

MAJESTY IN MISERY;

OR,

THE POWER OF CHRIST EVEN DYING.

And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept arose—MATT. XXVII. 51.

In the lowest depth of Christ's humiliation, God never left him without some evident and eminent testimony of his divine power. He hangs here on the cross dying, yea, dead; his enemies insulting over him, Where is now his God? 'If he be able to save us, let him save himself.' He bears not only the wrath of God, but even the reproach of men. Yet even now shall his divinity appear, and break like a glorious sun through these clouds of misery. He rends the vail, shakes the earth, breaks the stones, raiseth the dead.

These two verses stand gloriously adorned with four miracles:—

1. 'The vail of the temple was rent in twain.' You will say, perhaps the substance of it was not so strong but an easy force might rend it. But, ver. 50, Christ was dead before, or died at that very instant. It was above nature that a dying, yea, a dead man, crucified in so remote a place from it, should rend the vail within the temple.

2. 'The earth did quake.' Say the vail was of less substance, yet the huge body of the earth will try a man's strength. In vain should silly man contend with that which shall devour him. He cannot move the earth, the earth shall remove him, from walking alive on it, to lie dead in it. Behold the power of Christ: *terram movet*, he makes the vast body of the earth to tremble.

3. 'The rocks rent.' Will any yet say, natural causes can shake the earth? Then let their malicious cavil be choked with this third miracle beyond exception: he breaks the stones, not little stones, but huge, massy rocks.

4. Lastly, to stop the mouth of all adversaries to his divine power, he raiseth up the dead. *Suscitare mortuos è sepulchro*, is only proper to God. 'No man can give a ransom to God for his brother, that he should live for

ever, and not see corruption,' Ps. xlix. 7, 9. How much less, when he is dead, recover him to life again? Here was the finger of God. Now to proceed in order with the miracles:—

FIRST MIRACLE: 'The veil of the temple,' &c.—This veil was the partition betwixt the *sanctum sanctorum* and the *sanctum*, as it might be the upper part of the choir. 'Into this went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people,' Heb. ix. 7. By the rending of this veil were many things pre-signified:—

1. This serves for a confirmation of that Christ spoke on the cross: 'It is finished.' The rending of the veil doth actually echo to his words, and indeed fulfils them. Here is an end put to all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law. In the New Testament is one only real and royal sacrifice, Christ crucified. This was that object whereunto all those rites looked; and to them all there is now given a *consummatum est*. So that now *ceremonia mortua, lex mortifera*,—ceremonies are dead, and the law of them deadly. *Novum Testamentum latet in veteri, Vetus patet in novo*. The gospel lay hidden under the law, the law is complete in the gospel. 'Now, after that you have known God in his gospel, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage?' Gal. iv. 9. God's service is now simple and plain: 'in spirit and truth,' John iv. 23.

Christ is said to be 'the end of the law:' the moral law he kept himself sincerely, and satisfied for our breaches of it thoroughly. The ceremonial was referred to him, performed of him, fulfilled in him, extinguished by him. They had all *vigorem à Christo, relationem ad Christum, consummationem in Christo*. He gave them their beginning, he hath also given them their end. The veil rent, to witness the cancelling of that ritual obligation. 'Christ hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to his cross,' Col. ii. 14. That moment was their last gasp, they expired with Christ. But did all ceremonies then utterly die? No; some were typical, prefiguring Christ: those are dead. Some are for decency and order, *admiracula devotionis*: these are not dead. The law of Jewish ceremonies is abolished, but some must be retained. Christ came not to dissolve order. Men consist of bodies as well as souls; and God must be served with both. Now bodies cannot serve God without external rites; the spouse of Christ cannot be without her borders and laces. Of necessity there must be some outward observances, but thus qualified: that they be for number few, for signification plain, for observation simple; far from ostentation, further from superstition. Christ's spouse must not flaunt it like a harlot, but be soberly attired like a grave matron. *Ceremoniæ quasi ceremoniæ; wants, à carento*; as it were ordained to supply the defects of our nature. Because we could not serve God in that simplicity we ought, therefore we have these helps. Hence it is that the nearer to perfection the fewer ceremonies; as it were, the more light the less shadow. In the law were abundant ceremonies, in the gospel far fewer, in heaven none at all.

This condemns the church of Rome for a glorious harlot, because she loads herself with such a heap of gaudy ceremonies; and their mass for mere idolatry, which they believe to be a real propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, made by the priests for the sins of quick and dead. This is to build up the veil here rent in pieces, and to accuse Christ of falsehood in his *consummatum est*. Is an end put to them, and shall they still retain them; yea, obtrude them as principal parts of God's service; yea, worship them; yea, bind men's con-

sciences to them, on pain of damnation? Therefore they are liable to the censure of Augustine, who calls such *impious sepulchre violators*,—diggers into the graves of the dead for putrefied and rotten relics; yea, to the judgment of God, who saith, 'If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?' Col. ii. 20, 22. They will say, *Dicit Papa, sanxit concilium*,—Thus saith the Pope, thus decrees the council; but we, *Dixit Dominus, non Donatus*,—we hear what the Lord says in his Scripture concerning the law of ceremonies.

2. The second thing signified by the rending the veil is this: the holy of holies figured the third heaven, where God sheweth himself in glory and majesty to his saints. Solomon's temple had in it three courts: an outer court, whereinto the people were admitted; an inner court, wherein only the priests and Levites entered; an inmost of all, whereinto the high priest alone entered, and that but once a-year, and this was called *sanctum sanctorum*. So there is a threefold heaven—*cælum elementarium, stellatum, gloriosum*. First, the elementary heaven, wherein are clouds, winds, rain, dew; and the birds are called the birds of heaven, that is, of this elementary heaven. The second is the starry heaven; so the sun is said to 'go from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it,' Ps. xix. 6. The last is the glorious heaven, the habitation of God himself; and this was signified by the holy of holies. The veil signified the flesh of Christ; the rending of the veil, the crucifying of Christ; by this is made an entrance into that *sanctum sanctorum*, the heaven of glory. So expressly: Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.' Heaven-gate was shut up by our sins; none but our highest and holiest Priest had passage thither: but he rent the veil, suffered his body to be torn by death, that he might give us an entrance. Paul, speaking of the legal use of that holiest place in the temple, saith thus, 'The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing,' Heb. ix. 8. But now, by Christ's rending the veil, *patet alti janua cæli*,—the way of salvation is opened. Let this reach forth to us two comforts:—

Comfort 1.—There is no fear to be shut out of heaven if thou have faith in Christ; for to thee is the veil rent, the separation is abolished, Christ is crucified. For so, saith St Peter, 'an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 2 Pet. i. 11. Indeed, to unbelievers and hypocrites, to worldly wolves and luxurious goats, the veil is up still. How should they enter the *sanctum sanctorum*, that never approached the *sanctum*? How shall they see the glory of God, who would never entertain the grace of God? No; to these there are inaccessible bars, and cherubims with flaming swords, to forbid their entrance. But to every good and faithful servant the veil is taken away; and Christ says, 'Enter thou into the joy of the Lord,' Matt. xxv. 21.

Comfort 2.—By this means we have in this world a free access to the throne of grace by our prayers; the veil and separation of sin and wrath is rent asunder by Christ, and a clear way made for our supplications. The propitiatory and mercy-seat, the cherubims of glory shadowing it, the very presence of God, were within the holiest; and the people might not approach it, but stood without afar off: our Saviour hath torn away this veil, and opened our petitions a free passage to the seat of mercy in heaven. 'Having such an high priest over the house of God,' saith Paul, immediately after

the clearing our way through the veil, 'let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,' &c., Heb. x. 21, 22. We see how far our prerogative excels that of the Jews. They were servants, we are sons, and cry, 'Abba, Father;' they had priests, we are priests; they had a bar, to us that veil is rent away. 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,' Heb. iv. 16. This is singular comfort, that poor subjects may be sure of access to the king with their petitions; yea, more, be heard in all their desires; yea, most of all, have an advocate at the king's right hand to plead their cause. But then remember the Psalmist's caution: 'If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,' Ps. lxxvi. 18. Let the servants of Baal cry never so loudly, if lowly; their prayers are not heard. To the cries of unfaithful sinners the veil is up still; and, like a thick cloud, reverberates and beats back their orisons, that they cannot ascend to the throne of grace. Only faith makes a free passage; and a clear conscience hath a clear voice that can pierce heaven.

3. The breaking down of this veil did make the holiest and the other part of the temple all one. Whereby was signified, that of two was made one, Jews and Gentiles one church. 'He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us,' Eph. ii. 14. So that now those the Jews called dogs, eat the bread of the children; yea, they are the children: and 'Japhet is persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem,' Gen. ix. 27. She is also beloved that was hated; even the church of the Gentiles is the spouse of Christ. The veil that hindered, Paul calls the 'law of commandments, contained in ordinances;' this 'he abolished, for to make in himself of twain one new man,' Eph. ii. 15. Heaven-gate is no wider open to a Jew than to a Grecian. 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God,' Gal. vi. 15, 16. The sun of the gospel, as of the world, is not confined to lighten Judea only, but shines universally. There is not one privilege wherein the Gentile hath not as frank a share as the Jew; the sons of Hagar are adopted the sons of God; and the free 'Jerusalem above is the mother of us all,' Gal. iv. 26. All this did our blessed Saviour work for us by rending the veil; 'that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby,' Eph. ii. 16.

Oh, then, let us 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!' Christ hath made us at one; let us not make ourselves twain. The veil is rent, why set we up new—schisms in doctrine, jars in conversation? The bill of divorcement is cancelled; let us love our husband Christ, and, for his sake, every man his brother. Let us set up no more veils, lest we do it with the curse of building more Jerichos. There is no bond so sure as religion; no ligaments so strong as faith and a good conscience. Wretched man, that breaketh these ties, and rendest thyself from them to whom thou art by Christ united! A mother's, yea, a father's blessing, forsakes thee; and thou buildest up a new veil, which thou must look for no more Christs to come rend asunder!

4. The rending of the veil teacheth us, that when men sin rebelliously against God, no prerogative shall do them good. The temple was one of their principalest privileges, their glory, their crown. 'The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord,' Jer. vii. 4. It was a figure of the church-militant, as Solomon the builder was a figure of Christ. For this temple's sake God often spared them. So Daniel prays, 'Cause thy face to shine upon

thy sanctuary, that is desolate,' chap. ix. 17. Yet when they fall away from God, and crucify their Messias, this prerogative helps not. For here God's own hand rends the veil, and after gives the whole fabric a spoil to the Gentiles. 'If ye will not hear, if ye will not lay it to heart, I will send a curse upon you, I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart,' Mal. ii. 2. It lies in man's sin to make God curse his very blessings, and to punish the nocent in the innocent creatures.

We see the way how we may lose temples, and peace, and gospel, and all privileges, by running the courses of disobedience. Who can number the blessings we have enjoyed by the gospel? Let us beware lest our ungracious and ungrateful lives rob us not of that, with all the appertinent comforts. They that have travelled the Belgic provinces can witness the miserable footsteps of war, and the tyranny of desolation. Churches and cities have no more monuments, but the ruined foundations, to testify that they were. Sin made way for blood and massacre; idolatry pulled down those walls, which, otherwise, the most sacrilegious hand should have forborne. If there had been no enemy to raze them, they would have fallen alone, rather than covered so blasphemous impiety under their guilty roofs. 'Peace is within our walls, and prosperity within our palaces,' Ps. cxxii. 7; blessed for ever be our God of peace for it! Yet we have a subtle adversary, Sacrilege, that encroacheth sore upon us, and 'hath taken many of God's houses in possession,' Ps. lxxxiii. 12. We cannot say, 'They have burnt up all the synagogues in the land,' Ps. lxxiv. 8; but they have done very wickedly to the Lord's sanctuaries. The walls stand,—and it is well if in many places they do so,—but there is not a Levite to feed the people. Alas, how can there, when there is nothing left to feed a Levite? Covetousness would do as much hurt with us, as war hath done with our neighbours: it would, but I trust in the Lord Jesus it shall not. Though they have rent away God's right,—'tithes and offerings,' Mal. iii. 8,—they shall never rend away God's truth and gospel: rend themselves from it indeed they are likely to do.

5. Lastly, 'The veil was rent.' By rending the part, God did threaten the subversion of the whole. If he spare not the holy of holies, then much less the rest. When God had commanded, 'Slay utterly old and young, maids and children,' he adds withal, 'and begin at my sanctuary,' Ezek. ix. 6. If God begin at his sanctuary, he will not fail to end with the rest. If that shall not scape being profaned, how much less houses built for riot and disorder, pride and ambition! If the temple of prayers, then surely the dens of thieves. 'For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and shall ye go unpunished?' saith God to the heathen, Jer. xxv. 29. If the sacred things defiled by idolatry shall be subverted, never think that your fair houses shall stand, when they are made coverts of oppressions, and convents of superstition. When the better things are not favoured, the worst have small hope. So Peter reasons: 'If judgment shall begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?' 1 Pet. iv. 17. If the strong cedars of Lebanon be rooted up, woe to the rotten-rooted poplars! If the dragon's tail sweep stars from heaven, what shall become of squalid earthly vapours? The temple was one of the world's greatest wonders; as curious a workmanship as six-and-thirty years could make it. It wanted not the art of man; yea, the blessing of heaven was added to it. Yet now, lo, *etiam periere ruinæ*, this goodly building by sin was brought to ruin; yea, even the very ruins are perished. Shall, then, your forts and palaces, worldlings' paradises, full of rapine, empty of charity,

stand against all weathers and storms of judgment? No: stone shall fall after stone; and ruin shall one day tell the passengers, as God threatened of Jerusalem, Here stood a goodly manor, a sumptuous edifice, a royal palace. Or if they fall not down in themselves, they shall fall to the owners, whose iniquities have defiled them.

God punisheth by certain degrees: first he rends the veil, then rends away the temple; as by David's hand he first rent Saul's garment, and then rent away his kingdom. God at first toucheth men lightly, in their goods, quiet, health; if these stir not to repentance, he proceeds against the whole. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?' 1 Cor. iii. 16. If you set up in this temple idols, lusts, and evil affections, God first rends the veil, toucheth you with some gentle afflictions; but if you still continue to make this temple a den of thieves, the temple itself will be destroyed.

You have heard the first miracle, the rending of the veil. As the Jews were wont to rend their garments when they heard blasphemy against God, so it may seem the temple tore its garments, rent its veil in pieces, when it heard those execrable blasphemies against the Son of God.*

SECOND MIRACLE: 'The earth did quake.'—The philosophers having given divers natural causes of earthquakes, as by hot and dry exhalations shut up in the bowels of the earth, and labouring for vent, resisted by the earth's solidness, there ensueth *terræ motus*, a shaking of the earth, &c. But this was an extraordinary earthquake; for it happened exactly at the very instant of Christ's death.

It might be to set forth the glory of the New Testament, and to vindicate it from inferiority to the Old. The law was both given and renewed with an earthquake. Given, Exod. xix. 18, to the hand of Moses: 'The whole mount quaked greatly.' As at the giving, Mount Sinai, so at the renewing, Mount Horeb quaked: 'As Elijah stood upon the mount, there passed by a strong wind, and after the wind an earthquake,' 1 Kings xix. 11. So when the Lord of the gospel died, the earth shook, that the ministration of righteousness might not be less glorious than the ministration of death, 2 Cor. iii. 9. This miracle shall give us a threefold instruction:—

1. To consider the fierceness of God's wrath against sins and sinners. For God, by shaking the earth, did no less than threaten the utter subversion of those desperate and bloody wretches. Korah and his confederates were swallowed up of the earth, for rebelling against Moses, the Lord's servant. 'Of how much sorer punishment were these worthy that had crucified,' not the servant, but 'the Son of God?' Heb. x. 29. If the mercies of God had not been greater than their iniquities, they had not escaped.

By this we see how able God is to punish sinners. He shews what he can do; it is his mercy that he forbears. Some of these were to be converted; therefore, *concussi non excussi*,—moved, not removed; shaken, but not destroyed. *Ostendisti populo gravia*, saith the Psalmist: 'Thou hast shewed thy people hard things,' Ps. lx. 3. Shewed, not imposed; shook the rod, not laid it on. This forbearance of God should lead us on to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. If not, it is but the forerunner of vengeance. Though now by moving the earth he scare and spare these Jews, yet after the earth spewed them out, as an offence to her stomach. O obstinate hearts, that quake not, when the senseless ground quakes that bears so unprofitable a burden! Cannot the earth admonish thee? it shall devour thee. *Si non monebit, movebit*. If the Almighty's hand stirring it hath not stirred thee to repentance, a sexton's hand shall cover thee with moulds; a weak shaker

* Theophylact.

shall do it. Think when God moves the earth, he preacheth to thy soul. If thy heart, so little in comparison of that great vast body, will not tremble, know God hath one thing that shall shake thee to pieces—death.

2. The nature of sin is here considerable; so heavy, that it makes the very earth to quake. The Jews' sins were such a burden, that the earth could not bear them without trembling. The earth is fixed, and 'standeth fast,' saith the Psalmist, as the centre of the world; it is strange *that* to be moved, even so strange is the cause that moves it. It must needs be a monstrous weight of iniquity that totters the earth on her foundations. But why is the earth so quiet now? Do not innumerable wretches daily crucify Christ, by their oaths, blasphemies, and rebellions, in himself; by their persecutions and oppressions, in his members? Is not his word derided, his sacraments despised, his good creatures abused? Why doth not the earth shrink and shake at these horrid impieties? Be still; he that holds his hand from miracles, will not hold it from plagues. They are forborne, not forgiven. God keeps silence, but he sleepeth not; the earth may spare them, but 'desolation in a moment shall swallow them,' Ps. lxxiii. 19. To the Jews the earth moved, and they stood still; to these the earth shall stand still, and themselves shall be moved.

3. There is nothing on the earth that is not moveable, if the earth itself be moveable. 'God hath laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved,' Ps. civ. 5. Yet so that he who laid it can shake it: 'He shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble,' Job ix. 6. If the earth, then whatsoever is built upon it. 'The earth shall be burnt,' saith Peter. What, alone? No; 'the earth, with the works that are therein, shall be burnt up,' 2 Peter iii. 10. The works of men's hands, the works of their brains, their very 'thoughts shall perish.' 'The Lord's voice shook the earth; and he hath said, Yet once again I will shake not the earth only, but also heaven,' Heb. xii. 26. O blessed place, that is not subject to this shaking, whose joys have not only an amiable countenance, but a glorious continuance! 'The things that are shaken shall be removed, but the things that are not shaken remain for ever.' All the terrors of this world move not him that is fixed in heaven: 'They that put their trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever,' Ps. cxxv. 1. But the tabernacles and hopes of the wicked shall perish together: 'For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth ever,' 1 John ii. 17. Whereon, saith Augustine, *Quid vis? Utrum amare temporalia, et transire cum tempore! an amare Christum, et vivere in æternum?*—Whether wilt thou love the world, and perish with it, or love Christ, and live for ever?

THIRD MIRACLE: 'The rocks rent.'—A wonderful act, to break stones and rend rocks. This gives us two observations:—

1. This did foreshew the power and efficacy of the gospel, that it should be able to break the very rocks. As the death and passion of Christ did cleave those solid and almost impenetrable substances, so the publishing of his death and passion shall rend and break in pieces the rocky hearts of men. So John Baptist said, 'God is able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham,' Matt. iii. 9. The hearts of Zaccheus, Mary Magdalene, Paul, were such rocks; yet they were cleft with the wedge of the gospel. This is that rod of Moses, able to break the hardest rocks, till they gush out with floods of penitent tears. This is Jeremiah's hammer, powerful to bruise the most obdurate hearts. The blood of the goat sacrificed, of force to dissolve adamant. There is power in the blood of Jesus to put sense in stones. Blessed

are you, if you be thus broken-hearted for him whose heart was broken for you! For 'the broken heart the Lord will not despise,' Ps. li. 17.

2. Observe the wonderful hardness of the Jews' hearts. The stones rent and clave in sunder at the cruel death of Jesus; but their hearts, more stony than stones, are no whit moved. They rend not their garments, much less their hearts; whereas the earth rent the stones, her bones, and the rocks, her ribs. The flints are softer than they; the flints break, they harden. They still belch their malicious blasphemies; the rocks relent; the stones are become men, and the men stones. Oh the senselessness of a hard heart! rocks will sooner break than that can be mollified. Even the hardest creatures are flexible to some actions,—flints to the rain, iron to the fire, stones to the hammer,—but this heart yields to nothing, neither the showers of mercy, nor the hammer of reproof, nor the fire of judgments; but, like the stithy, is still the harder for beating. All the plagues of Egypt cannot mollify the heart of Pharaoh. It is wondrously unnatural that men, made the softest-hearted of all, should be *rigidiores lupis, duriores lapidibus*,—more cruel than wolves, more hard than stones. I would to God all hard-heartedness had died with these Jews; but it is not so. How often has Christ been here crucified, in the word preaching his cross to your ears, in the sacraments presenting his death to your eyes! Think, think in your own souls, have not the stones in the walls of this church been as much moved? God forbid our obduracy should be punished as theirs was! Since they would be so stony-hearted, Jerusalem was turned to a heap of stones, and the conquering Romans dashed them pitilessly against those stones which they exceeded in hardness.

Here let the wicked see their doom: the stones that will not be softened shall be broken. There is no changing the decree of God; but change thy nature, and then know thou art not decreed to death. Stony hearts shall be broken to pieces with vengeance; do not strive to alter that doom, but alter thy own stony heart to a heart of flesh, and so prevent it in the particular. Wolves and goats shall not enter into heaven. Thou mayest pull stars out of heaven before alter this sentence; but do it thus. Leave that nature, and become one of Christ's sheep, and then thou art sure to enter. No adulterer nor covetous person, saith Paul, 'shall inherit the kingdom of heaven,' 1 Cor. vi. 9. This doom must stand, but not against thee, if thou be converted. 'Such were ye, but ye are washed,' &c., ver. 11. You are not such. Had the Jews ceased to be stones, they had been spared. God will root thorns and briars out of his vineyard. If thou wouldst not have him root out thee, become a vine, and bring forth good grapes. God threatens to 'break the hairy scalp of him that goes on in sin;' yet mayest thou ward this blow from thyself. Go no further on in sin. When God comes in judgment to visit the earth, to shatter rocks, and break stones in pieces, thou hast a heart of flesh, mollified with repentance. Let the earth quake, and the rocks tear; thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.

FOURTH MIRACLE: 'The graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose.'—Concerning this two questions are moved:—

1. Where their souls were all this while before. I answer, where the Scripture hath no tongue, we should have no ear. Most probably thus: their souls were in heaven, in Abraham's bosom, and came down to their bodies by divine dispensation, to manifest the power and deity of Christ.

2. Whither they went afterwards. I answer, by the same likelihood, that they died no more, but waited on the earth till Christ's resurrection, and then attended him to heaven. But these things that are concealed should not be

disputed. *Tutum est nescire quod tegitur*,—It is a safe ignorance where a man is not commanded to know. Let us see what profitable instructions we can hence derive to ourselves. They are many, and therefore I will but lightly touch them :—

1. This teacheth us, that Christ, by his death, hath vanquished death, even in the grave, his own chamber. That giant is subdued, the graves fly open, the dead go out. This bears ample witness to that speech of Christ : ‘ I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,’ John xi. 25. The bodies of the saints, what part of the earth or sea soever holds their dusts, shall not be detained in prison when Christ calls for them ; as the members must needs go, when the head draws them. He shall speak to all creatures, *Reddite quod devorastis*,—Restore whatsoever of man you have devoured ; not a dust, not a bone can be denied. The bodies of the saints shall be raised, saith Augustine,* *tanta facilitate, quanta felicitate*,—with as much easiness as happiness. *Desinunt ista, non pereunt ; mors intermittit vitam, non eripit*,†—Our bodies are left for a time, but perish not ; death may discontinue life, not disannul it. *Intermittitur, non interimitur*,—it may be paused, cannot be destroyed.

2. Observe, that all the dead do not rise, but *many*, and those *saints*. The general resurrection is reserved till the last day ; this a pledge or earnest of it. Now, who shall rise with this comfort ? None but saints ; as here Christ takes no other company from the graves but saints : ‘ The dead in Christ shall rise first,’ 1 Thess. iv. 16. Christ is called ‘ the first-born from the dead,’ Col. i. 28. He hath risen, and his shall next follow him : ‘ Every man in his own order : Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming,’ 1 Cor. xv. 23. Worms and corruption shall not hinder. He that said ‘ to corruption, Thou art my mother ; and to the worms, You are my brethren and sisters,’ said also, ‘ I know that my Redeemer liveth, and one day with these eyes I shall behold him.’ The wicked shall also be raised, though with horror, to ‘ look upon him whom they have pierced.’ But as Christ did here, so will he at the last—single out the saints to bear him company.

3. This sheweth the true operation of Christ’s death in all men. We are all dead in our sins, as these bodies were in their graves ; now, when Christ’s death becomes effectual to our souls, we rise again and become new creatures. From the grave of this world we come into the church, ‘ the holy city.’ But thou complainest of the deadness of thy heart. It is well thou complainest ; there is some life, or thou couldst not feel the deadness. ‘ The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear it shall live,’ John v. 25. If this word hath raised thee from death, and wrought spiritual life in thy heart, thou shalt perceive it by thy breathing, words glorifying God ; and by thy moving, in the ways, and to the works, of obedience.

4. Observe, that these saints which arose are said to have slept. The death of the godly is often called a sleep. So it is said of the patriarchs and kings of Judah, they ‘ slept with their fathers.’ So Paul saith, they ‘ sleep in Christ,’ 1 Cor. xv. 18. The coffin is a couch ; *in quo mollius dormit, qui bene in vita laboravit*,—wherein he takes good rest that hath wrought hard in the work of his salvation before he went to bed. *Felix somnus cum requie, requies cum voluptate, voluptas cum æternitate*,—It is a sweet sleep that hath peace with rest, rest with pleasure, pleasure with everlastingness. So the godly sleep, till the sound of a trumpet shall wake them, and then eternal glory shall receive them.

* Enchiridion.

† Sen. Epist. 36.

5. Lastly, observe, that Jerusalem is called the holy city, though she were at this time a sink of sin, and a debauched harlot. Either, as some think, that she is called holy because she was once holy. So Rahab is called the harlot, because she was a harlot. Simon is termed the leper, Matt. xxvi. 6, for that he was a leper; and Matthew the publican, Matt. x. 3, for that he was a publican. Or else she was called holy for the covenant's sake, in regard of the temple, sacrifices, service of God, and of the elect people of God that were in it. Whence we may infer how unlawful it is to separate from a church because it hath some corruptions. Is apostate Jerusalem, that hath crucified her Saviour, called still the holy city; and must England, that departeth in nothing from the faith and doctrine of her Saviour, for some scarce discernible imperfections, be rejected as a fœdifragous strumpet? But there be wicked persons in it. What then? She may be still a holy city. *Recedatur ab iniquitate, non ab iniquis*,—Let us depart from sin; we cannot run from sinners.

Thus we have considered the miracles; let us now look into the causes wherefore they were wrought.

These may be reduced into five:—In respect of, 1. The *sufferer* dying; 2. The *creatures* obeying; 3. The *Jews* persecuting; 4. The *women* beholding; 5. The *disciples* forsaking.

1. In regard to *Christ*, to testify not only his innocency, but his majesty. His innocency, that he was, as Pilate's wife acknowledged, a 'just man,' Matt. xxvii. 19. His majesty, as the centurion confessed, 'seeing the earthquake, and the things that were done, Truly this was the Son of God,' ver. 54. He seemed a worm, no man: the contempt and derision of the people, forsaken of his confidence. In the midst of all, God will not leave him without witnesses, but raiseth up senseless creatures as preachers of his deity. *Est æterni filius qui illic pendet mortuus*,—He that hangs there dead on the cross is the Son of the eternal God. Rather than the children of God shall want witnesses of their integrity, God will work miracles for their testimony.

2. In regard of the *creatures*, to shew their obedience to their Creator; they are not wanting to him that gave being to them. These demonstrate it was their Lord that suffered, and that they were ready to execute vengeance on his murderers. The heaven that was dark would have rained fire on them; the earth that quaked, shook them to pieces; the rocks that rent, would have tumbled on them; and the graves that opened to let out all other prisoners, have swallowed them quick. They all waited but his command to perform this revengeful execution. Who shall now dare to persecute Christ in his members? The stones are thy enemies, the earth gapes for thee, hell itself enlargeth her jaws; if the Lord but hiss to them, they are suddenly in an uproar against thee. Go on in your malice, you raging persecutors, you cannot wrong Christ, no, not in his very members, but you pull the fists of all creatures in heaven, earth, and hell, about your ears: flies from the air, beasts from the earth, poison from sustenance, thunder from the clouds; yea, at last also, though now they help you, the very devils from hell against you. All creatures shoot their malignancy at them that shoot theirs at Christ.

3. In respect of the *Jews*, his enemies, to shame and confound them. The rocks and graves are moved at his passion; not they. *Lapides tremunt, homines fremunt*. The stones rend, the huge earth quakes with fear, the Jews rage with malice. We see how difficult it is to mollify a hard heart: harder than to remove a mountain, raise the dead, cleave a rock, shake the

whole earth. It is a great miracle to convert a wicked man, greater than rending of rocks. Moses's rod struck a rock thrice, and did it. Ministers have stroke men's rocky hearts three hundred times, and cannot. The graves sooner open than the sepulchres of sin and darkness; the vast earth sooner shakes than men's hearts at God's judgments.

4. In respect of the *women* that stood by, that their faith might be confirmed. For seeing him on the cross, at their mercy whose bowels never knew the softness of such a nature, exposed to all the tyranny of their hands and tongues: hands that, like cruel surgeons, searched every part of his blessed body; tongues that ran nimbly through all the passages of obloquy, till they had overtaken reproach itself, and cast it on him: his body at the full will of the tormentors, and his soul not without intolerable terrors; as they might judge by the strange speech that came from him: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Doth man triumph over him, and doth God forsake him? This might breed in their hearts a suspicion, either that he was a deceiver, or else utterly cut off. To stifle this doubt in the very birth, he shakes the earth, and rends the rocks; that as they knew him dying *hominem verum*, so they might perceive him, doing these miracles, not *hominem merum*, but the ever-living God. These wonders blow the spark of their faith, almost dying with Christ, and root in their hearts a deep and infallible persuasion of their Saviour. Something there is to keep the faith of the elect from quenching, though Satan rain on it showers of discouragements. Though no object greets the eye of flesh but discouragement, yet there is a secret spirit within, that will never suffer the faith to fail.

5. In regard of the *disciples*, to shame and convince them for leaving him. Christ had said before, *Si hi tacerent, loquerentur lapides*,—'If these,' speaking of his disciples, 'should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out,' Luke xix. 40. Lo, this saying is here come to pass: the disciples hold their peace, the stones speak; they forsake Christ, the rocks proclaim him. Such a shame is it for apostles and ministers of Christ to hold their peace, that if they be silent, the very stones shall preach against them. The walls, windows, pavements of churches shall cry out against such pastors, that undertake the office of shepherd, and feed Christ's flock with nothing but air. And even you that come to hear, if no remorse can be put into your hearts at the relation of our Saviour's death; if you have no feeling of his sorrows, no apprehension of these mysteries, no repentance of your sins, no emendation of your lives; know that the very seats whereon you sit, the walls of your temples, the very stones you tread on, shall bear witness against you.

Now, the Lord Jesus, that at his death brake the rocks, by the virtue of his death break our rocky hearts, that being mollified in this life, they may be glorified in the life to come! Grant this, O Father, for thy mercies' sake; O Christ, for thy merits' sake; O Holy Spirit, for thy name's sake: to whom, three Persons, one only wise and eternal God, be glory and praise for ever! Amen.