and that the utmost they amount to, is only to prove the supernatural almighty power of the efficient cause, and not the impossibility of the effect.

But, against these strong prejudices and plausible arguments, Christian Religion opposeth that, which neither prejudice can overbear nor yet arguments confute, the plain and evident testimony of sense.

This chapter, of which the text is part, gives us abundant attestation of the resurrection of Christ; relating his many appearances to his

disciples, who, after his death, conversed corporally with him, and who saw him perform all the functions of life, as eating, drinking, &c. which St. Augustin well saith he did, non egestate, sed potestate: not that he needed such weak supports; for his body was then spiritual, incorruptible, and impassible: but to shew that he was really a man, and might do it.

On the very day of his resurrection, he appeareth to Mary Magdalen, in the morning: v. 14: and, as the circumstance of the history gives us good grounds to conjecture, presently after to Peter: that these, who had been the greatest sinners and were the most passionate mourners, might first of all receive the strongest consolations, by declaring to them his absolute conquest over Death and the Devil, who had long possessed the one as his own, and almost dispossessed the other of Christ.

On the same day, about noon, he joins himself in company with two of his disciples, who were travelling to Emmaus, about seven miles distant from Jerusalem; and expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. Upon their discovering him, and his disappearing from them, they speed back the same evening to Jerusalem, earnest to declare to the other disciples what had happened unto them. They find them, and divers other believers, late and secretly assembled, for fear of the Jews: and, as they are declaring the former passages, Jesus himself came and stood in the midst of them; and shewed unto them his hands and his side; and they were glad, when they saw the Lord: vv. 19, 20. One would think, that such a sudden surprisal as this; appearing to them unexpectedly, when they were, in all likelihood, sadly discoursing of him, and wavering between hope and doubt; might rather have affrighted and terrified, than rejoiced them. They had shut the doors, for fear of the Jews: but, whom the strong bands of death and the bars of the grave could not detain, neither could the bolts and locks of a door exclude: yet we need not here fancy any penetration of dimensions, or that Christ's body passed through the very body of the door, as some affirm, who would rather vouch impossibilities and contradictions, than be barren in inventing miracles: it was wonderful enough, to make his passage by his word and will; and an astonishing sight, to see him in the midst of them, whose entrance thither, and sudden

opening and shutting of the door, they could not perceive. Whom would it not appal, to have a person, who they knew had been dead and buried, start in upon them from the confines of the grave and the regions of darkness; especially too, at such a time, when night and the fear of their own lives, both which circumstances here concurred, might make them more apt to receive terrifying impressions? But a Revived Saviour is a reviving sight; and the confirmation, which now their faith and hope received, sweetly vanquished all the troublesome suggestions of their fear, converted their doubting into assurance, and their trembling into joy.

This is now the Fourth time, that our Saviour shewed himself alive to his disciples, on the very day of his resurrection: two of which appearances are recorded in this chapter; and the other two in Luke 24.

From this night-assembly Thomas is absent: the wisdom of Divine Providence so ordering it, that the occasion of his diffidence should produce a stronger argument for the establishing of our faith. He hears their story, condemns their credulity; imputes all, either to some airy ghost or spectre, or else to the melancholy illusions of their own fancies; and resolves not to be imposed upon, either by their reports, or any flitting shows and unsubstantial apparitions: Except, saith he, I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. A most obstinate and unreasonable resolution! as if nothing were fit to be credited by us, but what we ourselves are witnesses of; and truth must make no more converts, than it hath testifiers. Well! this passeth with him a whole week; and because, in the interim, our Saviour had not appeared either to him or them, no doubt but his incredulity was mightily strengthened, and he pleased himself with the conceit of being the only wise and rational man of the whole company. But, after eight days, saith the text, that is, on that day sennight, being the Lord's Day, (for, after eight days, must not be here taken for eight days fully completed, but current: as it is said, Mark 8:31 that, after three days, Christ should rise again; that is, on the third day: and, so, Luke 2:21. When eight days were fulfilled, that the child should be circumcised; that is, he was to be circumcised on the eighth day; so, here, on the eighth day, after his

first appearances) when they were again met in the like assembly, and Thomas now with them, Jesus came, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you; and, then applying himself particularly to Thomas, offers to give him all the satisfaction that himself had required, to confirm the truth of his Resurrection: Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.

Wherein we may observe,

First. That though our bodies shall be raised entire and perfect, yet Christ's body, after his resurrection, retained those wounds and that solution of parts, which were caused by the nails and spear, and shall retain them for ever in heaven; now no longer dolorous in an impassible body, but as the monuments and trophies of his victory over sin and death.

For the body of Christ was, immediately after his resurrection, endowed with the same qualities that it shall for ever enjoy in heaven; except it be that radiant lustre and glory, in which it there shines, and which for a time he laid aside that he might the more familiarly converse with his disciples. Think, then, what an inestimable privilege it will be, when we shall hereafter approach in our glorified bodies unto the glorious body of our Blessed Saviour; and, as Thomas was invited to do, shall put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hand into his side, and sound the depth of those fountains, whence flowed forth his precious blood and our salvation with it.

Observe,

Secondly. The infinite kindness and condescension of our Saviour, in offering a conviction to his unbelieving disciple upon his own terms, though very bold and unreasonable ones they were.

Whether he did actually touch and search those sacred wounds, or satisfied his curiosity with the sight of his Redeemer, is not expressly recorded. Perhaps, shame and modesty checked any farther trial: which, where the object was so plain and evident, would have tended

rather to his reproach than conviction; and would have as much argued his unbelief, as confirmed his faith. And this seems intimated in that mild reproof, which our Saviour gives him, v. 29. Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they, who have not seen, and yet have believed.

Observe, likewise,

Thirdly. How wisely and graciously our Saviour accommodates his condescensions to the infirmities of his servants.

In the morning of the resurrection, when he first appeared to Mary Magdalen, he commands her, who, in all probability, was prostrating herself to embrace his feet, not to touch him, v. 17. Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father. Her faith was sufficiently assured; and therefore a touch had been but a needless officiousness: not to be allowed by a person, who was shortly to ascend into heaven; and, whilst now on earth, yet no longer in the state of mortals, nor to be conversed with according to the laws and usances of human respects. Yet, the very same evening, when he appeared to those, who were less assured, yea affrighted, supposing they had seen a spirit, he bids them handle him, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have: Luke 24:37, 38, 39. And, here, being to deal with one more curious and sceptical than the rest, he bids him make a critical scrutiny; and, to give him full satisfaction, submits, for the cure of his infidelity, to offer those wounds to be pierced again, which the infidelity of the Jews had made.

Observe,

Fourthly. A most irrefragable proof, both of the Humanity and Divinity of our Blessed Saviour.

The former, in that he yields himself to the trial and judgment of the most infallible of all our senses: the latter, in that, though he were bodily absent; yet, by his Immense Spirit, he heard the discourses and understood the scruples of his dissatisfied disciple; and offers him the very same conditions, verbatim, that he himself had propounded.



Observe,

Fifthly. That, though the matter of Christian Religion be sublime and mysterious above the comprehension of reason; yet its evidence is so plain, and the motives of credibility so convincing, as to be resolved into the very testimony of sense.

This is it, which I intend principally to insist on: Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

The Resurrection of Christ from the dead, is the fundamental of all fundamentals in Christianity. Upon the truth and evidence of this depend the truth and evidence of all our religion: for, if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain, saith the Apostle, and ye are yet in your sins: 1 Cor. 15:17.

First. Our faith would be vain, because terminated on a deceiver, who promised this; both as the complement of all his other miracles, and the seal of the truth and divinity of his doctrine; wherein, if he had failed, the one would have been justly accounted impostures, and the other lies and falsehoods.

Secondly. We should yet be in our sins, because the propitiatory sacrifice, which he offered upon the cross, would have been of no avail to the acquitting of us from our guilt, had not Christ risen again from the dead, to apply unto us, by his Spirit, the virtue of that oblation, for our righteousness and justification.

So that the whole weight and moment of Christian Religion depends upon the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, as its only basis and support. All those mysterious truths, which either he himself taught his Church in his own person or inspired his Apostles to deliver to the Church in his name, are therefore to be received, therefore to be believed, because they are clearly attested to us by innumerable miracles wrought by him, and by virtue of his name and faith in it. For God, who is Truth itself, will never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie. And the most miraculous of all those miracles, that, which gives them the firmest obsignation that they were

wrought by God, is his raising himself from the dead. So that, how abstruse soever the doctrines themselves seem to be, how unaccountable soever to the disquisition, how incomprehensible soever to the sphere and extent of our reason; yet we have still the same certain grounds to believe the most mysterious articles of our faith, as we have to believe, that he, who taught them, rose again from the dead.

I. Whence it appears, that **THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF ALL OUR RELIGION IS MADE INTO THIS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.** And, for the truth of this, our Saviour is content to leave himself to the unerring, yea infallible, judgment of human senses.

Lo here the infinite wisdom of the economy and dispensation of the Gospel! that those sublime truths, which far transcend the highest pitch of our reason, should yet be founded upon the certainty of our very senses; so that we have as much reason to believe them, as we have to believe the reality and existence of what we see, and hear, and feel. They hear his salutation: they see his person: he shews to them his hands and his side: he bids them handle and feel him; and speaks to Thomas to search his wounds: he eats, and drinks, and converses with them: and these evidences he gives, not only to single persons, but sometimes to whole multitudes of them; not in one single instance, but several times, and in several places, for forty days' continuance.

This, therefore, is the first and great thing, which Thomas was to believe, even the Resurrection of his Saviour, confirmed to him by the infallible evidence of his sense; and, upon the belief of which, depends the belief of all the mysteries of our religion.

i. Against this report, which the Gospel gives us, of the Resurrection of our Saviour, there can lie but **TWO DOUBTS.**

The one is, Whether the relaters of it might have had no design to delude us:

The other, Whether they were not deluded themselves.

For, if it can be evinced, that they were neither deceivers nor deceived, it is clear, in spite of all seeming impossibilities, that our Lord really and corporally rose again from the dead.

Both these, therefore, I shall endeavour to make good.

1. As to those Atheists, who do not so much question the infallibility of sense, as the credit of the relaters: not whether what they saw or felt were truly such as their sense dictated it to be; but whether they did, indeed, see and feel, and had the sensible trial of those things, which they give out to the world, and did not rather conspire together to revive their lost credit and their sinking religion, by reviving him, whose doctrine they embraced and whose person they admired: to persons, who may be assaulted with such doubts as these, I shall, to remove such vain surmises, offer these following considerations.

(1) Let them consider, That it is not the custom or interest of liars, to appeal unto the testimony of many witnesses, for the truth of what they assert: since it is most likely, that, among a great company and number of them, some one may be found, who, either out of honesty, interest, or weakness, may afterwards detect the fraud and all the mystery of the combination.

Had there been but one or two, to have avouched the Resurrection of Christ and asserted his appearance to them, there might have been some more colourable pretence for the Atheist to be suspicious, that they had complotted together to delude the world with fables, and reported what they never saw. But, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ was not like those apparitions of saints and angels, with which the Popish Legends are so nauseously stuffed; vouchsafed to a solitary, melancholy monk, or two: but, at several times, to several persons; and, oftentimes, to very many of them together. St. Paul speaks of a whole cloud of witnesses; so many, as cannot leave the least surmise in the most scrupulous mind, that they should all attest his resurrection by confederacy: 1 Cor. 15:6. He was seen by above five hundred brethren at once; of whom, he tells us, the greater part were then alive, when he wrote this Epistle: and this famous appearance to so numerous a company may either be that mentioned

Matt. 28:7 where he promiseth, to meet them in Galilee; or, else, that at the Mount of Olives, when he ascended gloriously into heaven. Now, had there been any forgery or falsehood in the joint testimony of so many hundred witnesses, doubtless, the unbelieving Jews and Heathens, who neglect no occasions to discover the defects of a hated doctrine, would have had advantage enough to detect it among some of them: for it is not reasonably to be imagined, that so many should combine together, in an unprofitable design to delude the world; or, if they should, yet that they should all persist in it to their death, without ever giving the least sign of the uncertainty and vacillation of their testimony.

(2) Suppose there had been no other witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ, but only the Eleven Apostles: yet, who is it, that would be so wicked, as to abuse mankind by forged stories, in a matter of such vast moment and consequence; especially, when they could expect no reward nor advantage by it? For, though human nature be most miserably depraved; yet we shall find few or none, that will be wicked gratis.

And, what could they propound to themselves, that might rationally be thought sufficient to induce them to such a grand cheat? Either it must be supposed to be riches; or fame; or, lastly, a barren and unprofitable design of keeping up the credit of their religion.

[1] But the First is altogether incongruous, both to their profession and practice.

For the preaching of the Gospel and a Raised Saviour, instead of enriching them, only exposed them to hunger, and thirst, and nakedness; or, to the shame of having these necessities relieved by the charity of others. Nor could they say, with that profane Pope, *Quantas divitias peperit nobis hæc Fabula Christi!* And,

[2] As for Fame, their simple and homely education, free from the pride and ostentation of the world, could never have permitted them to undergo so many sharp miseries, only to be talked of.

Besides, what Grotius very well observes, (De Ver. Chris. Rel.) they could not be moved to what they did, out of a desire of fame and propagating their name and renown to after-posterities; for they did not then believe their names or memory should be long lasting: for it appears, that God, for wise ends, kept his purpose secret from them, concerning the consummation of the world; and, that they verily thought, the dissolution of all things would immediately follow upon their preaching the Gospel. It is, therefore, altogether incredible, that they should contrive to delude the world out of hope of being famous: since they thought their names should certainly die with them; or, at farthest, soon after them, in the death and last funeral of the world itself.

(3) The only supposition, therefore, that remains, is, that they feigned this story of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, only to keep up their religion, and to add a greater Confirmation and Authority to their Doctrine.

But this, likewise, is utterly absurd to imagine. For, either they did believe the doctrine and religion, which they taught, to be true; or, they did not.

[1] If they did not believe it true, yea if they did not believe it the best and the only divine and heavenly religion in the whole world, what should move them to embrace it, to the hazard of their lives; and to reject other religions, which they thought to be better, and which they knew to be safer and attended with greater worldly advantages?

Can it be conceived, that men should be so far lost to reason and that inbred principle of self-preservation, as to thrust themselves upon all the injuries of an enraged world, yea upon most certain and cruel deaths, for the maintenance of a doctrine, which they themselves knew to be false, and from which they could expect no future benefit to compensate their sufferings? Either the Atheist must suppose them to be Atheists, or not: but, if they were Atheists, it is mere madness for an Atheist, who believes no religion, to die for any doctrine or opinion; and I remember, I have somewhere read a story of one condemned for Atheism, that recanted upon that very reason: and, if they were not Atheists, but did believe a God and future

rewards and punishments, as it is most evident they did, then it were worse than madness, to die for a religion, which they knew to be false; since they could expect nothing else, but that their dying for a lie should be punished with eternal death. It is, therefore, most clear and certain, that they did believe their religion and doctrine to be true; yea, to be infinitely the best in the world.

[2] Wherefore, if they did believe their religion to be true, then it follows:

1st. That they did not join together in a design to delude and cozen the world with tales, which they knew to be false and forged. And,

2dly. If they did believe their religion to be true, they must needs also believe the Master, Teacher, and Author of it, not to have been himself a deceiver.

But, unless they had been verily persuaded, that Christ did rise again from the dead, how could they account of him otherwise than as a deceiver? for he had promised them, that, after three days, he would rise again. And, of this promise they anxiously and solicitously expected the performance, after his death: for we find, that, when the third day was come, they began to entertain sad and misgiving thoughts concerning their hopes of his being the Messiah; as we may see, Luke 24:21 where the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, tell Christ a very sad story of one Jesus of Nazareth, who had been lately crucified at Jerusalem; and declare, with a seeming mixture of shame and diffidence, that they trusted, that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, say they, to-day is the third day, since these things were done. Certainly, if their faith began to stagger, before the time for the accomplishment of Christ's promise was fully expired, only because he had not publicly and openly appeared to them, although they had heard, as they confess, rumours from others concerning his resurrection; had he not risen at all, they would quickly have renounced their ill-grounded faith, and fallen from the profession of that new religion, as soon as they had discovered the author of it to be no better than a foul deceiver and impostor.

So that, I think, I have now made it demonstratively clear, that the Apostles, in reporting the resurrection of Christ, were not combined together, in a design of deluding the easy world.

But,

2. That they were not deluded themselves, nor imposed upon by false appearances, imagining, that they saw Christ raised, who, indeed, lay still under the arrest of death, and the power of the grave; is that, which I am next to demonstrate to you.

And, as to this, the text, which I have read, furnisheth me with arguments enough, to convince all those, who will not on purpose turn sceptics and reject the verdict of their very senses: He shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. What greater confirmation can be expected? I have already shewn you, that they could not conspire together to deceive the world, with reports which they themselves knew to be false; and that they were not themselves deceived, we have here the testimony of their senses: they heard his salutation, and saw his person. Most unreasonable are those men, who will disbelieve the reality and existence; of those things, which they see and touch. And, although reason may possibly dispute many plausible things against the resurrection: yet we ought to resign up our reason to our faith; especially when God hath been graciously pleased to give us so great a reason for our faith, as our very sense. It is foolish and in vain, for sophistry to urge impossibilities against the joint testimony of the hand, the eye, and the ear. They heard him discourse in the same tenor, both of voice and heavenly matter, as before: they saw the same figure, lineaments, and proportion of body in him, as formerly: they observed the orifices of those wounds, which the nails and spear had made in his hands and side: they felt him breathing upon them; which, certainly, if any thing, is the most infallible evidence of life: they touched his flesh, firm and substantial as before it was: nay, one of them, too curious and scrupulous to be imposed upon by false shews or airy fantastic shapes, would not believe, unless he plunged his hand into his sacred side. Now what greater confirmation could diffidence itself have desired, to assure them, that he was really a living man? If, after all these evidences, there might yet remain any

place for delusion or ground for distrust; for my part, I see not how they could be well assured, that ever there was such a man as Jesus in the world. The very same reasons, which might make them doubt whether he were the true Jesus after his resurrection, might as well make them doubt whether he were the true Jesus before his crucifixion; yea, and to doubt, whether they were truly one another. And, why might not we as well doubt, whether or no we are men, and not rather spectres, and phantoms, and mere empty shapes and shades of men? for we have no more reason to believe, that those, whom we see before us are men, than the disciples had to believe, that Christ appeared to them after his death, a true, real, and substantial man. They had the testimony of their senses for it; and we have no more for any thing that we see or touch, here in the world. He shewed unto them his hands and his side: and they were glad, when they saw the Lord.

So that, put all this together, and it amounts to a most certain and undoubted proof, That Christ is indeed risen from the dead.

For,

(1) It is certain, that his disciples saw him and conversed with him, after his resurrection.

For they could not feign such a story, either for riches, or fame, or the maintenance of a religion which they thought to be false; and false it must be, if the Author of it had not risen again, as he promised.

(2) It is again most certain, that, if they heard, and saw, and touched him, and conversed long with him, and had all the testimonies of their senses to confirm it, then it was that very Jesus, who was crucified and buried, who also was raised from the dead.

For those men, who can doubt this, may as well and with as good reason doubt, whether they are men or no.

So that they were neither deceivers nor deceived: and, therefore, what they affirm in this matter, is of infallible truth and certainty.



ii. From the Scripture's appealing thus to the evidence of sense, for the truth of a fact, on which that of the whole Christian Religion depends, it is easy and natural to infer, that **WHATEVER DOCTRINES ARE CONTRARY TO THE PLAIN TESTIMONY OF OUR SENSES, ARE NOT ONLY FALSE IN THEMSELVES, BUT TEND TO OVERTHROW THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR RELIGION.**

For, if Christian Religion be established upon the Resurrection of Christ, and this Resurrection of Christ can no otherwise be proved but by the evidence of sense; they, who impose such doctrines as destroy the credit of our senses, do, by very fair necessary consequence, destroy likewise the credibility of Christian Religion.

And such is that monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, held by the Church of Rome: viz. That, in the consecration of the Holy Sacrament, the bread is really changed into the true and proper body of Jesus Christ, and the wine into his true and proper blood: a doctrine, which puts a gross affront, not only on our reason, because of the innumerable contradictions involved in it; but a most intolerable affront upon our very senses, giving the lie to all the reports which they make, and flatly telling them that they are not to be believed in what they relate concerning their proper objects.

And what is the fatal yet necessary issue of this, but that we are left under an utter uncertainty, as to all the mysteries of our faith? for, if the sense of all mankind may deceive them, we have no assurance, that either Christ lived, or taught, or wrought miracles, or died, or rose again, or ascended into heaven: for I have no more reason to believe, that the same person, who was crucified and dead, did rise again from the dead, because the disciples saw, and heard, and touched him; than I have to believe, that what he gave them at his last supper was truly bread and wine, since they saw, and touched, and tasted it as such. Their senses equally voted for both: and, if there might be a deception in the one, why not in the other?

And, so, for the sake of a rotten superstructure, we must overturn the very ground-work of faith, yea and of all certainty, unless we will very meekly suppose, that the Apostles were blessed with that wonderful

privilege of discerning a human body in the shape of a loaf; or of feeling that to be flesh and blood, which yet they handled and tasted as bread and wine: a privilege, I dare say, never indulged to any Christians since their days!

And, if we cannot make any such strange discoveries, they ought not to be offended at us, though we still call that Bread and Wine, which approves itself so to all our senses; since our Blessed Saviour himself could give no stronger proof that he was himself, than by appealing to the senses of those who saw and touched him: Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have: Luke 24:39. This he thought a sufficient proof to convince them, that he had a human body: and shall not we think it a sufficient proof, that their Wheaten God hath not a human body, when our sight, our touch, our smell, our taste, all give in their concurrent verdict, that it hath neither flesh nor bones. We do see, we do handle, that it hath neither flesh nor bones; and, therefore, cannot be the proper body of Christ, which was crucified and raised again.

Certainly, since this doctrine of Transubstantiation baffles all those arguments, by which our Saviour himself was content that his resurrection should be tried, and the truth of all his gospel verified, we may well explode it: not only as infinitely absurd, but most blasphemous and atheistical; and such, as enervates the strongest proofs and the clearest evidences, which Christ himself could produce, that he was no deceiver.

I know, they will betake themselves to their fortress of Hoc est corpus meum: This is my body. "There," say they, "we have express and literal Scripture for it." But how do they, or how can we know, that there are any such words as these? is it not by our senses? either our seeing them written, or hearing them read? yea, how could the Apostles, from whose relation these words were written, know that our Saviour ever spake them? was it not because they believed their senses? and, what! shall we make them so fond, as to believe their single sense of hearing; when yet they must not, under pain of heresy, believe their several senses, of touching, tasting, and seeing? I pray, what prerogative of infallibility hath the ear above the hand, the eye, or the palate? Sure I am, that St. John, Epist. 1. chap. 1 vv. 1,

3 joins them equally in commission: that ... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life ... that ... declare we unto you: and yet we must, contrary to the judgment of three or four of our senses concerning their proper objects, believe a doctrine, for which the only proof they have, refers us to the testimony of one of our senses; for they tell us, the words are written, and we may see them, This is my body. It is true, we do see them; and, therefore, believe that they are written: but, what! do we likewise see with our eyes, that the sense of them is proper and literal? We see it written, that Christ is a Rock, a Vine, a Door; and, therefore, we believe it: but is it therefore true, that he is properly all these?

Certainly, if there be any miracles wrought in the Church of Rome, the greatest of them is, that they should be able to prevail with men in their wits to believe such gross absurdities. But the subject is too grave for satire; else, the provocations to it were very sufficient, to expose such a stupid piece of nonsense to the utmost scorn and derision.

Yet this, I think, we may very seriously assert,

1. That those, who would prove Transubstantiation by the written word, This is my body, do miserably invalidate the force of their own argument; since my sight can no more assure me, that any such words are written, than it assures me, that that is bread and wine which I receive.
2. That we have as clear evidence of the falsehood of Transubstantiation, as any we have, or can possibly have, concerning the truth, either of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, or of any other great and important Article of the Christian Faith. Neither have I, nor can any other man have, stronger grounds to believe, that Christ's natural body was raised from the grave, than we have to believe, that that is not his natural body, which we receive in the eucharist. Nay,
3. It is utterly impossible, that there can be clearer evidence for the one, than for the other. For, suppose a man should hear a voice from

heaven, which should tell him, that the elements were substantially changed into the true and proper body and blood of Christ; and yet afterwards, to his touch, his taste, his sight, his smell, they should still appear to be truly bread and wine; I would ask, whether he might not as rationally suspect his hearing concerning that voice, as three other of his chief senses, when they give in their reports concerning their proper objects, and that likewise consonant to the sense of all the rest of mankind: so that, in short, the issue is this, He, who believes Transubstantiation, hath no reason to believe any thing; for he destroys all motives and grounds of credibility.

But, it may be, the more absurd their faith is, the more merit is in it; in that they will believe things contrary to all reason, and all their senses. But let them beware also, that, by such a brutish and stubborn faith as this is, they do not destroy all possibility of the certainty of Divine Revelations (which, sure, must be made to some of our senses) and all the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, whilst they obtrude upon the faith of their credulous disciples such a monstrous figment, as utterly overthrows the credibility of all other things.

And, thus much, concerning the Prime and Fundamental Article of our Faith, the Resurrection of our Saviour, confirmed to the very senses of the Apostles.

II. But, when it is said to Thomas, Be not faithless, but believing; not only this, but OTHER POINTS OF FAITH, WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY BUILT UPON IT, AND BY CLEAR CONSEQUENCE DEDUCIBLE FROM IT, ARE INCLUDED.

And, therefore,

i. As, from the testimony of sense, they had all the reason in the world to believe the Resurrection of Christ; so, believing this, there is A LIKE REASON TO BELIEVE, THAT HE INDEED IS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

For, had he been a false prophet and an impostor, neither could he have raised up himself, being but a mere man; neither would God

have raised him up, being but a mere deceiver. And, therefore, when the Jews called for a sign from Christ, to prove him to be the true Messiah, he still gives them the sign of his resurrection; as if a greater and more evident proof than that could neither be given nor demanded. There shall no sign be given them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth: Mat. 12:38, 39, 40. And so, again, when they tempted him for another sign, to prove himself the true Messiah, he instanceth in his resurrection: John 2:18, 19. What sign shewest thou unto us?... Jesus answered ... Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; speaking there of the temple of his body. So that, still, the resurrection of Christ is a most infallible sign and proof, that he is the true Messiah and Saviour of the World.

Now think, O Christian! what joy it must needs be, to have such an irrefragable testimony, that thou hast not misplaced thy faith, thy hope, and thy worship; but that that Jesus, whom thou servest, was not only shamefully lifted up upon the cross, but gloriously raised up from the grave. How would the malicious Jews have insulted over the poor disciples' credulity, if Christ had not vindicated himself from the hand of the grave; and, by the power of his Almighty Godhead, overcome death within its own territories; and, in triumph, brought back his own body, as a spoil rescued from that mighty destroyer! and, therefore, the Apostle saith, Rom. 1:4. That Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead.

ii. Be not faithless, but believe, that by this Resurrection of thy Saviour, of which we have such undoubted testimony, **THE WHOLE WORK OF THY REDEMPTION IS COMPLETED.**

This glorious action gives the last complement and perfection unto it. The full work of our redemption consists, not only in the purchase of mercy for us, but also in the application of that purchase to us. The purchase was, indeed, made by the death of Christ; in which a full price was paid down to the justice of God: but the application of this purchase to us, is made by the resurrection and life of Christ. For he applies to us the benefits of his passion, both by the prevalency of his Intercession, and by the mission of the Holy Ghost: by the former, he

powerfully mediates with God to bestow them: by the latter, he effectually fits and prepares us to receive them. And both these are the blessed fruits of his resurrection and eternal life: for he ever liveth to make intercession for us: Heb. 7:25: and, being at the right-hand of God ... and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear: Acts 2:33 which, though occasionally spoken concerning his miraculous gifts, is yet equally true of his sanctifying graces: so, John 16:7. If I depart, I will send the Comforter unto you. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter ... even the Spirit of Truth: John 14:16, 17. There was no one prejudice, that so much hindered the Gospel from taking place upon the hearts of Jews and Heathens in the primitive times, as this of the death and cross of Christ: for believing, that he was lifted up upon the cross, but not believing that he was raised up out of the grave; their natural reason judged it folly, to expect life from him, who was not able to preserve or restore his own. Indeed, it were folly thus to hope, did not his life apply what his death merited; our salvation being begun upon the cross, but perfected upon the throne. The loss of his life would never have procured life for us, but that, as he laid it down with freedom, so he resumed it again with power: I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again: John 10:18. Indeed, it was his life and resurrection, that put virtue and efficacy into his death and passion: and, hence it is, that the Apostle seems to speak of the Resurrection and Intercession of Christ as having a greater influence into our justification, than his death and sufferings: Rom. 8:34. Who is he, that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *μαλλον δε*, yea rather, that is risen again ... who also maketh intercession for us: as if this were a surer foundation for our faith and comfort, than his death and passion. And, Rom. 5:10. We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *πολλω μαλλον*, much more ... we shall be saved by his life: reconciliation is made by the death of Christ, but the actual application of this is by his life. In respect of merit, it is wrought out for us by his death: in respect of efficacy, it is only applied to us by his life.

And, therefore, we find, that all the great benefits which Christ hath purchased for us by his death, are, by the Scripture, ascribed likewise to his life and resurrection. As,

## 1. Pardon of Sin.

1 Cor. 15:17. If Christ be not raised ... ye are yet in your sins; i.e. under the condemning guilt of them.

## 2. Justification of our Persons.

Rom. 4:25. He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. If he had not risen from the dead, he could not have justified us, because he himself had not been justified. He was, saith the Apostle, justified in the Spirit: 1 Tim. 3:16 that is, by the Almighty power of the Spirit that quickened him; or, else, by retaking his soul and spirit again unto him, If our Surety had still lain under arrest, the debt had not been satisfied; and, therefore, neither could we have been acquitted. But, being declared just by his resurrection, and discharged out of the prison of the grave, he now justifies us by the merit of his obedience and suffering.

## 3. Our future Inheritance of Life and Glory is, likewise, ascribed to the Life and Resurrection of Christ.

John 14:3. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that, where I am, there ye may be also: and, v. 19. Because I live, ye shall live also; i.e. because I shall for ever live interceding for you, therefore shall ye for ever live with me in glory.

Thus, you see, that all the great and spiritual benefits, which redound to believers by the death of Christ, do equally redound to them by his resurrection and life; and, that there is no part of our redemption, but it receives its obsignation and validity, as well from the glories and triumphs of his life, as from the shame and ignominy of his death. So that what the Apostle saith, Rom. 14:8. Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's; we may happily invert, and say, Whether the Lord liveth, he liveth for us; or, whether he dieth, he dieth for us: whether, therefore, he live or die, he is ours: for him either to live or die, is our gain and advantage.

Since, then, we have such undoubted assurance, that our Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, we may be as firmly assured, that the great end, both of his death and of his resurrection, is fully accomplished; which is the Redemption of fallen and lost mankind, and the Justification of all that believe in his name.

iii. Be not faithless, but believe, that the Resurrection of Christ is A MOST CERTAIN PLEDGE OF OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL GLORY.

Certainly, since the Head is raised, the Members shall not always sleep in the dust. But, as Christ's natural body was raised, so shall also his mystical; and every Member of it shall be made for ever glorious, with a glorious and triumphant Head. He is risen before, to pluck us out of our graves: and then shall our vile bodies be made like unto his glorious body; bright as the sun, impassible as angels, and quick as the motions of light. And, shall this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality? shall the womb of the grave bring forth, and death itself give up the ghost? shall the soul be immediately heightened into its happiness, and the body only lie down in its bed of earth, and there sleep away a short night of oblivion? shall both soul and body enjoy a posthumous union, and all mankind everlastingly survive their own funerals? Where, then, is thy sting? O death! O grave! where is thy victory? what is there so terrible in this king of terrors? We may justly use the speech, without the presumption of Agag, Surely, the bitterness of death is past. Our souls shall as certainly meet our bodies with vital embraces, as the soul of Christ did his; and these eyes of ours shall behold our Blessed Redeemer, whose Resurrection is both the cause and the pattern of ours. Oh think, what a ravishing sight it will be, to see the Lord in his body: that body, which was buffeted, which was crucified, which was raised for thee; and, through whose resurrection and glory, thou also art raised and glorified. Think, what unspeakable joy it will be, when thy body and thy Saviour's shall be alike. Think, what an infinite advancement, when thy soul shall not only be like the angels, but thy very body shall be like thy God's. And, though it must first be crumbled into dust, and undergo many dishonourable changes; yet know, that the grave is a safe repository, and death a responsible debtor. They shall give account for every dust entrusted to them:



and, then, that, which fell a clod, shall rise a star: our cottage shall be turned into a palace, our ruins rebuilt into a glorious temple. And, if the hand of death take us asunder, it is but as we use to do with our watches, to make them clean, and then put them together again; that our body may be a glorious instrument, and a glorious habitation, for a glorified soul.

But, before we take possession of this glorious inheritance, we have yet another stage to pass through, after those of our death and resurrection: and that is, the Last Judgment; the subject of my next discourse.

## **OF THE LAST JUDGMENT**

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST; THAT EVERY ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS DONE IN HIS BODY, ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR BAD. -2 COR. 5:10

I DOUBT not, but, at the reading of these words, some may be struck with terror, and some affected with prejudice: some, to think how dreadful, others, how common a truth, I am now about to treat of.

Common doctrines are like common mercies; the most useful, and yet the most slighted. What more necessary, than the common air and light? and, yet, because God hath made no distinction in his distribution of these, but a beggar may breathe as pure air and see as clear light as a prince; therefore are they despised, and accounted rather a debt of nature than an effect of mercy: that alone is esteemed great, and bears a value, which but a few enjoy.

Now, though this be a most absurd judgment, which we pass upon God's mercies; yet are we altogether as absurd and irrational, in judging of his truths. Singular notions, which but a few understand, and have not overmuch of sense and perhaps but too much of error in them, are cried up by men of itching ears and unstable minds, as the admired truths of the age. That is grown despicable, which every body knows.

And, as for those stale and old-fashioned truths, of Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell, professors, now-a-days, learnt them once in their catechisms, and perhaps never thought of them since. These are such things, which, while we reason with them of, they already know; yea and, I believe, some, with Felix, may tremble at them too.

And, so, what from those, who despise them, because common; and those, who hate them, because dreadful; it is the hardest matter in the world, for such doctrines as these, to sink either into men's affections or attentions.

But, whoever you are that read this, I beseech you, think with yourselves, what affections it would move, should you now hear the sound of the last trump; should you feel the dead, that lie here buried, begin to stir and heave under you; should you see here a tomb-stone removed and there a grave thrown open, here a head and there an arm, here one limb and there another, thrust out of the earth; the throng and multitude of some already risen, some just rising, and all hastening to judgment: would not such a spectacle as this, fright you into more serious thoughts, than perhaps the most of you have, even when you are in God's presence? "What security have I for my soul? what interest in my Saviour? what account can I give unto my Judge? Oh! what sentence shall I hear, by and by, pronounced upon me?" Thus, would you all, with amazed and trembling hearts, expect the issue of that great and terrible day of the Lord, which now you put far away from you; and, it may be, much farther in your own thoughts, than God hath done in his decrees. Well, Sirs, stir up the same affections now: you will not be much deceived, if you think you hear and see these things present before you this hour: there are but a few years, that make a difference

between what is and what shall be: and, when they are struck off, death, and judgment, and eternity, are really present with you; as really present, as the things you behold with your eyes. Could we but keep that sound always in our ears, which St. Jerome witnesseth, was always loud in his, *Surgite, mortui, &c.* Arise, ye dead, and come away to judgment: the Judge is set, the books are opening, doom is passing: how would this nip all our carnal jollity and childish pride; and make us careful to improve that time, to employ those talents, to regulate those thoughts, those discourses, those actions, for which we must, shortly, give so narrow an account to a most strict and impartial Judge?

This apprehension, the Apostle tells us, was it, that made him both so earnest in pressing the exercise of holiness upon others, and so laborious in the practice of it himself. Touching others, he tells us, v. 11. Knowing these terrors of the Lord, we persuade men: touching himself, v. 9. We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of God: so to please him by holiness and obedience, that, whether in our voyage or in our haven, whether in this world or in the next, we may be loved by him, and accepted.

And, why all this care and circumspection? why should this be the end of all his actions, and the only thing in the world he resolves to mind? There is good reason for it: shortly we must be judged by him; and, therefore, it is but needful to study now to please him: We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad.

In handling this most awful and tremendous point of religion, I shall not answer those nice and uncertain questions; Where is the Place? or, When shall be the Time of this Great Judgment? Neither of these hath God clearly revealed in his word.

As for the Place, the Jews think, that this great and last assize shall be held in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, near Jerusalem; according as they expound Joel 3:2: others, on the whole surface of the earth: others, in the air, from 1 Thess, 4:17 where the Apostle speaks of our being taken up to meet Christ in the air. And this, indeed, I judge to be the most probable: both because it is most capacious to contain so

great a multitude, as all nations, and languages, all families, and persons, that ever lived in the world, amount unto; and, also, because, in the Resurrection, men's bodies shall become incorruptible and spiritual: 1 Cor. 15 from v. 42 to v. 45, that is, they shall be endowed with refined and spiritual qualities, of impassibility and agility, whereby, possibly, they may move more freely, in the air, than now they do upon the earth. But these are only conjectures.

And, concerning the Uncertainty of the same, Christ hath told us, Of that day and hour (and it is as true, of that month and year) knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only: Matth. 24:36. Nay, our Saviour tells them, Mark 13:32 that he himself knew it not; nor men, nor angels, no, nor the Son: that is, as the Son of Man he knew it not; but, as he is the Son of God, so all things are known unto him; being one in essence, and equal in knowledge, with the Father.

Omitting, therefore, these uncertainties; there is a Twofold Day of Judgment: the one, particular; the other, universal the one, of the soul only, presently after Death; the other, both of soul and body united together, presently after the Resurrection.

First. There is a Particular Day of Judgment, that follows immediately after every man's Death.

There is no such thing as a neutral state of the soul; a state, wherein it is neither happy nor miserable; a state of slumber, wherein, as some men dream, it sleeps away the time until the Resurrection, without sense either of pain or comfort. We know, saith the Apostle, that if this earthly house ... be dissolved, that is, as soon as it is dissolved, we have ... a house ... eternal in the heavens: 2 Cor. 5:1 and, which is a convincing and demonstrative argument, the Apostle Phil. 1:23 desires to depart hence, and to be with Christ. Should his soul have been kept from Christ till the Day of Judgment, what reason was there for him to desire death; since his very desire of death was only for this end, that his soul might the sooner enjoy Christ? for, if his soul must have slept with his body till the Resurrection, whether he had died sooner or later, or not died at all, but lived to the very end of the world, it had been all one, as to his

enjoyment of Christ. So the Wise Man also, Eccl. 12:7. The dust, that is, the body, shall return to the earth ... and the spirit, that is, the soul, shall return unto God, who gave it: it shall return to him, that so it may receive its sentence from him; either a sentence of absolution, according to our faith and obedience; or of condemnation, according to our unbelief and impenitence. We are apt to look upon the Day of Judgment as afar off; some hundreds, or, it may be, thousands of years hence; and think it will never overtake us: be it so: yet, certainly, thy Day of Judgment is near at hand; and what relief is it, that the Last Day shall not be till some hundreds of years hence, if yet thy soul must lie in hell all those years under insupportable torments? How know we, but that death may be now striking us, the worms may be now expecting us, our bell may be now tolling, our grave now digging? Howsoever, doubtless these things will shortly be: shortly we shall all breathe our last, and give that gasp that will discharge our souls from our bodies; and then is our Judgment Day. And, Oh! what strange discoveries will that last moment make! we shall there see, what we have heard and believed of eternity here: sentence will be instantly pronounced, while the soul is as yet warm from the body: and, accordingly, either angels will wing it away into Abraham's bosom, to heaven, the seat of eternal joy; or devils, who are present about sick-beds, watching for their prey, will drag it down to eternal torments. And, according to the sentence passed upon every soul in this particular judgment, so shall they have the foretastes and essays, either of happiness or misery; in which the whole man, both soul and body, must abide for ever. This is the First Judgment-Day.

Secondly. There is an Universal Judgment. And this is to begin presently after the Resurrection.

The former judgment proceeded according as death, God's grim serjeant, arrested such and such a particular soul, and brought it before him: but, here, all, who ever have been or shall be in the world, shall, together, stand before Christ's tribunal, to receive their doom; and that not only naked souls, but soul and body united. There is but one time, when heaven and hell shall be quite empty of souls; and that is, at the Resurrection: for, before God proceeds to judgment, he will first set the gates of heaven and hell wide open,

and send out the whole multitude of souls, each to find its own body: one meets it with joy and embraces; the other, with curses: it curseth itself: it curseth those members, into which it must now again enter; those members, which were once instruments of sin, and must be always partners with it in torments. Both righteous and wicked, all alike, must appear in their bodies: and, though they do, beforehand, know themselves to be either acquitted or condemned; yet this is the time for the solemn and conspicuous pronouncing of the sentence, and distribution of rewards. It is remarkable, that the Scriptures do point out that Great Day to us, as the time, wherein mercy and forgiveness, rest and refreshing, joy and gladness, redemption and salvation, rewards and crowns, shall be bestowed upon God's children; and, on the contrary, wrath, and destruction, and everlasting vengeance, shall be executed upon the wicked: not to heap up places, see both of these, 2 Thess. 1:6, 7, 8. It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and, to you, who are troubled, rest with us: but when must this two-fold recompence be made? when the Lord Jesus, saith the Apostle, shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, nor obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: so Luke 14:14. Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just: what! not before? yes, as soon as the soul parts from the body, it receives its recompence: but, because the great and solemn time of retribution is the Day of Judgment, when God will manifest his justice to all the world, angels and men; therefore, the Scriptures ascribe rewards and punishments to this day.

Now, in farther treating on this subject, I shall insist upon these general heads:

The Certainty of a future judgment

Who it is, that is appointed then to be the Judge.

Who shall be Assessors on the bench, and Assistants in the Judgment.

The Apparatus, the Manner and Method, of the whole transaction.

Who they are, that shall be judged.

What they shall be judged for; and what Account they must give.

According to what Law they shall be judged.

The Witnesses, that shall appear against them.

The Pleas and Excuses, which the accused will then make for themselves; and the Invalidity of them.

The Proportioning of the Sentence, according to what hath been here done in the body, whether good or bad.

I. I shall begin with the CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

That there shall be a judgment to come, is both certain and necessary. This great and terrible day of the Lord will come, and will not tarry. God's hand is continually turning over our days and years, like the leaves of a book: there is something written on every one of them: the last is coming; and that, like the index or table, must give account of all the rest. There must be a Last Day, as there was a First: and this Last Day will bring to public view and knowledge, whatsoever hath been done all the days which the world hath stood.

This is clear, both from Scripture-evidence, and likewise from Rational Grounds and Arguments.

The Scripture is both plentiful and express, that there shall be such a general, such a solemn and dreadful judgment. We have a full description given of it by our Saviour, Matth. 25:31, &c. The Son of Man ... shall sit upon the throne of his glory, attended with angels; all nations standing before him, whom he will separate, some on his right-hand to everlasting life, and some on his left-hand to unquenchable fire. So, Luke 8:17. There is nothing hid, which shall not be revealed: and when revealed, but in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ? As it is, Rom. 2:16 so, in the 14th and 15th verses of Jude, Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, sayings, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of

his saints. To execute judgment upon all: and many other places too long and numerous to be here related.

And, beside Scripture, Reason also itself doth clearly shew, that there shall be a future judgment, in which God will render to every man according to his works.

i. This appears from THE ACCUSING OR EXCUSING OFFICE OF CONSCIENCE.

Whence proceeds that regret, those gnawings and stings of conscience, for sin, which sometimes the very worst of men feel? but that every man doth, as it were, naturally presage, that there shall be a Day of Judgment, wherein those sinful actions shall be brought to an account, and they punished for them? Even the consciences of Heathens themselves, who never had the light of the Scripture to reveal to them the Judgment of the Last Day, would witness against them, disquiet, and trouble them, when they sinned against their natural light: their conscience would bear witness, and their thoughts accuse, or else excuse them; as the Apostle speaks, Rom. 2:15: now what was it that could trouble their consciences, but only some secret hints and obscure notions of a judgment and wrath to come? We find them all strongly possessed with the apprehensions of a future state, in proportion to their present actions; hence, their Barathrum and Elysium, their Hell and Paradise: hence, their three severe and impartial judges: hence, their strange invented punishments, bearing a correspondence to the crimes of those who were said to undergo them; which though they were but the fictions of their poets, yet the very consent of nature and of nations dictated, that there were torments to be suffered, according to the sins here committed. The very workings of natural conscience, therefore, strongly prove, that there shall be a judgment

ii. This too may be evidently proved, from THE EQUITY AND JUSTICE OF GOD'S NATURE, COMPARED WITH THE SEEMINGLY STRANGE AND UNEQUAL DISPENSATIONS OF HIS PROVIDENCE.



Justice obligeth to do good, to those, who are good; and to inflict evil, upon those, who are evil. But, yet, Providence, in this life, seems to dispense affairs quite otherwise: whatsoever this world calls good, the riches, the power, the glory of it, are usually heaped upon wicked men, who swagger and flaunt it here, and fight against God with those very weapons which he puts into their hands; whereas, many of those, who are truly holy and the sincere servants of God, are oftentimes pinched by poverty, persecuted causelessly, opposed unjustly, despised and trampled upon, by every one who will but take the pains to do it. This is God's usual dealing and method with men, in this world. And it seemed so unjust and unequal, that hereupon, alone, many of the ancient Heathens denied, that the world was governed by Providence. What! can I think, that a just God rules the world, when I see a wicked Dives feasting in purple, carousing on the tears of widows mingled with the blood of orphans? and a godly Lazarus, all naked and sore and hunger-starved, lying prostrate at his gate; an object so miserable, as needed even the charity of the very dogs that licked him? here a grandee, a great and potent man in the world; and yet a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean wretch, a hater of God and goodness: another, perhaps, wandering about in a forlorn and destitute condition; and yet a saint, truly loving and fearing that God who afflicts him? And can there be equity in such an administration of affairs as this? It is true, indeed, that this were a charge hardly answerable, were this world the only place of dispensing out rewards and punishments. There is, therefore, a judgment to come: and then, Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for he shall eat the fruit of his doings; but, Woe unto the wicked! then, it shall be ill with them; for the reward of their works shall be given them: Isa. 3:10, 11. This shall be the day, wherein God will clear up the equity of his justice, in all the inequality of his providence. And what, then, are all the fine and gay things of this world? believe it, a poor saint, who hath on him the robe of Christ's righteousness, will be found much better clothed than ever Dives was, with all his purple. What will it avail this and that gallant, that they have here ruffled and ranted it in this world? alas! they have already received their good things. Now come the afflicted, the distressed, the derided saints, to inherit the kingdom; when potentates and nobles, the great and mighty ones of the earth, shall be thrust down, screeching and howling and struggling, but all

in vain, down, down to the lowest hell. Now, O Christian! is God unjust, because he suffers the wicked to flourish, and the godly to be afflicted, in this world? Beware how thou judgest God, till God hath judged men: and then thou shalt see, that all his dispensations, though now they seem very unequal, are yet tempered with most exact justice and equity.

This is the First General, which I propounded to be enquired into: the Certainty of the Future Judgment, demonstrated both from Scripture and Reason.

II. The JUDGE, before whom we must all appear, and by whom the sentence of life or death eternal must be pronounced upon all, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scripture assigns the giving of judgment upon all, chiefly unto Him: not so, as to exclude God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost: for it is a known rule, That whatsoever action God doth without himself, is common to all the Trinity. As the whole Trinity created the world, yet creation is particularly ascribed unto Christ; so the whole Trinity shall judge the world, and yet this passing of judgment is peculiarly attributed unto Christ. And that, both because it is most fit, that he, who was judged by men, should himself be the judge of men; and, also, because his authority will be then most visible and conspicuous before the whole world. Neither the Father nor the Spirit will make any visible appearance; but the Son shall then sit upon the Throne of his Majesty; and the whole world shall see him in that very body, that was buffeted, that was crucified, that was pierced, and, at last, glorified. Therefore, he is said to be the judge both of the quick and dead, because sentence shall proceed out of his mouth, and his presidency and authority shall be most remarkable. So, John 5:27: He hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Acts 10:42: He hath commanded us... to testify, that it was Christ, who was ordained of God to be the Judge both of quick and dead. 2 Tim. 4:1: I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead. Acts. 17:31: God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world ... by the Man, whom he hath ordained.

And, if Christ be ordained Judge, then,

**i. WHAT TERROR SPEAKS THIS TO WICKED MEN!**

Certainly, this must needs be a dark and gloomy day to them. It is that Christ, whose laws they have broken, whose love they have slighted, whose blood they have spilt, nay whose blood they have trampled on, whose members they have massacred and martyred; it is that Christ, who must then judge them: whom they have contemptuously refused to be their King and Saviour, they shall not be able to refuse from being their Judge. And can you then wonder, that they should call for rocks and hills to fall upon them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb? Rev. 6:15, 16: believe it, rocks and hills, the hardest and the heaviest things in nature, would be but a light coverlet to them, in comparison with that wrath, which shall sit insupportably heavy on them for ever, and sink them down to the bottom of hell. Christ comes now to you as a Saviour, in a meek and winning manner: he urgeth you, by all the arguments that love and pity can use: but, if you refuse him, his next coming will be as a Judge; and then the Lamb, which offered himself a sacrifice for you, will turn Lion, and sacrifice you to his wrath and justice. Now, the voice of a loving Saviour calls sinners to come unto him; but those, who will not come, the voice of a dreadful Judge will then bid to depart from him: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

**ii. WHAT UNSPEAKABLE COMFORT IS THIS TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD, that Christ shall be their judge!**

That Christ, in whom they have believed, whom they have loved, on whom they have trusted: that Christ, who hath dearly loved them, and given his life to redeem them, he shall judge them. And dost thou think, O believing soul! that that Christ, who hath shed his blood to save thee, will ever spend his breath to damn thee? Will the head execute the members? When the Devil brings in his accusations, when justice calls for vengeance, then the Judge himself will be your Advocate: Christ himself will plead for you. "The law of grace is, Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Behold my blood, and their faith. The law is satisfied, the inheritance is due. And, therefore, Come, ye blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from before the foundation of the world."

### III. Consider who shall be the ASSESSORS.

As in human judicatories, besides the judge, there are the justices, who, for the more solemnity, sit on the bench with him: so, in this Great and Last Assize, besides Christ, the Judge both of Quick and Dead, there are his assessors on the bench, his assistants in the judgment: and they are the saints; 1 Cor. 6:2. Know ye not, that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world must be judged by you, &c. so, Jude, vv. 14, 15, The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, To execute judgment upon all.

i. They must, first, be judged themselves; and, then, JUDGE OTHERS.

The blessed and joyful sentence must first be pronounced upon them; and then they, as triumphant members, will be associated with their Glorious Head, in passing a dreadful and condemning sentence upon all the rest of the world, both men and devils.

1. They shall judge the very Devils themselves.

Know ye not, that we shall judge the angels? saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 6:3 that is, those angels, which kept not their first station, but ... are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day: Jude ver. 6. Here is the consummate victory of the saints. They now subdue the Devil, as an enemy: then, they shall judge him, as a malefactor. They shall be revenged upon him, for all those horrid injections, violent temptations, and black and despairing apprehensions, with which he continually molests them. What exceeding joy will it be, when those poor weak saints, who were here, on earth, in perpetual dread of him and danger from him, shall sentence him to the same damnation, into which, by his wiles and power, he laboured to bring them. Now, he strongly tempts us to sin; and, if he prevail, he maliciously accuses us for yielding: but this is our happiness, that our tempter, our accuser, shall never be our judge. The time of recompence is coming: and then we shall accuse

this great accuser, and complain of all the wrongs and injuries that he hath done us; what blasphemous and atheistical thoughts, what foolish and hurtful lusts, he hath stirred up in us, which were our trouble and his guilt. And, not only shall we thus accuse and complain, but we shall condemn him too; condemn him to that fire and those torments, which his very tempting of us will make far more raging and intolerable for ever.

## 2. They shall judge all the Wicked and Ungodly of the World.

Oh! what strange amazement will seize all hearts on that day, when a few poor, despised creatures, who were thought no better of than the dung and dregs of nature; when these shall sit in state, and daunt all the great and gallant spirits of the world with a frown, and damn them with a word! Believe it, Paul will then make his judge Felix tremble, once more, at him. Let wicked men seriously consider of it: they must appear shivering before those saints, whom they hate and scorn now. Pilate himself, who once judged Christ, shall, at this day, be himself judged before the meanest servant of Christ. And it is sadly to be feared, that the great and honourable nobles of the world will there find but few of their peers to judge them: no; God hath chosen the mean things of this world, to confound the ... mighty. And, before these, all persons and causes must come. And, oh! think how dreadful it will be, that Thou, perhaps, shalt be sentenced to hell by thy poor neighbour; and Thou, by thy acquaintance and familiar: here, children pronounced damned by their parents, and parents by their children; husbands and wives by their yoke-fellows: and, though once so dearly loved, so nearly related, yet now sent down to hell by them, without the least yearning of compassion towards them; yea, with shouts and triumph. Thus shall the saints judge the world, both Devils and Wicked Men.

ii. But, yet, THEY SHALL NOT SO JUDGE THEM, AS CHRIST SHALL, BY AN AUTHORITATIVE PRONOUNCING OF THE SENTENCE UPON THEM.

But,

1. They are said to judge the world, because judgment shall pass upon all men, according to the Truth of that Doctrine, which they have taught and delivered.

Now, though the instructions and admonitions, which private Christians have given wicked men, shall rise up in judgment against them at the Last Day; yet this sense is more peculiar to the Prophets, Apostles, and faithful Ministers of Jesus Christ, who, of all men, shall be most especially employed in this judging work. Thus Christ tells his disciples, Matt. 19:28. Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel: that is, they shall, at last, be judged according to that doctrine you have preached to them and taught among them. Yea, we must distinguish between Christ's judging as a Prophet, and his judging as a King: Christ will, both ways, judge at the Last Day; by his authority as a King, and by his ministry as a Prophet: and therefore he tells us, John 12:48. The word, that I have spoken, the same shall judge them at the last day: i.e. it shall rise up in judgment against them. So, St. Paul, Rom. 2:16. God shall judge the hearts of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel: i.e. according to those gospel truths, which I have preached. Little do secure sinners think, when they come to the ordinances out of mere fashion and custom, that they then hear that word, which must determine their eternal state and condition: believe it, that word, which they either drowse away or scoff at, the same word of truth must judge them, at the Last Day. Never will there be such a repeating of sermons, as then: sermons, heard many years ago and quite forgotten, shall then be called fresh to mind; and, what the minister spake weakly, perhaps, and faintly, conscience will then repeat in a voice more loud and dreadful than thunder. And, oh! what a sad thing will it be for ministers to see most of their flocks standing there among the goats, and to be called forth by Christ to witness against such and such of their auditors! Christ will bid us name the texts and repeat the sermons, which brought home convictions and terrors to their consciences, for those sins, which yet we could never persuade them to repent of and forsake. The drunkard, the swearer, the unclean person, the sabbath-breaker, are sinners thick-set in every parish. Now, what should we do? If we reprove them not, if we warn them not to flee from the wrath to come, we bring their blood upon our own heads, and destroy

ourselves: if we do threaten and exhort and admonish them, and they repent not; their damnation will be sevenfold deeper in hell, than if they had never enjoyed means nor ministry; because they now add contempt of the Gospel to their breach of the Law. It is a very sad thing, yet so it must be, that ministers must stand forth for the condemnation of those, for whose salvation they have studied, and prayed, and laboured to the very utmost. That is one way, how the saints shall judge the world, viz. by their Teaching and Doctrine.

2. They shall judge the world, by the Example of their Lives and Conversations.

Then, O Sinner! will be seen their faith, and thy unbelief; their repentance, and thy impenitence; their obedience, and thy rebellions: and the good in them shall judge the evil in thee; and that is the reason, why wicked men do so hate it. God will, on that day, set a saint against a sinner: and, how glorious will the one appear! how ugly and loathsome the other! both are alike, by nature: both may live under the same means of grace: and yet, he, truly fearing God; thou, a despiser of God: he, a sincere professor of holiness; thou, a bitter hater of it: he, conscientious in all duties, which concern both God and man; thou, a swearer, a drunkard, a lewd profane wretch, that neither fearest God nor regardest men: and, therefore, he shall be thy judge. Nay, not only the examples of saints, but the examples of those too, who have been less vicious among wicked men themselves, shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them: the moral virtues of Heathens shall serve for the lessening of their own, and the greatening of the condemnation of others, who have not arrived to their pitch: thou art called a Christian, and thinkest that name enough to pass thee at the day of trial; but, what wilt thou say, when God shall produce many Heathens better than such Christians? their temperance and sobriety shall judge thy excess and riot; their uprightness and justice, thy fraud and deceit: and all the privilege, which thou shalt get by being a Christian, is only to lie the lower and hotter in hell: our Saviour tells us, Luke 11:31, 32. The queen of the south, and the men of Nineveh, who for ought we know, were never otherwise than idolatrous Heathens, yet they shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them.

3. The saints shall judge the world, by giving their Consent and Approbation to that most righteous Sentence of Condemnation, which Christ shall pronounce against them.

When Christ shall say to the goats on his left-hand, Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; the saints also shall shake their hands at them, and echo it after him, Go, ye cursed: and subscribe, that he is just and righteous, in damning all the unbelievers in the world, though many of them may be their own parents, or children, or friends, or nearest and dearest relations.

iii. And, if the saints must thus judge the world; then,

1. See here the mistaken judgment, which the world passeth upon them.

It counts them a company of poor silly souls, who have more honesty and less wit, by half, than needs. They are jeered and abused, persecuted and wronged, on all hands; and, if any forbear them, it is more out of scorn than love. Well, be it so: shortly, this jolly and frolic world will find itself much mistaken, when it shall see these despised ones advanced on the bench as assessors with Christ, and princes and potentates stand trembling at the bar as guilty malefactors.

2. Must the saints judge the world? how much, then, doth it belove them to be careful, that they do not commit the same crimes themselves, for which they must hereafter judge others!

This consideration should be exceedingly effectual with all those, who pretend to be saints and hope to judge the world, to exercise a singular holiness, and live quite otherwise than the world doth. And yet, who, almost, is there, that doth not hope to be among the judges, at the Last Day? Ask the drunkard or swearer, ask the profanest wretch that comes to church, "Do you hope to be saved?"—"To be saved! God forbid, else. It were pity I should live, if I had not hopes to be saved." And canst thou, who tearest the holy name of God with fearful oaths and curses, think thyself a fit man to judge swearers to hell? Canst thou, who sittest swilling till wine and strong drink



inflare thee, be fit to judge drunkards to hell? Canst thou, who wallowest in thy uncleanness, be fit to sit with God as a judge upon whoremongers and adulterers? Certainly, if such as these be the judges, who shall be the guilty? The Apostle thought it a most absurd thing, that men should pretend to teach the Law, and yet transgress it: Rom. 2:21. Thou, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou, that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? so may I say, Thou, that hopest to judge others, judgest thou not thyself? Thou, that hopest to judge stealers, and liars, and adulterers, and blasphemers, and the whole rabble-rout of sinners; wilt thou steal, and lie, and commit adultery, and blaspheme, and be as bad as the worst of men? Certainly, such hopes are utterly in vain; and, instead of being judges of others, such men shall find themselves condemned and executed as malefactors, at that day.

And, thus much, concerning the Third General propounded, who shall be the Assistants in the Judgment.

IV. The next general propounded, was, to give a brief description of the APPARATUS; the Manner and Method of the whole transaction.

And this, indeed, shall be unspeakably glorious and majestic. Every thing in it shall be so ordered, as may make most for the terror of the wicked, and the joy and glory of the godly.

i CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGMENT SHALL BE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED.

The world shall be secure; and think of no such thing, as a Day of Judgment. Every one shall be minding other matters: some, their trades; and some, their pleasures: and some, too, shall be sinning, when the last trumpet shall sound to judgment. Oh! how fearfully will men then be surprized! Some will be howling, and some praying; and, before they have spoken another word, be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; and then away through the air, to meet Christ in the clouds.

ii. For, THERE SHALL HIS THRONE BE SET, AND THERE SHALL ALL EYES BEHOLD HIM, IN THAT VERY BODY WHICH HE

## ASSUMED FOR US.

Acts 1:11. This same Jesus, which is taken from you up ... into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. His First Coming, to save the world, was mean and contemptible; but his Second Coming, to judge the world, shall be with the greatest glory and splendor that heaven can make. He shall set out of heaven with a shout, given by all the hosts of heaven: 1 Thess. 4:16. He shall come in flaming fire, attended with his mighty angels: 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. And all this, to strike terror into the hearts of wicked men, who shall have so great a Judge to condemn them; and to fill the hearts of his own with joy, who shall have so glorious a Redeemer to save them.

iii. He SHALL SEND FORTH HIS ANGELS, to assemble all nations and persons before him.

These are such officers, as none can resist, none can fly from. They will come into the very graves to you; throw off your earthy covering; drag out, and drive all the wicked of the earth, though loth and struggling, by whole herds, unto the Judgment-Seat.

iv. And, there, Christ SHALL MAKE A SEPARATION between them.

The sheep, i.e. those who have heard his voice, and been obedient to him, the Chief Shepherd of their Souls, he will place, visibly, on his right-hand, in a select company, by themselves: the goats, those who have followed the bent of their own lusts and wills, shall be pounded in together, on his left-hand. Both companies expect the passing of the last and definitive sentence upon them: the one, with infinite joy and exultation, the sentence of their admission into eternal happiness; the other, with inconceivable horror, the sentence of eternal wrath. According to this different sentence, so shall presently follow its different execution: the reprobates shall be driven away by angels, and dragged away by devils; and, whether they will or no, shall be forced to torments: the elect shall attend upon Christ back again, who shall enter into heaven at the head of them, and, with rejoicing, shew them all to his Father, as the children, which his eternal love had given him, and his own merits purchased.

I have not written these things to instruct any, in what they are ignorant of. I suppose, all know these first rudiments of truth. And it is a very fearful thing, to consider, that so many know the Day of Judgment, so certain, so dreadful, as it is held forth to be, and yet so few prepare for it. Let us be persuaded, therefore, to live as those, who must undoubtedly come to judgment, and give an account of all they have done in the flesh: otherwise, believe it, our knowledge of the Day of Judgment and of the great transactions which shall then be, will but make that day the more dreadful to us, and our eternal condemnation the more intolerable.

V. Consider the UNIVERSALITY of this judgment.

We all, saith the text, must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

i. All, WITHOUT EXCEPTION; and all, WITHOUT DISTINCTION.

1. All must appear, without the Exception or Exemption of any from the trial of this Great Day.

Rom. 2:6, 9, 10. God will render to every man according to his works: Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.... But glory and honour ... upon every man that worketh good. Nor greatness, nor goodness, can privilege any man from the sentence of the Judge; no more than here they can from the arrest of death. Nay, though death seems to be as universal as life itself: What man is there that liveth, saith the Psalmist, and shall not see death? it mows down all before it, and lays them in the dust: yet judgment is far more certain and universal, than death is. The Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 15:51 that we shall not all sleep; that is, our death-steep: at Christ's last appearance, there shall be a world full of men, some trading and some sinning, as now they are: none of these shall taste of death; but yet they must all undergo judgment. And, therefore, we rehearse it as an Article of our Faith, that Christ shall come to judge both the quick, or living, and the dead. All shall hear, and all must obey, the peremptory summons of the last trump: not a soul shall then hide itself in the crowd: not a body shall skulk in the grave. But all must appear. And, though our loose dust be scattered to the four winds of

heaven; yet, by the almighty power of God and the ministry of angels, every dust shall be picked up, and rallied again into the same body. The Sea shall give up the dead, which are in it; and Death and the Grave shall deliver up the dead, which are in them; and every man shall be judged according to his works: as we have it described, Rev. 20:13. And,

2. As all, without exception, so all, without distinction, must abide the trial of this Great Day.

God will be no acceptor of persons. Where the cause makes no difference, the Judge will not. He will as well hear what the consciences of the greatest can say against them, as what the consciences of the meanest; and give the Devil as free liberty, to accuse, to drag away, and damn princes, as peasants. Rev. 20:12. I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God: they all stand: there, no one calls, "Bring a seat here, for this emperor, and that king: Make room there, for this nobleman, and that gentleman:" no; great and small, noble and contemptible, must all stand huddled, in the same common crowd, together. Indeed, there shall be no such distinction as great and small, according to worldly pre-eminence: there will appear great sinners, and less; and great saints, and less: but, between great persons and their inferiors, that day will know no difference: all shall there stand upon the same level: high and low, young and old, all must alike come to judgment: no reverence shall there be shewn to the grey-hairs of an old sinner, nor any pity to the cries of a young.

Thus must all appear; without Exception, and without Distinction.

ii. And that, FOR THESE REASONS:

1. All are guilty, and all are accused; and, therefore, all must be judged.

Both God's equity, and also the clamours of our great accuser, require, that not one guilty person escape judgment. Now, the whole world is guilty before God: even infants themselves, whose souls are but just dipped into their bodies, yet thereby become partakers of

original sin: others grow up under innumerable actual provocations; every day and hour adding sin to sin, and guilt to guilt. If any might escape this trial, it might seem most reasonable, that true believers should, whose guilt is removed by free pardon and justification: but, though that guilt of their sins, which exposeth and is ordained unto condemnation, be removed; yet, because those sins, which God hath pardoned them, do for ever deserve condemnation, which guilt remission and justification can never take away; therefore the Devil will try the suit with them; and the great Day of Hearing will be the Day of Judgment, wherein all shall be impleaded, and, therefore, all must then appear to answer.

2. All must appear, because, on this day, God intends, most solemnly, to manifest the riches of his mercy on all the vessels of mercy, and the severity of his wrath upon all the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.

God hath, for this very end, decreed, that there shall be such a number of men in the world, and no more; that those two royal attributes of mercy and justice may be glorified upon them, especially in that Great Day. There is no part, in all eternity, so fitted for the exalting of mercy and justice, as this is: and, therefore, certainly, if God hath created all men to this very end, that they might be the standing monuments of these two attributes, they must all then appear, when these attributes may be most glorified. There was scarce any other reason, why God should create the world and men in it, but that the whole multitude of them, assembled together at the Last Day, should there serve for the glorious declaration of his justice in condemning them for their own sins, and of his mercy in saving his elect without their own merits: and, therefore, thou mayst as well not be a creature, as not appear at the Judgment-Seat, where the great end of thy creation shall be most solemnly accomplished. And, hence it is, that our Saviour saith, John 6:39. This is the Father's will, which hath sent me, That of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the Last Day: Christ shall raise them, that they may not be lost. Indeed, men were as good as lost, if they were not to rise again to judgment, It were almost lost labour to create them, and more loss to redeem them, were it not, that the judgment of the Last Day shall fulfil God's ends

upon them: in glorifying his love and mercy, in the view and to the admiration of the whole world, in the salvation of some; and his justice and righteousness, in the damnation of others. As sure, therefore, as God hath not been at labour in vain, in making any one man in the world; so sure shall every man in the world come to judgment.

(1) Hence it is, that believers usually pass through a Fourfold Justification, before they come to be perfected in glory.

[1] The First is a Justification in foro Divino, in God's own breast.

Whereby he doth, according to his secret grace, pardon their sins, and accept them into favour and unto life eternal.

[2] The Second is a Justification in foro Conscientiæ, at the bar of their own consciences. And that is, when God's Spirit witnesseth with theirs, that they are the children of God.

When the Holy Ghost opens the Book of Life, before their eyes; and darts in such a beam of heavenly and supernatural light, as enables the soul clearly to read its name written therein: when they can see their election, adoption, and justification, in their sanctification; and their sanctification itself, both in the fruits of a holy life, and the testimony of God's Spirit: this is to be justified in the Court of Conscience. Now there is no absolute necessity of this: men's eternal state may be secured without it: but, yet, God doth thus sometimes vouchsafe to set up his judgment-seat and to acquit his children in their own consciences, that so they may glorify and adore the riches of divine mercy, in choosing, in calling, such as they are, while he passeth by the far greater part of the world; and, thereby, as far as in them lies, they fulfil the end why he doth so.

But the glory, that redounds to God by this justification, is but private and personal.

And, therefore, there is,

[3] A Third Justification; and that is in foro Ecclesiæ Triumphantis, before all the angels and saints in heaven.

The mercy of a king, in pardoning a malefactor, is most honoured, when the pardon is read in full and open court. Here is a full assembly, even the assembly of the first-born: and, therefore, presently upon the death of his servants, as soon as their souls return to him; he doth, for the glorifying of his mercy and free grace, pronounce them acquitted and blessed, in the audience of saints and angels.

But, yet, neither is this an assembly full enough: there are vast numbers of sinners on earth and wretches in hell, who know not what transactions pass above in heaven.

And, therefore, for the glorifying of pardoning-mercy before them too, there shall be,

[4] A Fourth Justification, pro Tribunali Christi, before the judgment-seat of Christ, at the Last Day.

(2) Now, as there is this Fourfold Justification, so there is also proportionably a Fourfold Condemnation; and the last is before the tribunal of Christ too.

God will then assemble together angels and devils, saints and sinners, all the rational creation; that, before them, he may represent his mercy and justice, in their most conspicuous glory: his justice, in damning sinners, according to their own merits; his mercy, in saving his elect, according to the merits of Christ. And, therefore, all must then appear.

iii And, if all must appear, then,

1. What shame and confusion will cover the faces of wicked men, when their foul and gross sins shall be laid open before all the world of men and angels!

This is the day, wherein the secrets of every man's heart shall be revealed, and the actions of every man's life brought to public view. Nothing is secret, saith our Saviour, that shall not be made manifest: Luke 8:17. It is manifest to God already: Psal. 90:8: Thou hast set ... our secret sins in the light of thy countenance: but this, wicked men

blush not at: though God sees them, and sees that he may punish them; yet they are neither ashamed for his knowledge, nor afraid of his justice. That, which most awes them, is, lest the world should know how base and wicked they are: but, let them dig never so deep, to hide their sins; let them draw night and darkness round about, when they commit them; yet, foolish creatures! the whole world must know what they think to conceal: unless thou canst find out such an obscure and retired corner, where neither God, nor the Devil, nor thine own Conscience can follow thee; it is but childish to sin in secret: as good commit it on the house-top, in the face of the sun, in the concourse of people; for, if God, and the Devil, and thine own Conscience know it, the whole world must know it. Nay, the whole world of men, now living, are nothing, in comparison with the endless numbers of those, who must know thy greatest and vilest sins: all, who have ever lived from the foundation of the world, or shall until the final dissolution of it, shall hear the black catalogue of thy sins read over, sin by sin. Yea, the very sins of thy thoughts shall be ripped up: at such a time, blasphemy: at such a time, murder: at such a time, filthy lusts. Oh! whither wilt thou cause thy shame to go? where wilt thou hide thy head? Think, O Sinner! how wilt thou be able to look up, when God shall read aloud this long scroll of thy sins, in the hearing of Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, and all the world, both of good and bad? who shall as distinctly see thee, as though thou wert the only person to be then judged; and as thoroughly know thee, who thou art, under what education thou wast brought up, under what ministry thou hast lived, and what profession thou hast made, as though they had always been conversant with thee here on earth. Oh! the shame and amazement, which will then seize sinners, when God shall thus set their iniquities before their faces, to the everlasting confusion of their faces! It is indeed questioned, whether the sins of God's children shall be made public, at the Day of Judgment, to all the world: some deny it; because they think it unlikely, that God should uncover those sins in judging, which he hath already covered in justifying: but this proves it not; for, justification only covers our sins from condemnation, not from manifestation: it covers them from God's justice; but it doth not cover them from the world's notice: and, therefore, I think it most probable, that the sins of God's best saints and people, shall, in this universal judgment, be made known to all, both men and angels: the



text tells us, that all must give an account of what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good or bad; and, besides, the sins of God's children and of wicked men are so entangled together, by many circumstances, that the one cannot be fully made known, without the other: nor yet will this expose them to shame; for that shall be fully swallowed up in the joy which they shall then have, that God is glorified: as they shall not grieve at the damnation of their dearest friends, because God's justice is glorified, in their destruction; so neither shall they be ashamed at the publishing of their own sins to all the world, because the mercy of God shall be thereby glorified before all the world, in their pardon.

2. Since our appearing at the Judgment-Seat of Christ is so necessary, how much doth it concern us, to endeavour that it may be joyful!

And, how may this be accomplished, but,

(1) By labouring, in all things, to keep a good conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men; so to walk, that our hearts may never reproach us while we live, nor our consciences condemn us when we die?

Our rejoicing is this, saith the Apostle, even the testimony of a good conscience: 2 Cor. 1:12. And, if this be our rejoicing here on earth, this also will be our joy and glory at the Great Day.

(2) But, because there is no man living so perfect, but his own conscience may accuse him here, and will there bring in witness against him, of many sins he hath committed; therefore, if we would appear with joy at the Judgment-Seat, let us labour to procure an interest in Christ, the Judge.

Then, when thou standest at the great bar, thou mayst boldly throw out that challenge of the Apostle, Who shall lay any thing to my charge? If the Devil, if thy own Conscience answer, "Yes, we can: we can lay such and such sins to thy charge:" yea, but it is Christ that justifies; who shall condemn me? His merits, his righteousness, are mine; and, therefore, so is the glory purchased by them. This is that,

which, when others shall call for rocks and hills to fall upon them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, will make us lift up our heads with joy, knowing that our redemption is drawn nigh.

Thus you have seen, Who must be judged; and that is, All Men.

Now,

VI. Consider WHAT THEY MUST BE JUDGED FOR, and what account they must give; and that is, for All Things

They must receive, saith the text, according to all they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

But, yet, neither doth this seem fully to comprehend the whole scope and latitude of this judgment. But they shall be judged according to Three things:

According to what they have done out of the body.

According to what they have been in the body.

According to what they have done in the body.

Now, because most of the judgment will be taken up in examining this last; therefore, the Apostle, in the text, mentions only this; though, indeed, we must pass under account for the other two also.

i. We must be judged, FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE OUT OF THE BODY.

I am far from Origen's opinion, who fancied that the souls of all men were existent, and did either merit or demerit, long before their union to their bodies. Neither do I think, that we shall give account for what our souls do, when they are separate from our bodies, in the space between the day of our death and the Day of Judgment: for the actions of the soul, either in heaven or hell, shall not be rewardable, but shall be part of the reward itself. As the blasphemies of the damned souls, now in hell, shall not be farther punishable; because they are there one part of their punishment: so neither shall the

praises and hallelujahs of the blessed saints, in heaven, be farther rewarded; for these themselves are part of their reward.

And, yet, though our souls were not existent before they were joined to our bodies; and, although we shall not be accountable, for what they do when they shall be parted from it: yet we must all undergo judgment, for what we have done out of the body. You will ask me, "What can this be?" Indeed, it is but one action; and that is the very first transgression, which was ever committed by man against God. Though this act were done some thousands of years since, yet the guilt of it still passeth down along upon us. Other sins we are guilty of by commission; of this, by imputation: of others, in our persons; of this, in our representative. And, yet, for this, as well as others, we must be answerable in that Great Day. As Christ's satisfaction is imputed to all believers, who are his spiritual offspring, as theirs; and may be so pleaded by them, at the Day of Judgment: so is Adam's first transgression imputed to all his natural offspring, as theirs; and it will be so charged upon them at that day. The Covenant of Grace entitles us to the righteousness of Christ, through our mystical union to him by faith: the Covenant of Works entails Adam's guilt upon us, through our natural union to him, as our common parent; which gave him power to appear for us as our Federal Head, and to oblige us to stand or fall, according to the terms of the agreement entered into with God, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. All the world, which is now spread into so many thousand persons and families, lay all wrapped up together in his loins; and, when he lifted up his hand, in rebellion against God his Maker, he had the whole world of hands and hearts joining with him. Never was there any conspiracy against heaven, so general as that: for, in him, all sinned, saith the Apostle, Rom. 5:12: they were sinners in him, before they were creatures in themselves. Such early rebels were we against God, that we began to sin, when we were scarce any thing besides a notion.

This is that, which but few consider, and fewer lament; and, yet, this is that, which we have done out of our bodies, for which we must give an account: Rom. 5:18. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. And, certainly, if this one sin hath brought a judgment of condemnation upon all, it will likewise bring upon all a

judgment of trial and examination. At this day, Adam shall stand forth at the head of all his wretched posterity; and God shall once more arraign him, as he did Gen. 3:11. Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? Not be only, but the whole world with him, must then cry out, "Guilty! Guilty!" For other sins, particular persons must make particular answers: but, when this action comes to be tried, what an outcry will there be of all the world, at once confessing guilt and suing for mercy!

ii. All must be judged, FOR WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE BODY.

This is a day, wherein men's states shall be tried, as well as their actions. There are but two states, in which all men are: a state of nature, or a state of grace; of life, or death eternal. We are all by nature children of wrath, and heirs of perdition: that is our state: and the great question, in this judgment, will be, whether we have lived and died in this state, or not. This life is the only season allotted us for the changing of our state: now, or never to eternity, mayst thou, of a rebel, become a son; of an heir of perdition, be made an heir of glory: now, or never, may we have our natures renewed, our hearts sanctified, grace implanted, lusts subdued, and heaven and happiness ascertained to us. And, yet, how many of us are there, whose lives are well nigh spent, and yet whose natures are not hitherto changed! who have death breeding in their very bowels, and yet have not Christ formed in their hearts! Eternal woe unto such, if God snatch them hence in a sinful, unregenerate state; for, according to the state that death finds them in, so shall judgment pass upon them.

And yet, O desperate madness and folly of men, who, by wretched sloth and wilful neglects and endless delays, put it to the venture, whether God will not damn them the very next hour! Be persuaded to pass a judgment upon yourselves, upon your state, before God comes to do it. What think you, whose image and superscription do you bear? do you belong to God, or to the Devil? hath there a mighty change from an almighty grace passed upon you, or are you still the same you were? What is your state? is it a state of spiritual blindness and spiritual death, or are you changed from darkness to light, and

raised from death to life? Listen! what say your hearts to this? do they not generally suggest to you, that as yet you find no such mighty change wrought in you; but yet you hope it may be wrought time enough for your salvation? Speak out: is not this the very answer, which many of your hearts give you? And, what! will you hazard the sentence of the dreadful judgment upon "it may be?" It may be, God may change thy state and nature; but may it not likewise be, that God may cut thee off, and summon thee to judgment in thy old and sinful state, and pronounce sentence upon thee as thou shalt then be found?

Methinks, this should prevail with all of us, since the judgment must proceed according to the state in which death finds and leaves us; and, if our state be not now this moment changed, death may possibly seize us before it can be changed: this, I say, should prevail with us to give neither God nor ourselves any rest, till we are passed from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God. It is then too late to seek for oil, when the bridegroom is already come: too late to call and cry, Lord, Lord, open unto us, when the door is already shut. The door of hope is for ever shut against us, as soon as we enter into the gates of death. If death find thee out of a state of grace, judgment will certainly leave thee in a state of condemnation.

iii. All must be judged, **FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IN THE BODY**, whether it be good or bad.

Nothing, that hath been done in the world, shall always lie buried in oblivion. As there shall be a general resurrection of men, so there shall be a resurrection of their actions too. Then shall be known the true and complete history of the world: it is a natural and strong desire which we have, to be acquainted with what hath been done in the ages past before us: what great actions great persons have performed: at this day, we shall receive punctual information; and hear every one relate himself the story of his own life. Here, all the hidden mysteries of iniquity will be brought to light: those secret sins, which have been concealed from the eyes of men, shall then be proclaimed aloud in their ears: we must give God a strict account, and the whole world a perfect narrative, of them all: Rom. 14:12. Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God: and, 1 Cor.

3:13. Every man's work shall be made manifest; for that day shall declare it: all the wickednesses that men have brooded on and hatched in the darkest vaults of their own hearts, or acted in the obscurest secrecy, shall be then made as manifest, as if they were every one of them written on their foreheads, with the point of a sunbeam. Here, on earth, none know so much of us, neither would we that they should, as our own consciences: and, yet, those great secretaries, our own consciences, what through ignorance or searedness, overlook many sins which we commit; of which, at that day, they shall be informed. But our own consciences shall not know more of us, than all the world shall: for all, that hath been done, shall be brought into public notice; and we must give a most strict and particular account of all.

We must give an account for all: but this account will be most dreadful and terrible, when God comes to reckon with us upon these following particulars.

1. We must give an account for all the Sins which we have committed, and not repented of.

There is not a sin we commit, but God sets it down in his book of remembrance. There they all stand, written down in order, under every one of our names. Now, as we truly repent of any sin, so God blots it out: Acts 3:19. Repent ye, therefore ... that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord: that is, Repent, that so, at the Day of Judgment, the great debt-book may be found crossed and blotted, and not one sin legible against you to your condemnation. But, oh! what horror will seize on impenitent wretches in that day, when God shall open the debt-book to them, and shew them so many thousand sins standing all upon account, not one of them crossed out; not a tear of their own, nor so much as a drop of blood from Christ, to make one blot! It is easy and joyful to account for a crossed debt; to see, as true believers do, how much was once owing, and how much is now paid for: but, when wicked men shall see themselves chargeable with so many thousand talents, what else can they expect, but presently to be cast into that prison, whence they shall not come forth, till they have paid the uttermost farthing?

2. As we must account for sins not repented of, so for Duties slightly and hypocritically performed.

Indeed, many seem to provide against this danger: how is it possible, that they should give an account of their duties, who think not of what they say, nor of what they do, while they are performing them? But, yet, believe it, God writes down your prayers, word for word, after you; and he makes observations on them too: At such a petition, the heart ran gadding after a vain and foolish thought, that came cross it; and left the lips to walk alone: At such a confession, while the tongue spake bitter things against sin, yet the heart embraced and cherished it. Though men pray so, as that they scarce hear themselves, nor regard what themselves utter: yet, certainly, God hears them, and God regards them; not, indeed, so as to accept them, but so as to judge them for such slubbered and perfunctory duties. And, that holy and reverend name of God, which they mutter over without either fear or affection, he will then severely vindicate; when taking his name in vain in a duty, shall be as strictly accounted for, as blaspheming his name in an oath.

3. We must account for all the Ordinances and Means of Grace, which we have sat unprofitably under.

Then it will be reckoned up against us, that, at such a time, we heard the terrors of the Law denounced, and yet were not frightened by them: at such a time, the mercy of the Gospel, the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save us, and yet were not affected by it. Nay, these very discourses of the Day of Judgment must, at that day, be accounted for; whether you have been persuaded by them, so to prepare your accounts, that you may be able to give them up with joy, at this great and terrible day.

4. You must reckon for every Talent entrusted to you, whether you have husbanded it for your Lord's advantage.

God affords you means of grace to receive good, and he lends you talents to do good; and you must give an account of the right improving of both.

Is it Authority and Power as a Magistrate, that God hath given thee? He will, at this day, call thee to account, how thou hast used it; what vice thou hast suppressed; what zeal thou hast shewn in revenging God's honour, upon daring and impudent miscreants: whether thou hast punished the wickedness, not only of poor, trembling inferiors, but of proud and potent sinners; who make it their sport to baffle authority, and, as they deny the God of Heaven, so deride and scorn the Gods of the Earth. God will call thee to account, whether they have been a terror to thee, or thou to them; what reformation thou hast wrought in the place where thou livest; what crimes, by thy cowardly connivance, thou hast made thine own, and brought upon thine own soul. Shall there a drunkard reel home unpunished; his drunkenness is thine. Shall a blasphemous swearer rend and tear the holy name of the Great God, by his execrable oaths and curses, and yet escape; his oaths are thine, and all his curses will fall heavy on thine own head. Shalt thou know of any abominable lewdness and filthiness committed within the verge of thy power, and not execute vengeance for it; thou thyself art guilty of it. Shalt thou know any who profane the Lord's Day, and those holy ordinances which are thereon celebrated, and not vindicate the honour and worship of that God from whom thou hast received thy authority; thou art thyself the sabbath-breaker, and, by not reprovng and punishing the works of darkness in others, makest thyself a partaker of them, as the Apostle speaks Eph. 5:11. For these things, the Great God will bring thee to a strict and particular account; and, according as men's authority and the abuse of it have been the greater, so likewise shall their punishment be in hell: and, that they may not lose of their place and dignity, they shall be preferred to the next in torments, to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

Is it Wealth and Riches, with which God hath entrusted you? Know, that thou art but God's steward, and the keeper of his purse for the poor and needy. Thou art mistaken, if thou lookest upon what thou hast to be thine own, and at thine own dispose: no; it is only given thee to employ for thy Master's advantage; and he will reckon with thee for every farthing of thy estate, whether spent upon thy vain pleasures, or in refreshing the bowels of his poor saints and members. If either, by thy covetousness, thou hast dammed up and stopped the current of God's bounty that hath flown in upon thee,



and kept it from overflowing upon others also; or hast turned it aside into wrong channels, and hast profusely lavished out that plenty with which God hath blessed thee, in riot, excess, and debauchery, maintaining thy lusts at God's charge; be assured, that every penny of this ill-kept or ill-spent estate, shall, in this great Day of Judgment, prove a talent, but a talent of lead, to sink thy soul deep for ever, in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Or, hath God given thee Spiritual Gifts, tending more immediately unto edification? Assuredly, God will enquire, at this day, whose ignorance thou hast informed, whose deadness thou hast quickened, whose heart thou hast warmed by holy and heavenly discourses, whom thou hast converted from the error of his ways, or forwarded in the way of holiness and salvation. And, if it shall be then found, that thou hast been an unprofitable servant, and hid thy talent; nay, it may be not only so, but a wasteful servant, and spent it; mayest thou not fear, lest the same doom should pass upon thee at the Day of Judgment, as did upon him, Mat. 25:30? Cast him into utter darkness: where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

5. We must give an account of all the Providences, that have befallen us in our whole life, both in a way of mercy and judgment; and what effect each hath had upon us.

Whether mercies have made us more thankful and fruitful; whether judgments have made us more humble and penitent; whether the cords of God's love have drawn us, or his rod hath driven us nearer to him. There is not one dispensation of God's Providence, but it hath some influence upon our spiritual and eternal state and condition: either it proves a help or a hindrance to a holy life: either it unites the heart nearer unto God, or else alienates it more from him. And what use we have made of every providence, will be one great enquiry of this Great Day. Thou hast been delivered from many dangers, and from many deaths: God will examine, whether thou hast given up thy life to the service of that God, who hath rescued it from the very brink of destruction; or hast looked upon thyself as one delivered only to commit far greater abominations than ever before. God, it may be, hath laid sore and heavy afflictions upon thee: this day must give account, whether thou hast, with a meek spirit, patiently

submitted to his visitation, and, in the calmness and serenity of thy soul, satisfied thyself in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God; his wisdom, whereby he knows what is best for us; his goodness, whereby he will do that to us, which he knoweth to be best: or hast galled thy shoulders, by striving with thy yoke; vexed and roaring like a wild bull in a net; fretting and exasperating thyself against God and Providence, and, in the time of thy distress, sinning yet more against him: whether, when God, by his judgments, hath ploughed thee up, and made long furrows upon thee, this ploughing hath only made thee more rough and uneven, or hath prepared thee to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God. This also will be brought to trial at the Great Day of Judgment.

6. We must give an account of the Motions of the Holy Ghost, and the Convictions of our own Consciences, whether we have cherished or stifled them.

And, assuredly, at that day, conscience will be very mindful to inform against us, in this particular. How many good motions, and holy purposes and resolutions, have we murdered in their very infancy! our hearts have been both their womb and tomb: they have been buried in the same place, where they were conceived. When conscience hath reproved us, how often have we stopped its mouth, and offered violence to it! well! at this day it will revenge itself, and give in dreadful accusations against you, for not suffering it now to give you necessary reproof. Then, it will shew the bloody wounds and deep gashes, that all your wilful sins have made in it: and depose against you, how often you have striven against the strivings of God's Spirit; how often you have desperately rushed into those crimes, from which it would have withheld you; and most wretchlessly omitted those duties, of the necessity of which you were fully convinced. And, sad and dreadful will that account be, which we must then give of all those holy motions, which have been stifled to death in us. And,

7. We must give an account of those numberless Sins of our Thoughts and Words, which, as slight as we reckon them, must pass under particular examination, as well as the more observable actions of our lives.

(1) Our Thoughts claim now a privilege of being exempted from man's judgment and censure.

They lie hid in the inmost recesses and retirements of our souls, whither no created eye can reach to discover them. But, at this day, those callow and unfledged sins, those lusts which lie like beds of knotted and crawling serpents in our hearts, shall be brought forth to see the light; For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known: Mat. 10:26. In that day, when God shall reveal the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ: Rom. 2:16. Hypocrisy, and fair pretences, and a smooth life and conversation, do oftentimes put such a varnish upon a rotten heart, that we cannot now, without uncharitableness, judge ill of its thoughts and intentions: but, as it fares with painted faces, bring them to the fire, and their paint and daubing will shrivel up and fall off; so, as to these formal hypocrites, when heaven and earth shall be all on a flame about them, the scorching force of this great fire will make all their paint fall off, and expose the very thoughts of their hearts, a naked and a loathsome spectacle to the whole world. Then we must give an account to God, for all those atheistical, blasphemous, bloody, and unclean thoughts, that have bubbled up in our hearts: what entertainment we have given them: whether we have, with abhorrence and detestation, cast that filth back in the Devil's face; or, have sat brooding on those cockatrice's eggs, and enjoyed those sins in contemplation, which, for shame or outward restraints, we durst not commit in outward act. Believe it, how fond or favourable soever we may be towards these first-born of our hearts, looking upon our thoughts as thin aërial things, and but as shadows cast by our minds and fancies; yet, certainly, in God's account, who is a spirit, these spiritual wickednesses are as substantial crimes and solid iniquities, as those others, which are branded with infamy and scandal among men. And,

(2) We must give an account for every Word which we have spoken.

What a dreadful echo shall we then hear, when all our vain, rotten, unsavoury discourses shall be repeated in our ears, louder than the voice of thunder! It is a terrible place, Mat. 12:36. I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account for it in

the Day of Judgment. An idle word: that is, a word spoken to no commendable end or purpose. Our vain, frothy, light, and wanton discourses, all our superfluous tattle, every word that might be better spared than spoken, shall be reckoned for at this Great Day. How much more, then, our filthy and rotten communication; oaths, and curses, and blasphemies; backbitings, revilings, and malicious slanders; and such speeches, as leave the very soot of hell in the mouths that utter them! how much more severely shall these be accounted for! Oh! what a just and strict God have we to deal with! And, how deep have our own tongues set us on the score! We have talked ourselves in debt unto divine justice; and every vain, frivolous, and impertinent word, stands as an item to inflame the reckoning that we must then make. O Lord! set thou a watch upon the doors of our lips, and guide thou the moving of our tongues; that they may not now be set on fire of hell, nor hereafter set on fire in hell.

Now, when we shall be reckoned with for Sins, which we have committed and not repented of; for Duties, which we have performed slightly and hypocritically; for Ordinances and Means of Grace, which we have sat under unprofitably; for Gifts and Talents, which we have not husbanded; for Providences, which we have not improved; for the Convictions of our own Consciences and the Motions of God's Spirit, which we have not seconded; for the vanity of our Thoughts, the superfluity and frothiness of our Words; alas! what account can we give of these things? We cannot answer the demands of God's justice, for one of a thousand. And, therefore, as when Alcibiades\* went to visit Pericles, but was refused admission, with this excuse, That he was then busy studying, how to give up his accounts to the state; "Tell him," saith he, "that it were wiser for him to study how he might give no account:" so, truly, since we can give no good account, it will be our wisdom to study, how we may give no account, nor be ourselves answerable for what we have done. This can no otherwise be, than by getting an interest in Jesus Christ, that he may answer, and make up our accounts for us at that day; and, at every item reckoned up against us, may say, that it is discharged, blotted, and crossed out, by his own most precious blood. This is the only way for us, who are such desperate debtors, to appear with confidence before our great creditor.

VII. Let us now, in the Seventh place, consider ACCORDING TO WHAT LAW this judgment must pass upon us.

A law consists of two parts: a precept, or prohibition; and a promise, or threatening. According to the former, it is a rule to direct the obedience of the subject: according to the latter, it is a rule to direct the proceedings of the judge. The precept and prohibition are given to regulate our actions; and God hath added the promise and threatening, as that, according to which he will regulate his justice.

Now, that we may not, at this Great Day, miscarry in point of law, as being ignorant either of what we ought to do now, or what our judge will do then, I shall endeavour to shew you what that law is, according to which sentence must be pronounced upon all.

There is, therefore, a Twofold Law, by which men shall be judged; Unwritten, and Written. Or, if you will, both are written: the one, upon the heart; the other, in the word.

i. There is the UNWRITTEN LAW, or THE LAW THAT IS WRITTEN ONLY UPON THE HEART.

And this consists in those practical principles, which are deeply engraven upon the consciences of Heathens; and which, neither tract of time nor custom of sinning could ever utterly raze out. This is that light in the understanding, which naturally discovers good and evil: that voice in the conscience, which exhorts and admonishes, comforts and terrifies, accuses or excuses; being itself both law, judge, and witness, in a man's own bowels.

This Unwritten or Natural Law, for the substance and matter of it, is the same with the Moral Law contained in the Scriptures. It requires the performance of the duties of religion, towards God; the duties of sobriety, towards ourselves; and the duties of love and charity, towards others. All these, even the Unwritten Law, and those common notions in the hearts of Heathens themselves, did strictly command and enforce. So the Apostle, Rom. 2:14. The Gentiles, which have not the Law, do, by nature, the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves: that is,

though they have not the Written Law promulgated among them; yet, the Unwritten Law of Nature prompted them to the performance of what is contained in the Written Law. And this shews, saith he, ver. 15. the work of the Law written in their hearts: the Work of the Law was written in their hearts, when as the Words of the Law were not written in their books.

But, though this be the same for the sum of it, yet it is not so perfect and entire as the Written Law is. The ruins of the great fabric do not so fully represent it, as an artificial draught taken by some skilful pencil; in which we may see the whole proportion, and every part of it expressed exactly. This great and stately fabric is man, in his first creation. The Written Law is a perfect draught of him, taken by the hand of God himself; and exactly represents what he was, while he stood in his beauty and perfection. The Unwritten Law is the ruins of this great fabric, upon which there are still left some prints and footsteps of its former state and glory. Something there is, which shews what man once was, and directs what man should be; yea, so much, that it is both a wonder and a shame to Christians, that many Heathens, who have had none other guide, have left behind them such examples of a singular and raised virtue, as few among us are either able or willing to imitate.

This Unwritten Law, or the Law of Nature, is that, whereby Heathens shall be judged at the Last Day. No law is obligatory, till it hath received a sufficient promulgation; for, if it lie locked up in the magistrate's cabinet and be not made public, it binds no man either to obedience or punishment: now, it was impossible, that either the Law of Moses or the Doctrine of Christ should, in former ages, have been made known to all the remote Heathens on earth, unless it were by miracle: the greatest part of the world was not known to be, or to be inhabited, to the Jews, or to Christians that lived in former days: and, therefore, the knowledge of the Law or Gospel could not be conveyed to them, unless God should delegate some angel to such an extraordinary ministry, which, it is certain, he never did: and, therefore, this Law, which they knew not of, this Gospel, which was never preached among them, could not oblige them either to obedience unto God, or to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. When they sin, they transgress not the Law of Moses, unless it be materially

only; but, formally, they transgress the law of their own natural light and reason. And, certainly, that law, which they sin not against, shall not be the law by which they must be judged: so saith the Apostle, speaking of the Heathens, Rom. 2:12. As many as have sinned without the law, i.e. without the written Law of Moses, shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law. And the very same may be said of the Gospel also: it will not be required of Heathens, in this Great Day, to produce their faith: though the Athenians, in their blind superstition, built an altar unto the Unknown God; yet, certainly, it is not possible, that faith should fix upon an Unknown Saviour: no; unbelief will be but the sin of a few men, although it will be the condemnation of the most Christians; and that, because those, who are called Christians, are but a few, in comparison with those endless multitudes, who have never heard of the name or the doctrine of Christ, and therefore shall not be judged for rejecting either him or it. The great question, that shall be put to these men, will be, Whether they have lived and acted according to the dictates of right reason: Whether they have followed the conduct of their natural light, and obeyed the commands of their natural conscience: or, Whether they have gone contrary to it; damping their light, stifling their convictions, and imprisoning the truth in righteousness.

Thus shall Heathens, and they alone, be judged according to the light within them; because they had no other duty incumbent upon them, than to follow that light: which, while some frantic people now-a-days among us cry up as the only rule for practice and guide to happiness, they do what in them lies, to reduce themselves back to the state and condition of Heathens; and, for such, they may be reckoned, for they can scarce, without an abuse, be called Christians.

And if Heathens shall, at last, be thus judged according to the Law of Nature, then may we here learn,

1. What to judge concerning their Salvation.

It is not want of charity, but the evidence of truth, which makes us believe, that not one of them can, in an ordinary manner, be saved: I say, in an ordinary manner, because, whether God hath not or may

not, in an extraordinary way, reveal Christ to some particular persons among them, is not for us to determine: I would, it were more probable, than it seems to be. But, if God proceed with none of them in this world, in any other than an ordinary way, certain it is, though sad, that when he comes to judge them, they must be all cast and condemned. Acts 4:12. There is salvation in no other, but in Christ; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved: and, therefore, if Christ hath not been made known to them by a miracle, (which is too unlikely) judgment must sadly pass against them. And, what a sad thing is it, to consider, that incomparably the greatest part of the world, many of them endowed with gifts to be admired, many of them adorned with virtues scarce to be imitated, grave, and wise, and learned, and temperate, and public-spirited Heathens, must, perhaps, all perish, not having the Gospel, which alone can discover to them the way of life and salvation! Oh! the justice and severity of God! How unsearchable are his counsels, and his ways past finding out! Now, it appears clearly, that if God will judge them according to their own light, they will be found guilty; from this reason, because the will of man is more corrupted by the Fall, than his understanding and conscience is; so that those things, which we have light enough to discover to be our duty, we have not will enough to perform. There is no mere man in the world, nor ever was, who fully lived up to his convictions. And, therefore, though Heathens shall be tried by nothing else but the Light of Reason and the Law of Nature; yet this is enough to condemn them, for not living answerably to the dictates thereof. So the Apostle, Rom. 1:20, 21. They are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God: and, v. 32. Knowing the judgment of God, that they, which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

2. This may inform us what to judge, as concerning their salvation, so concerning their Condemnation.

If they shall not be judged for unbelief, for neglecting so great salvation as Christ hath purchased and the Gospel tendered, then, certainly, their condemnation will be much more tolerable, than the condemnation of unbelieving Christians. What saith our Saviour,



John 15:22? If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin. All the sins committed against the holiness of the Law, are as none in comparison with the great sin of slighting the mercy of the Gospel. And, therefore, we find that Sodom and Gomorrah, for whose monstrous wickedness God rained a hell out of heaven itself, are yet said to be more tolerably punished, than Bethsaida, and Chorazin, and Capernaum shall be, at the Day of Judgment: Mat. 11:22. Why! what is their sin, but only that Christ preached unto them and wrought miracles among them; and yet they repented, they believed not? This comes to judge, and expose them to a far more intolerable condemnation, than the vile and horrid lusts of a heathenish Sodom. Thou, Capernaum, saith our Saviour, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: lifted up to heaven, in privileges; and thrown down to hell, in punishments. Believe it, whosoever goes down to hell with the load of Church-Privileges and Church-Ordinances upon him, will never leave sinking and sinking, till he comes to the very bottom. And, assure yourselves, whosoever lies uppermost, yet the bottom of hell shall be paved with Christians.

That is the first particular: Heathens shall be judged, at the Last Day, by the Unwritten Law; the Law and Light of Nature remaining in their consciences: and, therefore, their condemnation is, in an ordinary way, more inevitable; but shall also be more tolerable, than the condemnation of others.

ii. There is a WRITTEN LAW, whereby all, who live within the sound and notice of it, must be judged.

And that is twofold: either the Law of Works: or the Law of Faith: or, if you will, both these are but one Law of Works: the one, as fulfilled by us in our own persons; the other, as fulfilled by us in Christ. The voice of the Law of Works, is, Do this, and live.

Now, the truth is, though believers have been guilty of numberless transgressions; yet they may be very well content to be tried by this law: and that, because, though they have transgressed this law, yet it is no contradiction to affirm, that they have fulfilled it too. In themselves, personally considered, they have transgressed it: in

Christ, mystically considered, they have fulfilled it. And, oh! what an unspeakable comfort will it be, when the Devil shall, in that Great Day, bristle up against us and accuse us of many thousand sins, that we may, under a blessed distinction, give him the lie! we are not transgressors, but fulfillers of the Law: we have done what is required; for Christ, our Saviour, hath done it; and Christ and we are one. Now, although, according to this sense, believers may stand acquitted in judgment, even by the Law of Works; yet the Scripture doth rather choose to express the transactions of that Great Day, to be according to the Law of Works or Faith; that is, according to the tenor of the Law or Gospel.

1. This is the unspeakable comfort of all true believers, that, at this Great Day, they shall not be judged by the Law of Works, according to its literal sense; but by the Gospel.

The tenor of the Gospel is, Whosoever believeth, shall be saved. The reason of all that Christ hath done in the world, why he took upon him the form of a servant, why he underwent the death of a malefactor, lies couched in this, that believers might obtain eternal life. This is the depth of that mystery, which angels pry into: this is the sum of that ministry, which is committed unto us: this is the form of that trial, which must pass upon you, whether you have received Christ by faith, who hath been revealed and tendered to you in the Gospel. It will then be but a vain and fruitless labour, for the Devil to heap up accusations against us: for, though the Law saith, The soul, that sinneth, it shall die; yet faith will then remove the suit from God's Common Bar, to his Court of Chancery, if I may so speak; from the letter of the Law, to the more equitable construction of it. And here it will be found, that you have already satisfied the Law: you, in Christ, have done it; and therefore stand free from its condemnation.

2. Unbelievers shall, at the Last Day, be judged by both these laws; both by the Law of Works and the Law of Faith: and, what will be to their inconceivable horror, both will condemn them.

The severity of the Law casts them: the mercy of the Gospel cannot relieve them. When God shall ask them, how they will be tried; by the

Law, or by the Gospel: if they say, by the Law, that tells them, Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, written in it, to do them: tell me, are ye so well persuaded and confident of your own righteousness and innocence, that you will stand to this sentence? will you venture the everlasting state of your souls upon this trial, that you cannot be proved guilty of any transgression? and, if your own consciences now accuse you, will they not much more, think you, accuse you then? Will you appeal to the Gospel? that tells you, He, that believeth not, is condemned already: John 3:18: and, He, that believeth not ... the wrath of God abideth on him: John 3:36: nay, let me tell you, the Gospel will be so far from relieving you, that it will but add to the condemnation of the Law: the Law sentenceth sinners to hell, for transgressing it; but, then, the Gospel lays on more load, and heats the furnace sevenfold hotter for those, who have not only violated the Law, but rejected pardon. He dies deservedly, who, being condemned by the law of the prince, slights his mercy too. This is the case of every unbeliever: they are all condemned, by law: God tenders them a pardon: Christ offers himself for their Saviour, his blood for their ransom: this Saviour they reject: this blood they trample on, and even dare God to do his worst. And, therefore, there is no one sin in the world, that carries so much provocation in it, as this of unbelief doth: it is an injury done to the tenderest of God's attributes, his mercy; it is an affront upon his dearest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and, therefore, shall be revenged with a most aggravated condemnation. Oh! then, what fears and terrors will encompass them round, who, when the Law hath condemned them for transgression, shall find themselves much more condemned for unbelief! The blood of Christ is not shed in vain: not a drop of it is spilt upon the ground, as water that cannot be gathered up again: it will, certainly, either justify, or condemn; either save, or destroy. And look, of what efficacy it is, to remove guilt from the souls of true believers; of the like efficacy it is, to bring guilt upon the souls of unbelievers: if, therefore, the blood of Christ, applied by faith, be of power to remove the guilt of all the sins which we have committed; the same blood, rejected by unbelief, will bring in a greater and sorer guilt upon us, than all the sins which we have committed besides. Be persuaded, therefore, never to leave praying and waiting, till the God of all grace be pleased to work this precious grace of faith in thee; without which, thou canst neither please him,

nor be well-pleasing to him: that so, the blood of Jesus Christ may, in that Great Day, be found upon thy heart, for thy justification; and not upon thy head, for thy condemnation.

VIII. In the Eighth place, consider, who shall then appear, to ACCUSE and WITNESS against us.

Men shall have a fairer trial before Christ's tribunal, than Christ himself had before man's. The Scripture tells us, that many false witnesses were suborned, to accuse him. And, it seems, their rage against him made them forget that principal rule of lying, viz. that it be uniform and congruous: for it is said, that their witnesses agreed not together. But, when we come to judgment, we shall have nothing to except against the undoubted truth of the witnesses: yea, and though they are of different interests and natures; yet their depositions against us shall punctually agree.

i. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE shall, at that day, give in clear and positive evidence against us.

And this is such a witness, as none can suspect or challenge of falsehood. He is privy to all we do: for all things are open and naked to his eyes: Heb. 4:13. It is as impossible to conceal any thing from his notice, as it is to do any thing without his permission. Every action must receive a passport from him; and, therefore, certainly, what cannot escape his providence, cannot escape his knowledge. He is company to us in solitariness. He is day about us at midnight. He sees our souls, more clearly than we can see one another's faces; and he hears the voice of our thoughts, more distinctly, than we can hear the sound of one another's words.

And where then will ungodly sinners appear, when Omniscience itself shall depose against them? when an all-knowing God shall rise up to accuse them? Now, indeed, God forbears them so long, till their impunity votes against his knowledge; and persuades them, that he sees them not, nor takes any notice of what they do. This is, usually, all the thanks they return his patience; that, because he winks at them, therefore they conclude him blind. But what saith God concerning these men, Psal. 50:21? These things hast thou done, and

I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; here man passeth judgment on God. But, when God passeth judgment on man, he saith, But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes; and this God doth, to some, in the judgment-day of conviction; but, to all, in the judgment-day of condemnation. He sets their sins in order before their faces.

This expression denotes unto us Two things.

First. How clear God's knowledge of our sins is in itself: that he will set the vast and confused heap of them in order, at that day. He will marshal them in the same rank and order, in which they were committed. The time, the place, the persons concerned, the occasions, the temptations, the aggravations, and all the circumstances of our sins, lie all a-row in his knowledge; and every sin shall then be as distinctly and particularly discovered by him, as ever it was committed by us.

Secondly. It denotes, how convictive this knowledge will be unto sinners. He will set their sins before their face: that is, he will so particularly represent unto them whatsoever they have done, and in what manner, that they shall, as it were, plainly see every sin before their eyes, and be forced to acknowledge them for their own sins.

This knowledge of God, which shall give in evidence at the Great Tribunal, carries in it Two things, which may justly make it very terrible unto sinners.

1. In that it is the knowledge of the Judge.

What can be more dreadful to the prisoner at the bar, than for the judge himself to accuse him? he may cavil against the testimonies of other witnesses; but what plea can he have, when the judge shall pronounce him guilty, upon his own knowledge? This is the very case of sinners: many witnesses shall be produced against them, at the Last Day, who shall bring in great accusations and strong evidences: but none of these shall so daunt and damp them, as when God the Judge shall, from his throne, attest, that, upon his own knowledge, all is truth. They can expect nothing, but the sentence of the judge, to

pronounce them damned; who have thus the knowledge of the judge, to pronounce them guilty.

2. It is the knowledge and testimony of Him, who is Truth itself; and, therefore, cannot be contradicted or denied.

And what can save them, if truth itself shall testify against them? unless that God, who is true in giving witness, should be unjust in giving sentence, which is impossible. It is impossible, likewise, that those, whom his knowledge doth accuse, his justice should acquit. Think then, O Sinner! what will become of thee, when thy sins shall be testified to thy face; not by any false or forged witness, but by the truth of God, to whom it is impossible either to lie or err: when his truth shall aver unto his justice, that thou art guilty, and both truth and justice consent together to thy condemnation. In 2 Kings 5:25. Gehazi returns from cheating of Naaman, and stands very demurely before his master: Whence comest thou, Gehazi? Thy servant went no whither: No! saith the Prophet: Did not my heart go with thee? so, when men shall stand before the Great God, he will call to them by name; "Sinner, what didst thou, such a day and hour of thy life?" It will be then in vain, to make any lame excuses; in vain to say, Thy servant did nothing. "No! was not mine eye upon thee? was not my heart with thee, to observe thy actions? Didst thou not, at such a time, wrong thy brother, by base fraud and injustice? at such a time, abuse thyself by riot and intemperance? at such a time, blaspheme me, by hellish oaths and curses?" Men may, perhaps, think me somewhat coarse and blunt with them, to tell them of such sins as these are: but I beseech them to consider, how they will answer God, when he shall reckon up against them these and other like sins; and accuse them of them upon his own knowledge. Here, men stand upon their own reputation: tell a sot, though he reels again, that he is drunk; or a thief, that he steals; or a liar, that he lies; and straight, in a rage, they will bid you prove it. But, when God shall, at the Last Day, accuse them of these sins, it will be found proof sufficient, that he, who is Truth itself, shall depose it against them.

That is, therefore, the First Witness, God's Knowledge.

ii. MEN'S CONSCIENCES also shall, in that day, bring in accusations against them.

And, indeed, conscience is not one witness, but a thousand: a whole cloud of witnesses; and such witnesses, as will speak truth too. Now, possibly, men's consciences may be seared so, as not to speak at all; or bribed so, as to speak nothing but flatteries, with Ahab's prophets, Go on, and prosper. But, yet, those sins, which they seem to take no notice of, when committed, they will fearfully exaggerate, when accounted for. Though, here, conscience seems to be like the unjust steward, and sets down fifty for a hundred, and small sins for great; yet, at that day, it will mend its accounts, and give them up faithfully and impartially. Some sinners are, even in this life, self-condemned: conscience hath sat upon them, and doomed them already. But all shall be so in the next: the process of God's justice shall be so clear, that men shall bring in evidence against themselves; and God shall need no other course to condemn them, but out of their own mouths: when God shall read over the catalogue of every man's sins against him, they shall all be found subscribed and attested by every man's conscience: and this, certainly, will be accepted as a competent witness, as having been always with the sinner, a register in his own breast, and having noted down every action of his life. Indeed, some men live as if they had no conscience at all: they do that, almost every day, which might set all the furies of hell about them; and, yet, they feel no terrors, no stings, nor scorpions. Well their conscience is not dead, but sleepeth: it is in a deep sleep; but the sound of the last trumpet will certainly awaken it. And, oh! how dreadful will it be, when they shall first of all hear an unknown voice, which they never heard before, accuse them aloud; and, from within them, out of their own bowels, call for wrath and condemnation upon them? how sad will it be, for conscience to give its first shriek and outcry at the great bar; and never to accuse them, before it comes there for ever to condemn them! It is not so much to be heeded, what a partial conscience saith now unto you; as what it will say at this great day: now, it may be like a bell while raising; it speaks only on one side, and sounds nothing but Peace, Peace: but, then, this peaceable conscience will grow suddenly enraged; and the first ill word, which you may hear, will be the calling for wrath and vengeance upon you.

That is the Second Witness, which shall be brought in against men at the Day of Judgment; their own Consciences.

iii. As God and Conscience, so THE DEVIL also will come in, to witness against sinners, and condemn them.

There are, in witnesses, many times, two qualities; the one, is a spleen and grudge against the offender; and this makes them willing: the other, is a personal knowledge of the offence; and this makes them able, to give in witness against him. In both these, the Devil abounds: he hath a most rancoured malice against all mankind; and industriously seeks how he may, by any means, compass their destruction: and he hath a personal knowledge of their sins too; and therefore will, doubtless, come in to accuse them. You see how ready he was to calumniate Job, though he must impudently contradict God, to do it: how much more ready will he be, to accuse profane sinners, when his testimony against them shall agree with God's! Though, now, he shews them a fair and flattering face, when he tempts; yet, then, he will appear in all his hideousness and horror, when he shall drag them to the great bar, and there accuse them: "Lord, here is a wretch, guilty of such and such crimes, that deserve thy damnation."—"How knowest thou, Satan?"—"How know I? He did it upon my persuasions: I tempted him to it: I presented objects: I suited him with opportunities: I excited his inward lusts to embrace them: it was at such a time, in such a place, with such and such circumstances." Believe it, this is the only time, wherein the Devil will tell them the truth. Now, he hides all, under false and glozing appearances: he shews the sinner nothing but the pleasure, or the profit, or the credit of the sin to which he tempts him: but, then, he will throw off this mask, and appear to him, as he is, plain Devil. Men are often afraid, lest they should meet the Devil in some terrible shape; lest he should make himself visible unto them: but little do they think, that he is always with them, and at their right-hand: he goes along with them wherever they go; observes whatever they do; gathers matter for temptation, out of every thing they converse with. And all this pains he takes, only that he might satisfy his malice in accusing them, and bringing witness against them, at the Last Day; and therefore, certainly, he will then urge it home with the greatest spite and aggravation that can be.



That is a Third Witness, that shall appear at the Last Day.

iv. OTHER MEN also shall then bring in witness against them. And what a world will there appear!

1. All those, with whom they have sinned; their brethren in iniquity.

These shall then, with direful exclamations, accuse one another of all the wickednesses, which they have done in partnership together. Did the drunkard or the riotous person believe, that those, whom he now calls his good companions, shall hereafter be his bitter accusers; that, in this great Day of Judgment, they shall, with mutual curses and execrations, call for wrath and vengeance one upon another; certainly, this would damp their mirth, break their wicked crew, and strike their excessive cups out of their trembling hands. Here, sinners shall accuse one another: the one, for enticing; the other, for consenting. They shall witness each other's guilt; and, with a hellish malice, rejoice in one another's damnation. Go, now, with such a thought upon thee, and hug thy sinful companion, if thou canst.

2. All those, against whom they have sinned, shall, at this day, appear, to witness against them; whether it be against their spiritual or their corporal state.

Thou, who, by thy evil example, hast encouraged others to sin, shalt, at this day, have them all come in to witness against thee; and exclaim, with fearful outcries, "Lord! I had not been in this estate of wrath and damnation, had it not been for this man's example." Thou, who art careless and remiss, in instructing, in exhorting, in reproofing those, who belong to thy charge, shalt have them all come in against thee: "Lord! we had not perished, had this man been careful to perform his duty to us; and, therefore, our blood lie heavy upon his soul for ever!" And, then, for temporal injuries, many are here wronged, who cannot right themselves against their powerful oppressors: but, at this day, the meanest shall have audience, and right done them against the greatest; and the oppressors themselves shall be oppressed, and sunk down to hell, by the accusations and witness of those, whom they have here wronged.

3. Those, who have reproved and exhorted sinners in vain, shall, at this day, witness against them and accuse them.

Every word of instruction or admonition, that hath been given you, shall then be witnessed to your faces, and your sin and condemnation aggravated by your slighting of them.

These Four Sorts of Witnesses shall then appear against you to accuse you: God, and your own Consciences; the Devil, and other Men. Their witness will be found true, and agreeing together. These will prove you guilty.

And what will you be able to plead, why sentence should not proceed against you? Truly, there is but one way, how, though you are accused by so many witnesses, you may yet escape condemnation; and that is, first of all, to accuse yourselves in an humble and penitent acknowledgment unto God. Say as much against yourselves now, as the Devil or your own Consciences can be able to say against you at the Last Day. This will invalidate their accusations; when all, that they can bring against you, you have confessed unto God long before. And you have that promise, too, for your assurance: he, that judgeth himself, shall not be judged: 1 Cor. 11:31. And so, he, that with true godly sorrow accuseth himself for his sins, though he shall be accused also at the great bar; yet, all those accusations shall not condemn him.

These will be the witnesses, who will, at the Last Day, come in against us.

IX. In the next place, let us consider what PLEAS and DEFENCES men will then make for themselves; and the INVALIDITY of them.

Indeed, in strict propriety of speech, I think there shall be no such thing as fending or proving, as we use to phrase it. It will be with sinners, as it was with him, who was found at the wedding-supper without the wedding-garment: they shall be all stricken speechless; and, like guilty malefactors, hang down their heads under that heavy doom, which shall then pass upon them, without once daring to lift them up, in alledging any thing in their own defence or excuse.

Reprove men now, and their constant custom is, either to deny, or extenuate, their faults. This lessening of sin is of as great antiquity, as the committing of it: no sooner did Adam sin, but he seeks out for fig-leaves, to cover his spiritual, as well as his corporal nakedness; and lays the blame upon his wife; and she, again, upon the serpent: so it is still in this world: no man will father his own guilt: the vilest sinners stand peremptorily upon their own justification; and, as dogs, so they, with their own tongues, strive to lick off that dirt which sticks upon them. But, in this great day, every man's mouth shall be stopped and gagged. And there be Two things, which will then silence all the wicked of the world, that they shall have nothing to produce on their own behalf; and they are, Consciousness of Guilt, and Despair of Mercy. The former will shew them, how untrue; the latter, how fruitless, all the excuses, which they can then make, will prove: should sinners once open their mouths in their own defence, their very Consciences would rise up in their throats, and choke them: and, therefore, we have it, Rom. 3:19. That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be guilty before God. Or, should conscience give way, yet Despair never makes apologies: and the certainty of their condemnation, which the most of them shall then know, by having before felt it; and the rest, as self-condemned men use to do, by prejudging it; this despairing certainty, I say, will rather move them to curse and blaspheme their Judge, than to plead for or excuse themselves. Thus, if we speak properly, guilt and despair will tongue-tie every ungodly sinner at the great tribunal.

And, yet, the Scripture, where it gives us the most exact and particular description of this Day of Judgment, brings in wicked men defending themselves from the accusations laid in against them. So, Mat. 25 where they are accused for not relieving Christ, when hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and imprisoned; to this charge they return a very pert and quick answer, ver. 44. When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison? So, Matt. 7:22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name ... cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

It seems, therefore, that there shall, really, many pleas be made by wicked men, to keep the sentence of the judgment from passing upon

them.

But the answer is easy. For these places are not to be understood literally; as if, indeed, they should put Christ upon proving his accusations, or should bring in any allegations for themselves. No, Conscience and Despair will, as I said, strike them all dumb.

But the Scripture thus expresseth it, for these Three Reasons.

i. That, hereby, it might PARALLEL AND ACCOMMODATE THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY, TO HUMAN COURTS OF JUDICATURE HERE BELOW.

Human judges are bound to hear what both parties can say; as well the defendant, as the plaintiff: otherwise, they must needs be unjust, in giving sentence without due information; although, perhaps, they may decree what is just. But, at this bar, there needs no canvassing of the question to inform the judge. But, yet, because this is the usual course in Courts of Justice here below; therefore, the Scripture, speaking of the great and last judgment, in conformity to these, mentions also the pleas that wicked men shall make for themselves; though, in strictness of speech, every mouth shall be then stopped, and every tongue cramped, but what shall be employed in judging and condemning themselves.

ii. Wicked men's pleas are mentioned in Scripture, that, hereby, MIGHT BE SET FORTH THE EXACT EQUITY AND CLEARNESS OF THAT GREAT TRIAL.

When we say, that men shall plead for themselves, the meaning only is, that God will be so just, that, in passing sentence upon them, he will consider, as well what may make for them, as what may make against them: their sentence shall be weighed out to them, as well according to the alleviating, as the aggravating circumstances of their sins: and it shall be as just and righteous, as if they had been permitted to plead all that possibly they could, on their own behalf. Thus, there are divers things spoken of this judgment, not as if they were really and properly to be transacted; but only to set forth the equity of God's proceedings therein. Rev. 20:12 we have mention

made, of the opening of the books, out of which men shall be judged. Now it were very gross, hence to imagine, that there shall be any material books, out of which either God or his officers should read the indictment against sinners: but these books, here spoken of, are God's remembrance and men's own consciences, which shall then as punctually represent their works unto them, as if every circumstance had been carefully written down in a book. So, you have heard how many witnesses shall come in against sinners, and accuse them: neither is this to be understood literally; as if, indeed, all these should make a real appearance: only it denotes, that the trial of sinners shall be as just and legal, as if so many witnesses were sworn and examined against them. So, here, when we say, that wicked men shall bring in excuses for themselves at the Day of Judgment; or, when the Scripture brings them in, pleading, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or thirsty, or naked? Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, &c. this doth not necessitate us to believe, that it shall be properly and literally thus fulfilled; but only intimates, that the judgment shall be as fairly and equally managed, as if every man were permitted to speak whatsoever he could produce for himself.

iii. The Scripture mentions their pleas, that, hereby, it MIGHT PRESCRIBE AGAINST AND CUT OFF MEN'S VAIN AND PRESUMPTUOUS HOPES.

And so it speaks rather by way of supposition, than affirmation. Almost every man hopes he shall be able to plead That, at the Last Day, which may be available to procure him mercy: now, suppose men were allowed to speak for themselves, and to produce in judgment what they now trust will stand them instead; alas! how much in vain would all be, that they can alledge! Those, who have enjoyed church-privileges, and have eaten and drank in Christ's presence; those, who have received spiritual gifts, and have prophesied and wrought miracles in his name: these rely upon this; and think this is enough to save them, in that Great Day; but, suppose they should plead all this, yet will the Judge say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. So that the mentioning of wicked men's pleas and excuses doth but shew, that what they trust to, and hope will bear them out in the Day of Judgment, will then be of no

avail; but, notwithstanding all, sentence must pass upon them as workers of iniquity.

And, in this sense, I shall now speak of it; and shall shew you, that what pleas and excuses wicked men do now relieve themselves with, will then be found vain, and of no effect.

1. Many think that their Ignorance will be a good excuse for them, at the Day of Judgment.

What is more common, in the mouths of brutish and sottish people? God will not require more than he hath given: it is not expected from them, to do as others, who are more learned and knowing; and, though they have not such good words, yet they have as good hearts as the best: and, they hope, their good meaning will bring them to heaven as soon as others, whose heads are better stuffed, and whose tongues are better tipped, than theirs. And so they think, that there is no safer, nor easier, nor shorter way to get to heaven, than in the dark, hoodwinked and blindfold.

It is true, it is not necessary for every private Christian to busy and beat his head about the nice and curious questions of religion; which have always been disputed, and will never be decided, till our partial knowledge give place to perfect. We have sufficiently seen, what wild delusions and damnable errors men of weak intellectuals have run into, while they have employed themselves about the disputes, rather than the practice of Christianity: when men of shallow parts will boldly adventure to fathom deep controversies, they plunge themselves into an abyss of mistakes and errors, and are in the ready way to drown themselves in perdition. And yet, withal, it were to be wished, that Christians did not look upon all that is disputed against by men of perverse minds, as uncertain to be known, and unnecessary to be practised.

Some things, in Christian Religion, are fundamental and vital; the ignorance of which excludes from all possibility of salvation. And such are the doctrines of Repentance from dead works; of Faith in our Lord Jesus; of the common and daily Duties of a godly life. He, who knows not, that sin is to be repented of, that Christ is to be

believed in, that the duties of holiness and obedience are to be constantly performed and good works to be maintained, cannot possibly be in any capacity of salvation. The knowledge of these things is necessary, not only necessitate Præcepti, by the necessity of God's command, which requires them; for, so, is every thing in Scripture necessary, either to be known or done: but necessitate Medii, they are necessary, as Means to the obtaining of an end, and without which it cannot possibly be obtained. No man can be saved, unless he repent and believe; and no man can repent and believe, if he be utterly ignorant what repentance, and faith, and God, and Christ, are. Such ignorance, in whomsoever it is, is damnable. So, Ps. 79:6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen, that have not known thee, &c. And the Prophet Isaiah makes such ignorance to be so far from an excuse, that it is the very reason why God will not spare nor pity them: Isa. 27:11. It is a people that hath no understanding: therefore, he, that made them, will not spare them; and he, that formed them, will shew them no mercy. And, yet, how many are there, who know not what Repentance, or Faith, or God, or the Gospel, means! who know not Christ's person, nor his offices; his merits, nor their own misery; what he hath purchased for them, nor what he requires from them! and, yet, if they know that there is a heaven, hope to go to it too! Believe it, such are in no more capacity of salvation, than the very Heathens; nay, in a far worse condition, inasmuch as the Heathens never could, but They might attain to the saving-knowledge of a Saviour, were it not for their own wretched and wilful sloth. Ignorance of fundamental truths and vital duties will be so far from an excuse, that it will be brought in as one killing part of their indictment; and, certainly, most forlorn and desperate must that man's case needs be, whose best excuse is of itself a damning sin.

Other things there are, in Christian Religion, that appertain not to the vitals, but to the vigorous, flourishing, and beautiful state of holiness, both in the heart and life. And such are, a competent knowledge and insight into the more abstruse mysteries and remote duties of the Gospel. There are many truths revealed in Scripture, and some duties commanded; the ignorance of which, we dare not but say, may be consistent with true grace. The disciples of Christ himself, before his ascension, knew not many things, which yet were

of great concernment to be known, and of great influence into practice.

But, do not presently conclude, that, certainly, your ignorance is of this kind: an ignorance of such things as are merely mysterious, and of no absolute necessity, either to be known or done, in order to salvation: and, therefore, though you fail in many things, yet that this will serve for your excuse, at the Last Day.

For this ignorance is Twofold; either

Invincible; and that is, indeed, an excuse for sin: or else,

Wilful and affected; and that is so far from being an excuse, that it is a dreadful aggravation of it.

An Invincible Ignorance is such, as is conjoined with an impossibility, in an ordinary manner, of right information; and it ariseth only from Two things:

Absolute want of necessary instruction. Or,

Want of natural capacity to receive it.

If you are deficient in either of these, then, indeed, ignorance might pass for a tolerable excuse for many faults, at the Day of Judgment. And, indeed, it doth not only excuse à tanto, as is commonly held; but à toto: for, where there can be no sufficient declaration of the law, it is all one as if there were no law; and, where there is no law, there is no transgression. And, therefore, as I said above, no sins shall be charged upon Heathens, but such as the Law of Nature and right Reason doth condemn.

But, certainly, your ignorance cannot be invincible, nor pleaded by you as an excuse: for,

First. Have you not the means of knowledge plentifully dispensed amongst you?



When you have frequent instructions, Scriptures unfolded, truths inculcated, duties pressed and urged, it must be mere industry, that can keep you ignorant. If you see not the light, it is because you love darkness: if you know not the things of God, it is because you say unto him, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

Secondly. Are you destitute of natural capacities of wit and understanding, to apprehend the truths of God and the mysteries of salvation, when they are delivered to you?

Thou, who art as knowing for the world, as others; what is the reason thou art not as knowing for heaven? Dost thou not enjoy the same means; the same instructions, advice, and admonitions? and why, then, so ignorant in spiritual concernments, and yet so politicly wise in worldly affairs? Why! but because men wilfully close up their eyes, and stop their ears; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and so spoil a good excuse against the Day of Judgment?

But, alas! this excuse will not hold good, at that day. If men will not see, when the light shines round about them; if they will not know, but refuse instruction, when the means of knowledge is dispensed to them; this blindness and ignorance is so far from lessening, that it will exceedingly heighten and greaten, both their sin and their condemnation. Drunkenness is no excuse of a fault, but an aggravation; because, though the drunkard knows not what he doth, yet he wilfully deprives himself of the use of his own reason: and so a sin, that is committed through wilful and affected ignorance, is made two thereby. And, certainly, if that servant was to be beaten with many stripes, who knew his master's will, but did it not; with many more shall he be beaten, who knew not his master's will, but might have known it.

And, therefore, think not to plead ignorance for your excuse. Believe it, pleaded it shall be, but not by you; but, by the Devil and your own consciences, against you.

That is the First vain Excuse.

## 2. Many rely upon their Civil and Reproachless Lives.

They neither debauch themselves, nor wrong others: and, if they were called before man's judgment-seat, nothing could be charged upon them; and therefore, certainly, they hope to escape at God's tribunal, which is not so severe and unmerciful as man's is. But, let them know, that this negative righteousness will nothing avail them, so long as it is baffled by their unbelief: for there is an immutable law, that fixeth an eternal doom upon every man: He, that believeth ... shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned: Mark 16:16.

## 3. Many rely upon a Comparative Righteousness.

They glory, with the bragging Pharisee, that they are not extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as other men; and, therefore, they hope, that, as they have not lived the same lives, so they shall not partake of the same condemnation. But, alas! God will not judge thee, by comparing thee with other men, but with his Law: thou fallest far short of the holiness and perfection of that, even in those very actions, wherein thou dost far transcend other men: it may be, there is no comparison between thee and others; but then there is no comparison between thee and the Law: thy very excellencies may, at this day, be judged deficiencies; and thyself, a surpasser of others, wilt be then judged as a transgressor against God. And, yet, if a comparative happiness will content thee, this, possibly, thou mayest have for thy comparative holiness: yea, but this is no relief, no comfort; for this comparative happiness thou mayst have in hell itself: those, who have been holy, in comparison with the wickedness of the lewd and debauched world, shall also be hereafter happy, in comparison with the intolerableness of their torments; and, yet, thou mayest be a miserable damned wretch for all this.

## 4. Others rely upon their own Righteousness, and the Merit of their own Good Works.

They doubt not, but, if God would set their good against their bad, they should stand upright in judgment; and think, that, take one time with another, God hath been no loser by them: if, at one time,

they have provoked him; at another, they have appeased him: if they have wronged him, by sins; they have again recompensed him, by duties. Foolish creatures! who think to discharge debts by duties; and satisfy God's justice with that, which they owe to his sovereignty: this is but robbing one of God's attributes, to pay another. Hadst thou never offended justice; yet all the good, which thou canst perform, is due to God's sovereignty, as he is thy Creator and Highest Lord: justice requires not obedience, but punishment; nor will it be satisfied with any kind of punishment, but what is, like itself, infinite: and, therefore, though you should deal out all your estates in alms; though you should drop tears night and day; though you could make rivers by weeping, and raise storms by sighing, and pray till your tongues cleave to the roof of your mouths; though you should fast yourselves to ghosts, and macerate your bodies with the most rigid and sharp penances that ever blind devotionists practised, and, after all, give them to be burned; yet all this could not be put into the balance against the least of your sins. For, whatsoever you can either do or suffer, is due or not due, is required by God or not required. If it be due, it cannot be satisfactory: the payment of one debt cannot cross out another. If it be not due, it cannot be acceptable: it is but will-worships false and adulterate coin, (and much of this sort is among the Papists) that bears not the stamp of divine authorization upon it, and therefore will not be received, nor pass for payment. Not that I would drive you from performing duties: God forbid! but, from trusting in them. Let me ask you, to what purpose is it, that you keep up something of religion? to what purpose, that you frequent public ordinances? that you force your ears to hear that word, which yet prophesieth no good concerning you; and task your lips to say over those prayers, in which yet you find no relish? is it not the secret thought of many men's hearts, that hereby they shall buy off guilt and escape condemnation? if this be your hope, let me tell you, it is no better than a spider's web; and, when the besom of destruction comes, it will sweep down such cobweb-hopes as these are, and such as settle in them, into perdition. For, those very duties and works, which many trust unto to save them, may, at this day, for the slight and hypocritical performance of them, be reckoned up against them as so many sins: so far from being expiations, that they may rather be their faults: there, will be no setting the good against the bad; for the manner of performing that, which is good, turns it into filth and

abomination in the sight of God; and all they do, is either sin in itself, or sinful. And, therefore, to plead your own righteousness and your own good works, is but to plead that, the defects and hypocrisy of which will be brought in against you, to condemn you.

5. Many most presumptuously rely upon the Merciful and Gracious Disposition of God; and bottom their hopes of safety, in that Great Day, only upon this presumption.

In spite of Scripture, and threatenings, and judgments, they will not believe, but that the world is only scared out of its wits, by representing God more terrible and severe than indeed he is. What though the Law hath threatened death to transgressors, and the Gospel to unbelievers; and they are both: yet they will think, that God hath still reserved in his hands a power to relax this rigorous sentence, and to dispense with and pardon whom he pleaseth; and they hope they shall be of that number. Strange sinners these! who are resolved upon it, that God shall shew them mercy, though he himself hath protested the contrary; and will not be beaten from it, but that their souls are dearer to God, than his own truth. And, therefore as it were on purpose to blast such foolish hopes, where divine mercy is displayed in the greatest glory that ever it was, God brings in the severity of his justice to equal it: so, Exod. 34:6, 7. The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: now after all this triumph of mercy, to dash the hopes of wicked men, it is added, a God that will by no means acquit the guilty. Carnal reason might possibly think it a contradiction, that God should proclaim that he will pardon sin; and yet, by no means, acquit the guilty: for what else is pardon, but an acquittance of those who are guilty? But here is no contradiction: the guilty, whom God will pardon, are the penitent and believing sinners, here upon earth: the guilty, whom he will by no means pardon, are the finally impenitent; those, who shall be found under guilt, at the Day of Judgment. Though there shall stand millions of wretched creatures, wringing their hands, tearing their hair, rending heaven and earth with their outcries; enough, even to move those very rocks to compassion, which they shall then call upon to hide and cover them: yet this God, who is all bowels and love, and whom wicked

men do preposterously fancy so merciful; yet this merciful God will only mock their fears, flout their tears, and laugh at their cries, and send them all to hell with scorn; that Christ, who so far gratified the petition of the very devils, as to send them into the herd of swine, rather than back to hell, their place of torments; though all the wicked world should fall down at his feet, and beg him, by his death, his blood and passion, by all that he hath either done or suffered, to shew them mercy, (powerful arguments, if now used, to prevail) yet these powerful arguments shall not then incline him, either to pardon them, or, in the least, to mitigate their doom. No, this is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation. As soon as this life is expired, the time of believing and repenting is expired too; and the time of mercy and pardon, with it. When Christ shall sit as Judge, it will be then too late to cry, "Mercy! mercy!" Mercy hath been already tendered, and proudly rejected. Sinners! why was it not embraced while you lived upon the earth: while you were entreated and beseeched to accept it? It is now in vain to call, or cry, or strive: God hath sworn in his wrath, that not one of them shall enter into his rest.

6. Many ignorant persons think, that they will plead to God, that they are his Creatures, and the Workmanship of his own Hands.

They will never believe, that the infinitely gracious God will damn, what himself hath made; and destroy the work, which his own hands hath framed.

But,

(1) What think you? Have not the Devils as good a plea as this?

Are not they God's creatures, and the work of his hands, as well as you? Nay, are they not more costly and exquisite pieces of the creation, as being mighty spirits, than you, who are but vile dust? If God must, therefore, in justice save you, because you are his creatures, must he not save them too? Certainly, this plea gives sinners but poor hopes, which only proves, that, if they be saved, so must the very devils.

(2) Let the Scripture beat off men's hands, from grasping this reed.

Doth not God expressly say, Prov. 16:4 he made all things for himself, and the wicked for the day of wrath? In vain is it to plead, "He made me, and therefore will save me." If thou remain wicked, God made thee for the day of wrath and destruction: so, Isai. 27:11. He, that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he, that formed them, will shew them no favour.

Nay,

(3) Wicked men are not so much to be accounted God's workmanship, as the Devil's.

God doth not so much ascribe the workmanship of the Man, unto himself, as the workmanship of the New Man. Are you sanctified and renewed? then are you, indeed, God's workmanship: Eph. 2:10. We are his workmanship, created ... unto good works. But, while men continue in their sinful state, though God made them, yet they are the Devil's workmanship: he is their father, and they his offspring. God's workmanship was made like God; but that image is defaced, and the perfect resemblance of the Devil stamped upon the souls of wicked men. And, therefore, in destroying them, God doth not so much destroy his own image, as the brood of Satan.

This, therefore, is no ground of hope, nor plea for mercy.

7. It will then be in vain, to plead Church-Privileges and Ordinances, or Spiritual Gifts and Endowments.

Christ hath told us, that many shall come to him with open mouth, in the Last Day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name ... cast out devils? and in thy name done many mighty works? Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets? And must we be sentenced to the same hell, with those, who never heard thee preaching? with those, whom thou never heardst praying?" A specious plea! yet, if this be all, he will command them away into everlasting fire: Go, ye cursed. The kingdom of heaven here upon earth, I mean, the Visible Church, for

so the Scripture often calls it, admits of many wicked men and hypocrites into communion with it: they enjoy the same ordinances, partake of the same sacraments; but, at this day, will be made the great separation, when the members of the Kingdom of Heaven shall themselves be shut out of the Kingdom of Glory: so saith our Saviour, Matt. 8:12. The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.

8. Some may think to alledge, for their excuse, that they wanted Time to prepare for Eternity.

Their employments in the world are such, that they have not leisure to think of their soul's welfare: providence hath set them in a most cumbersome calling; and the cares and business of this world flow in so fast upon them, that they drink up all their thoughts, and sequester all their time. As the Duke D'Alva, being demanded whether he observed a comet that had lately appeared, "No," said he, "I have so much to do on earth, that I cannot spare time to mind heaven:" so it is with many: they are overwhelmed with worldly employments, and have no spare time to think of heaven; and therefore hope, that God will not expect so much from them, as from others who are better at leisure. But, it were happy for these men, if, as they pretend, they cannot spare time to be holy, so they could not spare time to die, and to be judged. It is true, men may make their trades and callings too unwieldy for them; and thereby become, not masters, but drudges to their own affairs: they have not time for natural and necessary refreshments; and what time, then, think you, for divine and heavenly duties? what time for prayer or meditation, when the world is still crowding in upon them? those, who have little else to do, find it a hard task to work their hearts to a ready performance of these; and how much more they, who have always some pretence from their callings, to neglect them! However, it is the greatest folly in the world, and can be no excuse at the Last Day, to grasp so much of earth, as to let go their hold of heaven. Men should, therefore, so model and size their worldly employments, as to make daily room for religion. And, let them know, that, if these their employments be either such or so numerous, as are not consistent with a godly life; this is not a calling, but a temptation, and as such to be avoided. It will not be an excuse, but an aggravation, of men's

doom at the Last Day, that they, who have lived forty or threescore years in the world, could yet find no time for heaven; as if the laying up of a vain and perishing estate here below were of more concern, than the laying up treasures in heaven, and a good foundation against the time to come.

Thus we see how vain and frivolous those many excuses, that men may think to make at the Day of Judgment, will then prove. Let me hence only draw one Practical Inference, and so conclude. Since, then, no excuse will prevail, to keep off the dreadful sentence of judgment, Oh! then! let no excuse prevail, to keep us from a holy life. Let no excuse keep us from coming to Christ, since no excuse can help us when we come before Christ. When our Saviour invited his guests, they all made excuses: one had bought a farm, and another oxen, and they could not come. Poor excuses! but yet any thing is sufficient to reject Christ's invitations. But, though men make excuses when Christ invites them, no excuses shall serve the turn when he summons them. The ministers of the Gospel, when they knock at men's hearts and bid them come to Christ, are turned off with very slight answers: but, pray bethink yourselves, what excuse, what answer you will make, when an angel shall come into the grave to you, and knock at your coffins, and bid you arise, and come to judgment. It were well for many, if they could then excuse themselves from appearing; or else, at their appearing, excuse themselves from their guilt and condemnation. But no excuse will then be taken. I beseech you, consider, that, in that day, and that day is coming, nothing will avail you but Faith and Obedience: and, as you would plead it then, so be persuaded to practise it now.

x. The Tenth and last General to be treated on, in handling this subject, is, the PRONOUNCING and EXECUTING OF THE SENTENCE, which shall be the last decision of our eternal state.

And that is Twofold: either of absolution, or of condemnation: either, Come, ye blessed; or Go, ye cursed. These two sentences shall proceed and the execution of them be proportioned, according to the difference of men's lives and works. All shall come forth, saith our Saviour: they, that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they, that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation: John



5:29. And this, the text expresseth to be a receiving according to what we have done in the body; whether it be good or bad. So, Rev. 20:12. The dead were judged ... according to their works.

For the more distinct prosecution of this particular, there are two terms in the text, which require a more exact consideration: the one, is that proportioning term, according: the other, is that of receiving; which, being here peculiarly spoken of the Day of Judgment, must necessarily imply the receiving, either of a blessed reward, or of a deserved punishment.

If we consider the former term, According to that he hath done: this may admit of a Twofold Distinction.

First Distinction. Men shall be judged according to their works: either quoad speciem operum; or, else, quoad diversum gradum in eâdem specie: either

According to the different Kind of their works; or else,

According to the different Degrees of them, in the same kind.

Second Distinction. According to our Works, may denote, that the recompence of our works, shall be proportioned, either

According to their own merit; or else

According to God's Covenant and Agreement with us.

Third Distinction. And, if we consider the Reward and Punishment, which we shall receive according to our works; this also is either

Partial and incomplete; or, else

Perfect, and entire.

Out of these distinctions thus premised, I intend to form my following discourse.

i. Therefore, the last definitive sentence shall pass upon all ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS; that is, either ACCORDING TO THE KINDS, or THE DEGREES of them.

1. Though, in a natural respect, there be various and numberless Kinds of works: yet in morality, there are but two especially; and they are, Good and Bad.

Concerning indifferent actions, the text takes no cognizance; nor shall I, at present, meddle with them: for, indeed, there shall no such actions be found at the Day of Judgment; but those, which are different in themselves, are determined, and made good or bad, by their circumstances; and, as such, shall be accounted for at the Last Day.

Now, in these two great kinds, of Good and Bad, which divide between them whatsoever is done in the world, there are several degrees and advances. They are not all like Jeremiah's figs; the good, incomparably good; and the evil, excessively evil: but some good actions are better, and some bad are worse, than others. And this difference proceeds; in godly men, from the mixture of corruption with grace, whereby they cannot do the good they would; and, in ungodly men, from conscience or some more external restraint, whereby they dare not do the evil they would.

Now, that a different sentence shall proceed upon men at the last, according to the different kinds of their works; that those, who have done good, shall receive good, and those, who have done evil, shall accordingly receive evil; is so clear, that he must be a very atheist, and destroy the foundation, not only of the Christian, but of all religion, (for all religion is built upon this belief) who shall go about to deny it. I need not quote Scripture, though it be in nothing more abounding than in this. The very first springings of natural light, and the unpremeditated resolves of reason, dictate this to be an unquestioned truth. For, from whence proceed those pale fears and grim thoughts, those heart-smitings and stinging regrets, which sometimes pierce and rack the souls even of the most wicked wretches, but from a sad apprehension, that the Great God will recompense unto them evil for evil? which apprehension they are not

disputed into, by any far-fetched arguments and long consequences; but it strongly masters their understandings and consciences, by its own downright and native evidence.

2. Leaving them, therefore, to the horror of that reflection, let us, in the second place, consider the proportioning of the last sentence, according to the several Degrees of good and evil that shall be found in men's works.

Herein, something is probable, and something demonstratively certain.

(1) It may very piously and profitably, and with great probability, be believed, that there shall be a distribution of different degrees of glory, according to the different exercise of grace and holiness in this life.

Learned men are at some variance, in this particular. The most affirm it: and others do not indeed so much deny it, as they do, that there is any thing in Scripture upon which we may fix a firm and sure persuasion, that it shall be so; and among these, are Peter Martyr, and Spanhemius, and Cameron. Those, who are for the affirmative, alledge, Matt. 5:19. He, that breaks the least commandment, shall be the least in the kingdom of God. To this it is answered by others, that the Kingdom of Heaven here, may be well taken for the Kingdom of Grace in the Church on earth; and so to be least in it, infers no inferiority in glory: or, if it be taken for the Kingdom of Glory; yet, that to be least in it, implies here a total exclusion from it. That parable, Matt. 25 of the different rewards according to the different improvement of the talents, is produced to favour a difference in degrees of glory: those of the contrary persuasion say, that, if parables be in this case argumentative, they may well oppose that other parable, Matt. 20 against degrees of glory, where each of the labourers received a like reward, though for different labour: each man had his penny; as well he, who came in at the eleventh hour, as they, who had borne the heat and burden of the day. Again, it is pleaded, from 1 Cor. 15:41, 42, where the Apostle saith, that as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead; that, therefore, there are degrees of glory: but to this it is

truly replied, that the Apostles speaks not there concerning the difference between one glorified body and another; but of the difference that is in one and the same body, between its state of corruption before, and incorruption after, the resurrection: As one star differeth from another star in glory, so doth the body differ when it is raised, from what it was, when it was sown. It was sown a corruptible body, it is raised incorruptible, &c. Many such arguments are alledged, and many such answers are shaped to them. Which of these two is the very truth, I shall not presume positively to determine. Only, to me, it seems more according to the plain and obvious sense of the Scriptures, that there shall be different degrees of glory, as a correspondent reward unto men's different works of grace: not only that our good works shall receive a good recompence; but that, according to the exalted measures of goodness that is in them, such, likewise, shall be our exaltation in the heavenly kingdom; where, possibly, there shall be no parity, as there is no confusion. And, possibly, this may be intimated, 1 Cor. 3:8 where the Apostle tells us, that every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.

But, howsoever, whether there shall be such a difference or not, we may make a Twofold good Use of it.

[1] If there shall be different degrees of glory, how should this excite us to strive after an Eminency in Holiness!

Certainly, it is a commendable and a worthy ambition, to covet the highest place in heaven; to desire to sit next to cherubims and seraphims: nay, if it were possible, to get the same place in heaven, which St. John, the beloved disciple held here on earth, to lean in the very bosom of Christ himself. If increase of grace will proportionably increase glory, what Christian will be so ill a husband, as not to put that grace to use, that shall at last bring him in so great interest and advantage? To be continually in the exercise of holiness, is to be continually adorning our own crown, and setting new gems into it: it is but to irradiate our diadem of stars, with a lustre that shall outshine the sun in its brightness; and to make that glory ponderous and weighty, the least measures of which are in themselves precious and inestimable.

[2] If there shall be no different degrees of glory, but all shall be of the same pitch and stature; think then, O Christian! what infinite comfort it will be, that, though now thy graces are weak, thy fears perplexing, thy corruptions restless, thy temptations violent and impetuous; though now thou seest thyself excelled by many, whom thou admirest, and fain wouldst imitate: yet, at this day, the same sentence shall absolve thee, the same heaven receive thee, the same glory crown thee, as shall absolve, receive, and crown the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, the most eminent and singular Saints, for ever. So that, whether you are persuaded, that there shall be different degrees of glory in heaven or not; yet it yields matter of Motive, or of Comfort.

But, to leave this,

(2) It is certain, that the last sentence and the execution of it shall be proportioned, according to the different degrees of evil, of which wicked men shall be guilty.

The Scripture is express for this: Luke 12:47, 48. He, which knew his master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he, that knew it not, that is, if his ignorance of it be invincible, shall be beaten with few stripes: so, Mat. 11:22, 24. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrha, in the Day of Judgment, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. Every vessel of wrath shall, indeed, be brimful: but some vessels shall contain much more wrath than others: God shall, on purpose, widen and enlarge their capacities, that he may pour into them much more of his fury and indignation, who have deserved more at his hands. Indeed, the wrath, nay the least frown of an Almighty God, is able to sink the stoutest of his creatures into nothing. But, herein, is the dreadful severity of God seen, that the more power he will put forth in punishing them, the more power he will put forth in supporting them; and will, as it were, hold them up in one hand, while he scourgeth them with the other.

And, if there shall be such a difference of punishments in hell, according to the difference of crimes here on earth, oh then! what desperate folly and madness are most wicked men guilty of, who so

go on, adding iniquity to iniquity, as if they were resolved, a single damnation should not content them! Is it, that they despair of mercy, and think that it is but in vain for them to scruple sinning, who are sure of condemnation? why, though they had ground for such a despair, which no man hath, who will speedily repent and be converted; though they had heard God swear aloud, in his wrath, that they, of all men living, should never enter into his rest: yet, it is a degree beyond all madness, for men therefore to aggravate their damnation, because they cannot escape it. Believe it, the least degree of God's everlasting wrath is an intolerable hell: and what do you else, by demeriting additional degrees by your repeated sins, but heap up many hells for your torments; and heat the infernal furnace, into which you must be cast, sevenfold hotter than else it would be? There is not the smallest part of torment which the damned now suffer, but, were they for a while reprieved and let out of hell, they would do more to escape, than the most holy and laborious Christians do to obtain all heaven itself. All this I speak upon supposition: for, assurance of salvation there may be, but of damnation there cannot be, in this life: and, yet, were it supposed that men could be assured that their souls were cut out on purpose to make firebrands for hell; yet, hereupon, desperately to harden themselves in sin, what were it else, but to set these brands a-burning at both ends? what were it else, but, because they must be prisoners, to strive what they can to deserve the dungeon?

Thus, then, we have seen how men must be judged according to their works: both as to the Kinds of them, which are good or evil; receiving the good of salvation according to the good of obedience, and the evil of damnation according to the evil of sin: and, likewise, according to the Degrees of their works, in each kind: and I have shewed it to be probable, that, of those, whose works have been more holy, the glory shall be more excellent; and to be certain, that of those, whose works have been more sinful, the punishment shall, accordingly, be more intolerable.

ii. The Second Distinction premised was this: That, to be judged according to our works, may denote, that the recompence of our works shall be made, either **AS THEY ARE CONSIDERED IN THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN INTRINSICAL WORTH AND**

MERIT; or, else, AS THEY ARE CONSIDERED IN GOD'S COVENANT AND AGREEMENT MADE WITH US; which covenant promiseth a blessed reward to our good works, and threateneth a severe punishment to our evil works.

And, here, I shall briefly lay down these Two Positions.

1. Wicked men shall, in this Great Day, be judged according to the proper demerits of their own works.

And what that is, the Apostle informs us, Rom. 6:23. The wages of sin is death. And, certainly, God will not be unjust, in withholding deserved wages from any of the workers of iniquity: but, because they have not as yet received any thing in proportion according to their deserts, therefore divine justice reserves it for them in hell. The heaviest punishments which they can endure upon earth, be they outward torments or inward horrors, are but small drops and foretastes of that full cup of wrath and trembling, that God will put into their hands, and force them to drink of for ever. And, therefore, look what Christ suffered for believers, what wrath, fears, and agonies met upon him, as the desert of the sins of those in whose place he stood; the same shall all wicked and ungodly men bear in their own persons: yea, and possibly much more, inasmuch as there is no dignity in their persons to take off from the degrees of their punishments, as there was in him: it was more satisfactory to justice, for a Divine Person, who was God as well as Man, to suffer less, than it can be for such contemptible creatures as men are, to suffer more: and, therefore, if ever any wicked man was affected with a deep sense of what Christ underwent, let him know, that those sufferings do but represent, as in a map, how great and insupportable his shall be, when God shall come to render unto him according to his doings. And, yet, let me add this too, that still there is more demerit in their sins, than the utmost extremity of punishment can reach: sin is an infinite evil; and doth, in itself, merit every way infinite punishment, infinite in intention as well as extension, in degree as well as duration: yea, the least sin, in itself, deserves as much or more wrath, than the greatest is punished with; so that the very damned themselves may, with truth, say, that they are punished less than their iniquities deserve. It is not possible for a finite creature to bear

the full strokes of an infinite justice: and, therefore, God limits his justice within the compass of their limited natures; and brings it to a stint infinitely below their deserts, and yet infinitely above their patience to endure. Oh, how much cursed malignity is there in sin! those sins, which rash and foolish man plays and dallies with; that lay him under as much wrath as can be heaped upon him, and deserve infinitely more!

That is the First Position: Wicked Men shall be judged according to the Desert of their Works.

2. Believers shall be judged according to their works; not considered in their own desert, but as considered in God's gracious covenant and agreement made with them.

In strict propriety of speech, merit connotes the dueness of the reward to our actions, antecedently to any compact, or promise made to reward them. Now, if we consider the holiest and best works of the holiest and best Christians, they are only acceptable and rewardable with eternal life, as they are under God's gracious promise in Christ; and therefore cannot be, in themselves, meritorious: and, if we consider them as abstracted from this promise, they are so far from being rewardable with life, that they are punishable, for the defects of them, with eternal death. God, indeed, is become a debtor to our faith and obedience; but St. Augustin well resolves us how: *Deus debitorem se fecit, non aliquid accipiendo, sed liberaliter promittendo*: "God hath made himself a debtor, not by receiving any thing from us, but by promising liberally to us:" and, so, he is a debtor rather to his own word, than to our works. This, therefore, is the unspeakable happiness of true believers: their weak and imperfect works, if done in faith and sincerity, shall, through Christ's merits and God's promise, be as fully rewarded, as if they were perfect and unspotted obedience.

iii. We must DISTINGUISH OF THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT, which men shall receive according to their works: for that is either PARTIAL and INCOMPLETE; or, else, PERFECT and ENTIRE: the one is to be received at every man's particular, the



other at the last and universal judgment: according as we ourselves are, either partial or complete, so will be our recompence.

1. Before the Resurrection and General Judgment, only one part of man is capable either of glory or torment; and that is his soul. That, therefore, I call a partial reward, that crowns but a part of man; and that a partial punishment, which is inflicted but on a part, viz. the separate soul. The bodies, even of those, whose souls shall be as far distant as heaven and hell, must lie down and sleep together in the same common bed of earth the saints, whose souls now shine in heaven as the sun in the firmament, if we ransack their graves, we shall not find their dust more glittering than others; nor are the carcasses of those sinners, whose souls now burn as firebrands in hell, more black and sooty. The bodies, therefore, of men, shall not receive according to what hath been done in them, until the consummation of all things. Only some few exceptions the Scripture hath noted; as Enoch, Elias, and (as St. Augustin in one of his Epistles supposeth) those saints who were raised at Christ's death, who have already received their entire happiness.

Indeed, as when Christ lay in the grave, there was still the continuance of the hypostatical union between his dead body and his everliving Godhead; so is there a continuance of the mystical union between the dead bodies, yea between every scattered and loose dust of the saints, and the glorious person of Jesus Christ. Now this, though it be an exceeding great honour, yet we cannot so much reckon any part of the reward, as an assurance of the whole: for, because the bodies of the saints, while separated from their souls, are yet united by an invisible and ineffable band to their Saviour; therefore, do they now rest in hope, and shall hereafter arise in glory: Because I live, ye shall live also: John 14:19: and, of all, which the Father hath given me, I must lose nothing, but must raise it up again at the Last Day: John 6:39. Christ's miraculous resurrection was performed within three days after his death; but his mystical resurrection shall not be until the end of the world: when the saints of all ages shall together rise out of their graves, then riseth Christ's mystical body: and to this very end shall it rise, that the saints, being themselves complete and entire, may then receive a complete and entire happiness; that, as they have on earth glorified God both in

body and soul, so in heaven both body and soul may be glorified with God. It is worth observing, how gradually God leads his people into the possession of glory; as if he would inure them to bear such an exceeding and eternal weight, as the Apostle calls it, by lifting smaller parcels of it beforehand: and, therefore, in this life, they only receive the earnest of their inheritance, which are the graces and comforts of the Spirit: Eph. 1:13, 14: at death, they receive vast incomes of glory, as much as their souls alone can contain: yet this is but only part of payment, upon which they live splendidly, until the resurrection of their bodies and the process of the general judgment: and, then, as the body shall again receive its soul, so both soul and body shall together receive their full reward; the uttermost farthing of all that Christ hath purchased, the Gospel promised, of themselves expected. So is it, also, with wicked men: sin and the terrors of a guilty conscience are the earnest of hell, in this life: the torments of the separate soul are part of payment: but, still, justice is behindhand with them, till the resurrection of their bodies; and then shall they receive the full measures of wrath, pressed down and running over. And, indeed, it is but meet, that these bodies should be consorts with the soul in receiving, as they have been in doing, good or evil.

2. Now, what this consummate reward and punishment shall be, is altogether inconceivable.

(1) The Complete Reward, which is reserved for believers, is inconceivably glorious.

It is that, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it, or can it, enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those that love him; scarce thoroughly apprehended by the blessed themselves: and, therefore, for us, who are yet at distance, to attempt a description, were but to sully and diminish it. And, therefore, as God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, is better known to us by negatives than affirmatives, by what he is not than by what he is; so also is heaven: you may best conceive it, when we tell you, there shall be nothing to fright, nothing to afflict, nothing to grieve, nothing to lessen the highest, fullest, sweetest delight and satisfaction, that the vast and capacious soul of man is able, either to receive or to imagine: there, we shall be freed from all the cares and

sorrows, the pains and miseries of this life: we shall be got above the reach of Satan's temptations, and out of the danger of his fiery darts: we shall be above the clouds of despondency and desertion: there, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; and all sin, the cause of those tears, rooted out of our hearts: and there, finally, we shall neither want any thing that we would have, nor desire any thing but what we have. Add to this, the infinite happiness of our vision and fruition of God: we shall there see the Father of Lights, by his own rays: we shall see the Sun of Righteousness, lying in the bosom of the Father of Lights: we shall feel the eternal warmth and influence of the Holy Ghost, springing from both these lights: there, you shall see God no longer darkly through a glass, but face to face; without interruption, without obscurity: and, if it now cause such joy, when God doth but sometimes beam in a half-glance of himself into the soul, oh! then, within what bounds can our joy contain itself, when we shall fix our eyes upon God's, and lie under the free and unchecked rays of the Deity beating full upon us, and be ourselves made strong enough to bear them? there, we shall corporeally approach nigh unto Christ's glorious body, and put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hands into his side; and search and sound those blessed fountains, from whence flowed forth his blood and our salvation: there we shall for ever converse with innumerable hosts of holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; and join with the assembly of the first-born Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, and holy Martyrs of all ages, since the beginning of the world; and, with infinite delight, mutually rehearse the mercies of the Great God, and sing his praises: there, we shall perpetually exult in the smiles of God, and live in eternal ecstasies and raptures; such as we never knew what they meant, no not when we were here most spiritual. And, when God hath wound off time from its great bottom, when he shall sound the Resurrection, and summon to Judgment; then, shall our happy souls meet their expecting bodies, with unspeakable joy and vital embraces: these lumps of clay shall be refined and clarified: the glories of the soul shall shine through them; and they themselves shine with a lustre, clear as the sun in its brightness. And, then, both soul and body shall enter into the entire fruition of those joys, the greatness of which we cannot express, but only by saying, we know not what they are. This is the inconceivable Reward of the Godly.

(2) As the reward of the godly shall be inconceivably glorious; so the Doom, that shall pass upon all the Wicked and Ungodly of the world, shall be unspeakably full of terror.

And this doom contains in it a Twofold Punishment: the one, privative; the Pœna Damni, or Punishment of Loss: the other, positive; or Pœna Sensûs, the Punishment of Sense. The inflicting of these two will be the full execution of the last sentence upon them.

[1] As for the Punishment of Loss, we may consider it, either in respect of those things, which once they had; or in respect of those things, which they might have had, had it not been through their own wilful default.

1st. If we consider their loss in regard of the things which once they had, so it is Twofold: for they have lost that, which they counted their happiness; and they have lost that, which might have made them truly happy.

(1st) They lose that, which they accounted their happiness: that is, the world; the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world.

These are the things, which send many to hell; but do not descend with them thither, to relieve and comfort them there. Dives riots, on earth; but, in hell, cannot obtain one poor trembling drop of water, to cool his flaming tongue. Tell me, what will it avail you, that you have lived in all affluence and voluptuousness? The time is coming, when these things shall be no more, or no more yours. And, oh, then! tell me, what sad losers will those men be, who have lost their souls to gain the world; and yet must, at last, lose the world together with their souls!

(2dly) They shall be punished with the loss of that, which might have made them truly and eternally happy, had they been wise to improve it.

Here, God strives with them by his Word, by his Spirit, by his Patience, by his Providence: he follows them from day to day, from ordinance to ordinance; with threatenings, with exhortations, with

promises, with expostulations: Why will ye die? Turn ye, and live: for, as I live, saith the Lord, I delight not in the death of him that dieth: yea, God sends his Spirit to strive with them; sets on conscience to fright them; and all to reduce them: and this might have proved their salvation, had they wisely managed it. But, in hell, all this too is lost: there, no day of mercy riseth upon them; no patience, nor long-suffering; no awakening providences, nor converting ordinances; nor any possibility of a better estate. And, certainly, if there be any reflection in hell, that will cut the soul to the quick, it will be this: that once it enjoyed such fair opportunities and overtures for heaven, but neglected them; and now hath lost them for ever, for ever, without hope. Thus they shall lose what they once enjoyed.

2dly. Their greatest lose is of those things, which they might have enjoyed: and that is, in a word, whatsoever happiness and glory the saints stand possessed of in heaven.

(1st) They lose the presence and enjoyment of God, which is the very heaven of heaven itself.

Indeed, heaven is not heaven, without him; and hell could not be hell, were God there. It is true, God is present with the damned in his essence, for, if I descend into hell, saith the Psalmist, thou art there; and he is present, by his power, to torment them: but the comfortable presence of God they are for ever cut off from. And, oh! for the soul to be cut off from God, is as great a loss, as for the stream to be cut off from the fountain, or a beam to be cut off from the sun. And, yet, this is the sentence of that Great Judgment, Depart from me, ye cursed. Depart from thee, Lord, who art every where! oh! whither shall we flee? happy were it for us, could we depart from thee, where thou art not; but most wretched and accursed, that we must depart from thee, and yet be where thou thyself art: withdraw the presence of thy wrath and power, or vouchsafe the presence of thy love and favour, and it will be no hell whither thou sendest us. It is not so much the exquisite torments, as the loss of God's gracious presence, that makes hell unsufferable: were but God's gracious presence with them, the damned could lie down in everlasting flames, as comfortably as in beds of roses: but, to be deprived of

those glorious communications of God which the saints enjoy, when they see him face to face, without obscurity; when they enjoy him continually, without interruption; when they delight in him eternally, without satiety; this is a loss, as the joys themselves are, altogether inconceivable.

(2dly) They lose all that additional glory, which the saints possess: a glorious habitation, the palace of the Great King: glorious society, saints and angels, yea and Christ himself: glorified bodies, sparkling with the radiancy of spiritual qualities.

This is that loss, which wicked men must, in the Great and Last Day, sustain.

[2] As for the second part of their Punishment, which is that of Sense, our Saviour briefly sums it up in Two things: the worm, that never dieth; and the fire, that never goeth out: Mark 9:44: within, the worm gnaws them; and, without, the fire burns them.

1st. Conscience is this never-dying worm, which shall eternally sting and torture them.

And this is their misery, that they themselves must be their own merciless tormenters. Those, who have but in this life lain under the horrors of despair, sadly know what an inexorable tyrant conscience is: how many doth it now force, in the extreme anguish and horror of their souls, to cry out, They are damned, they are damned! Oh! then, what anguish will it cause in hell, when they shall pronounce themselves damned, and not lie; and have nothing of hope or possibility left to mitigate it! Every sin, which they have committed, shall, like so many vipers, crawl about their hearts, and gnaw them through to all eternity. And the fretting review, that conscience will take of them, shall give them no rest night nor day: "Here I lie burning for ever, for gratifying a base lust, for pleasing my brutish part but for a moment. Ah! fool, where are those sins, those pleasures, which I prized above heaven, and ventured hell for? What remains of them all, but the anguish and horror? And have I thus sold my soul for nothing? and am I thus irrecoverably lost? O Conscience! thou stingest too late; too late, now, for any thing but my

torment. These thoughts I should have had while I lived, while I was tempted to such and such a cursed sin: then had they been seasonable; but now too late, Conscience, too late for ever!" Thus the never-dying worm shall sting them. But,

2dly. The unquenchable Fire shall burn them.

This shall be their doom, Depart from me, ye cursed. Whither! into everlasting fire. It is a fire so elevated, as shall be able to work upon the soul itself; and so tempered, as it shall not be able to consume the body. It is a darksome, gloomy fire; that torments by its scorching, but yields no comfort by its light. The Scripture calls it a furnace of fire, to shew its rage and fierceness; and a lake of fire and brimstone, to shew its vastness. Imagine you saw a sea of molten brimstone set on fire, and vomiting forth black and sooty flames, and thousands of wretched creatures plunging and wallowing in it, and you have some resemblance of what Hell is.

This is the complete and final reward of all impenitent sinners, which they shall receive, according to their works.

Thus I have, in a scanty manner, opened unto the reader the Doctrine of the Last Judgment. As we must, at the Last Day, so we have, in this discourse, seen the Judge sitting upon his throne, and all the world arraigned before him. We have heard what course of law God will proceed by: and what sentence shall be pronounced; of infinite joy to the good, Come, ye blessed; of inconceivable terror to the wicked, Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

And now, this great assembly breaks up. Heaven throws open its gates to entertain Christ, marching in triumph before all his elect: and hell enlargeth itself to swallow up devils and damned wretches; who, loaden with a most heavy doom, shall sink down into that bottomless pit for ever and ever.

And now, what shall I say? Have I yet need to add any thing that may aggravate the terror of this Great Day? Methinks, fear and astonishment should shake every heart before the Lord. The very devils quake and tremble under a dreadful expectation of this day:

and shall devils tremble, and yet sinful man be fearless? ay, and confident? Be astonished, O Hell! at this; that hell itself hath not such daring and undaunted sinners, as are upon earth! Do you think you shall live for ever? death is insensibly stealing away your breath; and, after death, comes judgment: and, then, believe it, you shall hear the last sentence pronounced otherwise than in books and sermons. Now, you put far from you the evil day; but this day will come appareled all over with horror and affrightment on every side. That day is a day of wrath; a day of trouble and heaviness; a day of gloominess and darkness; a day of clouds, storms, and blackness; a day of the trumpet and alarm. The sun shall be darkened, the moon turned into blood, and the powers of heaven shaken: the stars shall fall as withered leaves: the graves shall vomit up their dead: the heavens shall be shriveled, and the elements molten. And then, Sinner! bear up, and be as stout as thou canst. But, certainly, did men but believe these things, it could not be that they should harden themselves in sin, as they do: could iniquity so abound in the world? would there be such rank and rotten discourse in every mouth, such oaths and curses, such riot and excess, such filthiness, villany, injustice, rapine, and oppression; did men believe, that the day is coming, wherein they must give a strict account for every idle word and vain thought? for whatsoever they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad?

For shame! therefore, let us either for ever strike it out of our creed, and profess that we do not believe, that Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead, or live better. Let that exhortation of the Apostle take place with us, (with which I shall conclude) 2 Pet. 3:11, 12. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God; wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions October 2020. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068