

bodies. He is the "resurrection and the life," John xi. 25. If your bodies be members of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, they shall certainly arise in glory. Get into this ark now, and you shall come forth with joy into the new world. Rise from your sins; cast away these grave-clothes, putting off these former lusts. How can any one imagine, that those who continue dead while they live, shall come forth, at the last day, unto the resurrection of life? But that will be the privilege of all those who, having first consecrated their souls and bodies to the Lord by faith, do glorify him with their bodies, as well as their souls; living and acting to him, and for him, yea, and suffering for him too, when he calls them to it.

PART IV.

OF THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed, &c.—Unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.—MATT. XXV. 31—34, 41, 46.

THE dead being raised, and those found alive at the coming of the Judge changed, then follows the general judgment, plainly and awfully described in this portion of Scripture; in which we shall take notice of the following particulars: 1. The coming of the Judge, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory," &c. The Judge is Jesus Christ, "the Son of man;" the same by whose almighty power, as he is God, the dead will be raised. He is also called the King, ver. 34, the judging of the world being an act of the royal Mediator's kingly office. He will come in glory; glorious in his own person, and having a glorious retinue, even all the holy angels with him, to minister unto him at this great solemnity. 2. The mounting the tribunal. He is a King, and therefore it is a throne, a glorious throne, "He shall sit upon the throne of his glory," ver. 31. 3. The appearance of the parties. These are, all

nations; all and every one, small and great, of whatever nation, who ever were, are, or shall be on the face of the earth; all shall be gathered before him, summoned before his tribunal. 4. The sorting of them. He shall separate the elect sheep and reprobate goats, setting each party by themselves; as a shepherd, who feeds his sheep and goats together all the day, separates them at night, ver. 32. The godly he will set on his right hand, as the most honourable place; the wicked on the left, ver. 33. Yet so as they shall be both before him, ver. 32. It seems to be an allusion to a custom in the Jewish courts, in which one sat at the right hand of the judge, who wrote the sentence of absolution; another at the left, who wrote the sentence of condemnation. 5. The sentencing of the parties, and that according to their works; the righteous being absolved, and the wicked condemned, ver. 34—41. 6. The execution of both sentences, in the driving away of the wicked into hell, and carrying the godly to heaven, ver. 46.

DOCTRINE. There shall be a general judgment.—This doctrine I shall, I. Confirm; II. Explain; and then apply.

I. For confirmation of this great truth, that there shall be a general judgment.

1. It is evident from plain Scripture testimonies.—The world has in all ages been told of it. Enoch, before the flood, taught it in his prophecy, related in Jude, ver. 14, 15, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all,” &c. Daniel describes it, chap. vii. 9, 10, “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” The apostle is very express, Acts xvii. 31, “He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.” See Matt. xvi. 27; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 Thess. i. 7—10; Rev. xx. 11—15. God not only said it, but he has sworn it, Rom. xiv. 10, 11, “We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God.” So that the truth of God is most solemnly pledged for it.

2. The perfect justice and goodness of God, the sovereign ruler of the world, necessarily require it, inasmuch as they require its being well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Yet we often see wickedness exalted, while truth and righteousness fall in

the streets ; piety oppressed, while profanity and irreligion triumph. This is so very common, that every one who sincerely embraces the way of holiness, must and doth lay his account with the loss of all he has, which the world can take away from him, Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," But it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, that the affairs of men should always continue in the state which they appear in, from one generation to another ; and that every man should not be rewarded according to his works : and since that is not done in this life, there must be a judgment to come ; "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven," 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. There will be a day in which the tables will be turned ; and the wicked shall be called to an account for all their sins, and suffer the due punishment of them ; and the pious shall be prosperous : for, as the apostle argues for the happy resurrection of the saints, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. It is true, God sometimes punishes the wicked in this life : that men may know, "He is a God that judgeth in the earth : " but yet much wickedness remains unpunished and undiscovered, to be a pledge of the judgment to come. If none of the wicked were punished here, they would conclude that God had utterly forsaken the earth ; if all of them were punished in this life, men would be apt to think there were no after reckoning. Therefore, in the wisdom of God some are punished now, and some not. Sometimes the Lord smites sinners, in the very act of sin ; to shew unto the world, that he is witness to all their wickedness, and will call them to an account for it. Sometimes he delays long ere he strikes, that he may discover to the world that he forgets not men's ill deeds, though he does not immediately punish them. Besides all this, the sins of many outlive them ; and the impure fountain opened by them, runs long after they are dead and gone. As in the case of Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, whose sin ran all along unto the end of that unhappy kingdom, 2 Kings xvii. 22, 23, "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam, which he did ; they departed not from them ; until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight."

3. The resurrection of Christ is a certain proof, that there shall be a day of judgment. This argument Paul uses to convince the Athenians, that Jesus Christ will be the Judge of the world ; "Whereof," says he, "he hath given assurance to all men, in that

he hath raised him from the dead," Acts xvii. 38. The Judge is already named, his patent written and sealed, yea, and read before all men, in his rising again from the dead. Hereby God has given assurance of it: by raising Christ from the dead, he has exhibited his credentials as Judge of the world. When, in the days of his humiliation, he was cited before a tribunal, arraigned, accused, and condemned of men; he plainly told them of this judgment, and that he himself would be the Judge, Matt. xxvi. 64, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And now that he is raised from the dead, though condemned as a blasphemer on this very head, is it not an undeniable proof, from Heaven, of the truth of what he asserted? Moreover, this was one of the great ends of Christ's death and resurrection; "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord," that is, "the Lord Judge," as is evident from the context, "both of the dead and of the living," Rom. xiv. 9.

4. Every man bears about with him a witness to this within his own breast, Rom. ii. 15, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." There is a tribunal erected within every man, where conscience is accuser, witness, and judge, binding over the sinner to the judgment of God. This fills the most profligate wretches with horror, and inwardly stings them, upon the commission of some atrocious crime; in effect summoning them to answer for it, before the Judge of the quick and dead. And thus it does, even when the crime is secret, and hid from the eyes of the world. It reaches those, whom the laws of men cannot reach, because of their power or craft. Men have fled from the judgment of their fellow-creatures; yet go where they will, conscience as the supreme Judge's officer, still keeps hold of them, reserving them in its chains, to the judgment of the great day. And whether they escape punishment from men, or fall by the hand of public justice, when they perceive death's approach, they hear from within, of this after reckoning; being constrained to hearken thereto, in these the most serious minutes of their lives. If there be some, in whom nothing of this doth appear, we have no more ground thence to conclude against it, than we have to conclude, that because some men do not groan, therefore they have no pain; or that dying is a mere jest, because there have been some who seemed to make little else of it. A good face may be put upon an ill conscience; the more hopeless men's case is, they reckon it more their interest to make no reflections on their state and case.

But every one, who will consult himself seriously, will find in himself the witness to the judgment to come. Even the heathens wanted not a notion of it, though mixed with fictions of their own. Hence, though some of the Athenians, "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, mocked," yet there is no account of their mocking, when they heard of the general judgment, Acts xvii. 31, 32.

II. For explanation, the following particulars may serve to give some view of the transactions of that great day.

1. God shall judge the world by Jesus Christ. "He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31. The psalmist tells us, that God is judge himself, Psalm l. 6. The holy blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is Judge, in respect to judicial authority, dominion, and power: but the Son incarnate is the Judge, in respect of dispensation, and special exercise of that power. The judgment shall be exercised or performed by him as the royal Mediator; for he has delegated power of judgment from the Father, as his servant, "his King," whom he hath "set upon his holy hill of Zion," Psalm ii. 6, and to whom he "hath committed all judgment," John v. 22. This is a part of the Mediator's exaltation, given him in consequence of his voluntary humiliation, Phil. ii. 8—10, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," that is, power and authority over all, to-wit, "That at," or in, "the name of Jesus," not the name Jesus; that is not the name above every name; being common to others, as to Justus, Col. iv. 11; and Joshua, Heb. iv. 8, "every knee shall bow." This is explained by the apostle himself, of "standing before the judgment-seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10, 11. So he who was judged and condemned of men, shall be the Judge of men and angels.

2. Jesus Christ the Judge, descending from heaven into the air, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. "He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," Matt. xxiv. 30. This his coming will be a mighty surprise to the world, which will be found in deep security; foolish virgins sleeping, and the wise slumbering. There will then be much luxury and debauchery in the world, little sobriety and watchfulness; a great throng business, but a great scarcity of faith and holiness. "As it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark: and the flood came, and

destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.—Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed," Luke xvii. 26—30. The coming of the Judge will surprise some at markets, buying and selling; others at table, eating and drinking, and making merry; others busy with their new plantings; some building new houses; nay, the wedding-day of some will be their own and the world's judgment-day. But the Judge cometh! the markets are marred; the buyer throws away what he has bought; the seller casts down his money; they are raised from the table, and their mirth is extinguished in a moment; though the tree be set in the earth, the gardener cannot stay to cast the earth about it; the workmen throw away their tools, when the house is half built, and the owner regards it no more; the bridegroom, bride, and guests, must leave the wedding day, and appear before the tribunal; for, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. i. 7. He shall come most gloriously; for he will "come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark viii. 38. When he came in the flesh, to die for sinners, he laid aside the robes of his glory, and was despised and rejected of men: but when he comes again, to judge the world, such shall be his visible glory and majesty, that it shall cast an eternal veil over all earthly glory, and fill his greatest enemies with fear and dread. Never had prince and potentate in the world such a glorious train, as will accompany this Judge: all the holy angels shall come with him, for his honour and service. Then He, who was led to the cross with a band of soldiers, will be gloriously attended to the place of judgment, by "not a multitude of the heavenly host," but the whole host of angels: "all his holy angels," says the text.

3. At the coming of the Judge, the summons is given to the parties by the sound of the last trumpet; at which the dead are raised, and those found alive are changed; see 1 Thes. iv. 16, 17. O loud trumpet, that shall be heard at once, in all corners of the earth, and of the sea! O wonderful voice, that will not only disturb those who sleep in the dust, but effectually awaken, rouse them out of their sleep, and raise them from death! Were trumpets sounding now, drums beating, furious soldiers crying and killing men; women and children running and shrieking, the wounded groaning and dying; those who are in the graves would have no more disturbance than if the world were in most profound peace. Yea, were stormy winds casting down the lofty oaks, the seas roaring and swallowing up the ships, the most dreadful thunders going along the heavens, lightnings

every where flashing, the earth quaking, trembling, opening, and swallowing up whole cities, and burying multitudes at once; the dead would still enjoy a perfect repose, and sleep soundly in the dust, though their own dust should be thrown out of its place. But at the sound of this trumpet, they shall all awake. The morning is come, they can sleep no longer; the time for the dead to be judged: they must get out of their graves, and appear before the Judge.

4. The Judge shall sit down on the tribunal; he shall sit on the throne of his glory. He stood before a tribunal on earth, and was condemned as a malefactor: now he shall sit on his own tribunal, and judge the world. He once hung upon the cross, covered with shame; now he shall sit on a throne of glory. What this throne shall be whether a bright cloud, or what else, I shall not inquire. Our eyes shall answer to that question at length. John "saw a great white throne," Rev. xx. 11. "His throne," says Daniel, "was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire," chap vii. 9. Whatever it be, doubtless it will be a throne glorious beyond expression; and in comparison with which the most glorious throne on the earth is but a seat on a dunghill; and the sight of it will equally surprise kings who sat on thrones in this life, and beggars who sat on dunghills. It will be a throne, for stateliness and glory, suited to the quality of him who shall sit on it. Never had a judge such a throne, and never had a throne such a judge on it.

Leaving the discovery of the nature of the throne until that day, it concerns us more nearly to consider what a Judge will sit on it; a point on which we are not left to uncertain conjectures. The Judge on the throne will be, (1.) A Judge visible to our bodily eyes, Rev. i. 7, "Every eye shall see him." When God gave the law on mount Sinai, the people "saw no similitude, only heard a voice:" but when he calls the world to an account how they observed his law, the man Christ being Judge, we shall see our Judge with our eyes, either to our eternal comfort, or to our eternal confusion, according to the entertainment which we give him now. That very body which was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, between two thieves, shall then be seen on the throne, shining in glory. We now see him symbolically, in the sacrament of his supper; the saints see him by the eye of faith; then all shall see him with those eyes now in their heads. (2.) A Judge having full authority and power to render unto every one according to his works, Christ, as God, hath authority of himself; and as Mediator he hath a judicial power and authority, which his Father has invested him with, according to the covenant between the Father and the Son for the redemption of sinners. His divine glory will be light, by which

all men shall see clearly to read his commission for this great and honourable employment. "All power is given to him in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. He hath "the keys of hell and of death," Rev. i. 18. There can be no appeal from his tribunal: sentence once passed there, must stand for ever; there is no reversing it. All appeals are from an inferior to a superior court: but when God gives sentence against a man, where can he find a higher court to bring his process to? This judgment is the Mediator's judgment, and therefore the last judgment. If the Intercessor be against us, who can be for us? If Christ condemn us, who will absolve us? (3.) A Judge of infinite wisdom. His eyes will pierce into, and clearly discern the most intricate cases. His omniscience qualifies him for judging the most retired thoughts, as well as the words and works. The most subtile sinner shall not be able to deceive him, nor, by any artful management, to palliate the crime. He is the searcher of hearts, to whom nothing can be hid or perplexed; but all things are naked and open unto his eyes, Heb. iv. 13. (4.) A most just Judge; a Judge of perfect integrity. He is the righteous Judge, 2 Tim. iv. 8, and his throne a great white throne, Rev. xx. 11, from whence no judgment shall proceed, but what is pure and spotless. The Thebans painted justice blind, and without hands; because judges ought not to respect persons, nor take bribes. The Areopagites judged in the dark; that they might not regard who spoke, but what was spoken. With the Judge on his throne, there will be no respect of persons; he will neither regard the person of the rich, nor of the poor: but just judgment shall go forth, in every one's cause. (5.) An omnipotent Judge, able to put his sentence in execution. The united force of devils and wicked men will be altogether unable to withstand him. They cannot retard the execution of the sentence against them one moment; far less can they stop it altogether. "Thousand thousands of angels minister unto him," Dan. vii. 10. And, by the breath of his mouth, he can drive the cursed herd whither he pleases.

5. The parties shall appear. These are men and devils. Although the fallen angels were, from the first moment of their sinning, subjected to the wrath of God, and were cast down to hell, and wherever they go they carry their hell about with them; yet it is evident that they are reserved unto judgment, 2 Pet. ii. 4, namely, unto the judgment of the great day, Jude verse 6. Then they shall be solemnly and publicly judged, 1 Cor. vi. 3, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" At that day they shall answer for their trade of sinning, and tempting to sin, which they have

been carrying on from the beginning. And they shall receive the due reward of all the dishonour which they have done to God, and of all the mischief which they have done to men. Those wicked spirits now in chains, though not in such strait custody, but that they go about, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, shall then receive their final sentence, and be shut up in their den, in the prison; where they shall be held in extreme and unspeakable torment, through all eternity, Rev. xx. 10. "And the devil, that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." In prospect of which, the devils said to Christ, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matt. viii. 29.

But what we are chiefly concerned to take notice of, is the case of men at that day. All men must appear before this tribunal. All of each sex, of every age, quality, and condition; the great and small, noble and ignoble; none are excepted. Adam and Eve, with all their sons and daughters, every one who has had or, to the end of the world, shall have a living soul united to a body, will make up this great congregation. Even those who refused to come to the throne of grace, shall be forced to the bar of justice: for there can be no hiding from the all-seeing Judge, no flying from him who is present every where, no resisting of him who is armed with almighty power, "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. v. 10. "Before him shall be gathered all nations," says the text. This is to be done by the ministry of angels. By them shall the elect be gathered, Mark xiii. 27, "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds." And they also shall gather the reprobate, Matth. xiii. 40, 41, "So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. From all corners of the world shall the inhabitants thereof be gathered unto the place where he shall set his throne for judgment.

6. There shall be a separation made between the righteous and the wicked; the fair company of the elect sheep being set on Christ's right hand, and the reprobate goats on his left. There is no necessity to wait for this separation, till the trial is over; since the parties will rise out of their graves with plain outward marks of distinction, as was mentioned before. The separation seems to be effected by that double gathering, before mentioned; the one of the elect, Mark xiii. 2: the other of them that do iniquity, Matt. xiii. 41. The elect being "caught up together in the clouds, meet the

Lord in the air," 1 Thess. iv. 17, and so are set on his right hand ; and the reprobate left on the earth, are placed upon the Judge's left hand. Here is now a total separation of two parties, who were always opposite to each other in their principles, aims, and manner of life ; who, when together, were a burden the one to the other, under which the one groaned, and the other raged ; but now they are finally parted, never to come together any more. The righteous and wicked, like the iron and clay, which could never mix, See Dan. ii. 41—43, are quite separated ; the one being drawn up into the air, by the attractive virtue of " the stone cut out of the mountain," namely, Jesus Christ ; and the other left upon its earth, to be trod under foot.

Now let us look to the right hand, and there we shall see a glorious company of saints shining, as so many stars in their orbs ; and with a cheerful countenance beholding Him who sitteth upon the throne. Here will be two wonderful sights, which the world never saw. 1. A great congregation of saints, in which there will not be so much as one hypocrite. There was a bloody Cain in Adam's family ; a cursed Ham in Noah's family, in the ark ; a treacherous Judas in Christ's own family ; but in that company there will be none but sealed ones, members of Christ, having all one Father. This is a sight reserved for that day. 2. All the godly upon one side. Seldom or never do the saints on earth make such harmony, but there are some jarring strings among them. It is not to be expected, that men who see but in part, though they are all going to one city, should agree as to every step in the way : no, we must not look for it, in this state of imperfection. But at that day, Paul and Barnabas shall meet in peace and unity, though once " the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, the one from the other," Acts xv. 39. There shall be no more divisions, no more separate standing amongst those who belonged to Christ. All the godly, of the different parties, shall then be upon one side ; seeing, whatever were their differences in lesser things, while in the world, yet even then they met and concerted all in one Lord Jesus Christ, by a true and lively faith, and in the one way of holiness, or practical godliness. And vile hypocrites, of whatever party, shall be led forth with the workers of iniquity.

Look to the left hand, and there you will see the cursed goats, all the wicked ones, from Cain to the last ungodly person who shall be in the world, gathered together into one most miserable congregation. There are many assemblies of the wicked now ; then there shall be but one. But all of them shall be present there,

brought together, as one herd for the slaughter, bellowing and roaring, weeping and howling, for the miseries come, and that are coming on them. And remember, thou shalt not be a mere spectator, to look at these two such different companies; but must thyself take thy place in one of the two, and shalt share with the company, whatever hand it be on. Those who now abhor no society so much as that of the saints, would then be glad to be allowed to get in among them, though it were but to lie at their feet. But then not one tare shall be found with the wheat; He will thoroughly purge his floor. Many of the right-hand men of this world, will be left-hand men in that day. Many, who must have the door on the right hand of those who are better than they, if the righteous be more excellent than his neighbour, shall then be turned to the left hand, as most despicable wretches! O how terrible will this separation be to the ungodly! How dreadful will this gathering them together into one company be! What they will not believe, they will then see, namely, that but few are saved. They think it enough now to be neighbour-like, and can securely follow the multitude: but the multitude on the left hand will yield them no comfort. How will it sting the ungodly Christian, to see himself set on the same hand with Turks and Pagans! How will it gall profane Protestants, to stand with idolatrous Papists; praying people, with their profane neighbours, who mocked at religious exercises; formal professors, strangers to the new birth and the power of godliness, with persecutors! Now there are many opposite societies in the world; but then all the ungodly shall be in one society. And how dreadful will the faces of companions in sin be to one another there! What doleful shrieks, when the drunkards, who have had many a jovial day together, shall see one another in the face; when the husband and wife, the parents and children, masters and servants, and neighbours, who have been snares and stumbling-blocks to one another, to the ruin of their own souls and those of their relatives, shall meet again in that miserable society! Then there will be curses instead of salutations; and tearing of themselves, and raging against one another, instead of the wonted embraces.

7. The parties shall be tried. The trial cannot be difficult, seeing the Judge is omniscient, and nothing can be hid from him. But, that his righteous judgment may be made evident to all, he will set the hidden things of darkness in the clearest light at that trial, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

Men shall be tried, 1. Upon their works; for "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl. xii. 14. The Judge will try

every man's conversation, and set his deeds done in the body, with all the circumstances thereof, in a true light. Then will many actions, commended and applauded of men, as good and just, be discovered to have been evil and abominable in the sight of God; and many works, now condemned by the world, will be approved and commended by the great Judge, as good and just. Secret things will be brought to light; and what was hid from the view of the world, shall be laid open. Wickedness, which hath kept its lurking place in spite of all human search, will then be brought forth to the glory of God, and the confusion of impenitent sinners, who hid it.—The world appears now very vile in the eyes of those who are exercised to godliness; and it will then appear a thousand times more vile, when that which is done of men in secret comes to be discovered. Every good action shall then be remembered; and the hidden religion and good works, most industriously concealed by the saints from the eyes of men, shall no more lie hid: for though the Lord will not allow men to proclaim every one his own goodness, yet he himself will do it in due time. 2. Their words shall be judged, Matt. xii. 37, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Not a word spoken for God and his cause in the world, from love to himself, shall be forgotten. They are all kept in remembrance, and shall be brought forth as evidences of faith, and of an interest in Christ. Mal. iii. 16, 17, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." The tongue, which did run at random, shall then confess to God; and the speaker shall find it to have been followed, and every word noted that dropped from the unsanctified lips. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment, Matth. xii. 36. And if they shall give account of idle words, that is, words spoken to no good purpose, neither for God's glory, nor their own nor their neighbour's good; how much more shall men's wicked words, their sinful oaths, curses, lies, filthy communications, and bitter words, be called over again in that day! The tongues of many shall then fall upon themselves, and ruin them. 3. Men's thoughts shall be brought into judgment: the Judge will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Thoughts go free from man's judgment, but not from the judgment of the heart-searching God, who knows men's thoughts, without the help of signs to discern them by. The secret springs of men's actions will then be brought to light; and the sins,

that never came further than the heart, will then be laid open. O what a figure will man's corrupt nature present, when his inside is turned out, and all his speculative impurities are exposed! The rottenness that is within many a whited sepulchre, the speculative filthiness and wantonness, murder and malignity, now lurking in the hearts of men, as in the chambers of imagery, will then be discovered, and what good was in the hearts of any shall no more lie concealed. If it was in their hearts to build a house to the Lord, they shall hear, that they did well that it was in their heart.

This trial will be righteous and impartial, accurate and searching, clear and evident. The Judge is the righteous Judge, and he will do right to every one. He has a just balance for good and evil actions, and for honest and false hearts. The fig-leaf cover of hypocrisy will then be blown aside, and the hypocrite's nakedness will appear; as when the Lord came to judge Adam and Eve "in the cool," or, as the word is, "in the wind of the day," Gen. iii. 8. "The fire," which tries things most exquisitely, "shall try every man's work, of what sort it is," 1 Cor. iii. 13. Man's judgment is often perplexed and confused: but here the whole process shall be clear and evident, as written with a sunbeam. It shall be clear to the Judge, to whom no case can be intricate; to the parties, who shall be convinced, Jude ver. 15. And the multitudes on both sides shall see that the Judge is clear when he judgeth; for then "the heavens shall declare his righteousness," in the audience of all the world; and so it shall be universally known, Psalm l. 6.

On these accounts it is, that this trial is held out in the Scripture, under the notion of "opening of books;" and men are said to be "judged out of those things written in the books," Rev. xx. 12. The judge of the world, who infallibly knows all things, has no need of books to be laid before him, to prevent mistakes in any point of law or fact; but the expression points at his proceedings as most nice, accurate, just and well grounded, in every step of them. Now, there are four books that shall be opened in that day.

(1.) The book of God's remembrance, or omniscience, Mal. iii. 16. This is an exact record of every man's state, thoughts, words, and deeds, good or evil: it is, as it were, a day-book, in which the Lord puts down all that passes in men's hearts, lips, and lives; and it is a reckoning up every day that one lives. In it are recorded men's sins and good works, secret and open, with all their circumstances. Here are registered all their privileges, temporal and spiritual mercies, often made ready to their hand; the checks, admonitions, and rebukes, given by teachers, neighbours, afflictions, and men's own consciences; every thing in its due order.—This book will serve

only as a bill of indictment, in respect of the ungodly ; but it will be for another use in respect of the godly, namely, for a memorial of their good. The opening of it is the Judge's bringing to light what is written in it ; the reading, as it were of the bill and memorial, respectively, in their hearing.

(2.) The book of conscience will be opened, which shall be as a thousand witnesses to prove the fact, Rom. ii. 15, " Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." Conscience is a censor going with every man wherever he goes, taking an account of his deeds done in the body, and, as it were, noting them in a book.—Much is written in it, which cannot be read now ; the writing of conscience being, in many cases, like to that which is made with the juice of lemons, not to be read till it is held before the fire ; but then men shall read it clearly and distinctly ; the fire which is to try every man's work, will make the book of conscience legible in every point.

Though the book be sealed now, the conscience blind, dumb, and deaf, the seals will then be broken, and the book opened. There shall be no more a silent conscience, and far less a seared conscience, amongst all the ungodly crew : but their conscience shall be most quick-sighted, and most lively, in that day. None shall then call good evil, or evil good. Ignorance of what sin is, and what things are sins, will have no place among them : and the subtle reasonings of men, in favour of their lusts, will then be for ever baffled by their own conscience. None shall have the favour, if I may so speak, of lying under the soft cover of delusion ; but they shall all be convicted by their conscience. Whether they will or not, they must look on this book, read, be confounded, and stand speechless, knowing that nothing is charged upon them by mistake ; since this is a book which was always in their own custody. Thus shall the Judge make every man see himself in the glass of his own conscience, which will make quick work.

(3.) The book of the law shall be opened. This book is the standard and rule, by which is known what is right, and what is wrong ; as also, what sentence is to be passed accordingly, on those who are under it.—As to the opening of this book, in a statute, which shews what is sin, and what is duty ; it agrees with the opening of the book of conscience : for conscience is set, by the sovereign law-giver, in every man's breast, to be his private teacher, to shew him the law ; and his private pastor, to make application of the same ; and at that day, it will be perfectly fit for its office, so that the conscience, which is most stupid now, shall then read to the man most accurate, but dreadful lectures on the law. But what seems

principally pointed at by the opening of this book, is the opening of that part of it which determines the reward of men's works. Now the law promises life, upon perfect obedience: but none can be found on the right hand, or on the left, who will pretend to that, when once the book of conscience is opened. It threatens death upon disobedience, and will effectually bring it upon all under its dominion.—And this part of the book of the law, determining the reward of men's works, is opened, only to shew what must be the portion of the ungodly, and that there they may read their sentence, before it is pronounced. But it is not opened for the sentence of the saints; for no sentence absolving a sinner could ever be drawn out of it. The law promises life, not as it is a rule of actions, but as a covenant of works; therefore innocent man could not have demanded life upon his obedience, till the law was reduced into the form of a covenant; as was shewn before. But the saints, having been, in this life, brought under a new covenant, namely, the covenant of grace, were dead to the law as a covenant of works, and it was dead to them. Wherefore, as they shall not now have any fear of death from it; so they can have no hope of life from it, since "they are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. But, for their sentence, "another book is opened."

Thus the book of the law is opened, for the sentence against all those on the left hand: and by it they will clearly see the justice of the judgment against them, and how the Judge proceeds therein according to law. Nevertheless, there will be this difference, namely that those who had only the natural law, and lived not under any special revelation, shall be judged by that law of nature they had in their hearts; which law declares "that they which commit such things," as they will stand convicted of "are worthy of death," Rom. i. 32. But those who had the written law, to whom the word of God came, sounding in the visible church, shall be judged by that written law. So says the apostle, Rom. ii. 12, "For as many as have sinned without" the written "law, shall also perish without" the written "law: and as many as have sinned in the law," that is, under the written law, "shall also be judged by the" written "law."

(4.) "Another book" shall be "opened, which is the book of life," Rev. xx. 12. In this the names of all the elect are written, as Christ said to his disciples, Luke x. 20, "Your names are written in heaven." This book contains God's gracious and unchangeable purpose, to bring all the elect to eternal life; and that, in order thereto, they be redeemed by the blood of his Son, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and raised up by him at the last day

without sin. It is now lodged in the Mediator's hand, as the book of "the manner of the kingdom:" and having perfected the work the Father gave him to do, he shall, on the great day, produce and open the book, and present the persons therein named, "faultless before the presence of his glory, Jude, verse 24; not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. v. 27. Not one of those who are named in the book will be missing. They shall be found qualified, according to the order of the book, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, raised up, without spot: what remains then, but, according to the same book, they obtain the great end, namely, everlasting life? This may be gathered from that precious promise, Rev. iii. 5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment," being raised in glory; "and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father:" it shall be, as it were, read out, among the rest of God's elect, "and before his angels." Here is now the ground of the saints' absolution, the ground of the blessed sentence they shall receive. The book of life being opened, it will be known to all, who are elected, and who are not.—Thus far of the trial of the parties.

8. Then shall the Judge pronounce this blessed sentence on the saints, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34. It is most probable, the man Christ will pronounce it with an audible voice: which not only all the saints, but all the wicked likewise, shall hear and understand. Who can conceive the inexpressible joy, with which these happy ones will hear these words? Who can imagine that fulness of joy, which will be poured into their hearts, with these words reaching their ears? And who can conceive how much of hell shall break forth into the hearts of all the ungodly crew, by these words of heaven? It is certain that this sentence shall be pronounced, before the sentence of damnation. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed," &c. Matt. xxv. 34. "Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed," &c. verse 41. There is no need of this order, that the saints may, without fear, hear the other sentence on the reprobate: they who are raised in glory, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, presented without spot, and whose souls, for the far greater part of them, have been so long in heaven before, shall not be capable of any such fear. But hereby they will be brought in orderly, to sit in judgment, as Christ's assessors, against the ungodly; whose torment will be aggravated by it. It will be a hell to them to be kept out of hell, till they see the doors of heaven opened to receive the saints, who once dwelt in the same world with

them; and perhaps in the same parish, country, or town, and sat under the same ministry with themselves. Thus will they see heaven afar off, to make their hell the hotter: like that unbelieving lord, 2 Kings vii. 19, 20. They "shall see" the plenty "with their eyes, but shall not eat thereof." Every word of the blessed sentence shall be like an envenomed arrow shot into their hearts while they see what they have lost, and from thence gather what they are to expect.

This sentence passes on the saints, "according to their works, Rev. xx. 12; but not for their works, nor for their faith, as if eternal life were merited by them. The sentence itself overthrows this absurd conceit. The kingdom which they are called to, was "prepared for them, from the foundation of the world;" not left to be merited by themselves, who were but of yesterday. They inherit it as sons, but procure it not to themselves as servants do the reward of their work. They were redeemed by the blood of Christ, and clothed with his spotless righteousness, which is the proper cause of the sentence. They were also qualified for heaven, by the sanctification of his Spirit; and hence it is "according to their works:" so that the ungodly world shall see now, that the Judge of the quick and dead does good to those who were good. Therefore it is added to the sentence, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat," &c., ver. 35, 36; which does not denote the ground, but the evidence of their right to heaven; as if a judge should say, he absolves a man pursued for debt, for the witnesses depose that it is paid already. So the apostle says, 1 Cor. x. 5. "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Their overthrow in the wilderness was not the ground of God's displeasure with them, but it was an evidence of it. And thus our Lord teaches us the necessary connexion between glory and good works, namely works evangellically good; works having a respect to Jesus Christ, and done out of faith in him, and love to him, without which they will not be regarded in that day. And the saints will so far be judged according to such works, that the degrees of glory amongst them shall be according to these works. For it is an eternal truth, "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly," 2 Cor. ix. 6.

Thus shall the good works of the godly have a glorious, but a gratuitous reward; a reward of grace, not of debt; which will fill them with wonder at the riches of free grace, and at the Lord's condescending to take any notice, especially such public notice, of their poor worthless works; which seems to be the import of what they are said to answer, "saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered?"

ver. 37—39. And may they not justly wonder to see themselves set down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and to hear him acknowledge a dinner or supper, a little meat or drink, such as they had, which they gave to a hungry member of Christ, for his sake? O plentiful harvest, following upon the seed of good works! Rivers of pleasures, in exchange for a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple! Eternal mansions of glory, in exchange for a night's lodging given to a saint, who was a stranger! Everlasting robes of glory, in exchange for a new coat, or, it may be, an old one, bestowed on some saint, who had not necessary clothing! A visit to the sick saint, repaid by Christ himself, coming in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels! A visit made to a poor prisoner for the cause of Christ, repaid with a visit from the Judge of all, taking away the visitant with him to the palace of heaven, there to be for ever with himself! These things will be matter of everlasting wonder; and should stir up all, to sow liberally in time, while seed-time of good works lasts. But it is Christ's stamp on good works, that puts a value on them, in the eye of our gracious God; which seems to be the import of our Lord's reply, ver. 40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

9. Now the saints having received their own sentence, "they shall judge the world," 1 Cor. vi. 2. This was not fulfilled, when the empire became Christian, and Christians were made magistrates. No, the psalmist tells us, "This honour have all the saints," Psalm cxlix. 9. And the apostle in the forecited place, adds, "And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" ver. 3, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Being called, they come to receive their kingdom, in the view of angels and men: they go as it were, from the bar to the throne, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 21. They shall not judge the world, in Christ their head, by way of communion with him, by their works compared with those of the ungodly, or by way of testimony against them; but they shall be assessors to Jesus Christ the Judge, giving their voice against them, consenting to his judgment as just, and saying *Amen* to the doom pronounced against all the ungodly: as is said of the saints, upon the judgment of the great whore, Rev. xix. 1, 2, "Hallelujah—for true and righteous are his judgments." Thus, the upright shall have dominion over them, in the morning," of the resurrection, Psalm cxlix. 14. Then, and not till then, shall that be fully accomplished, in Psalm cxlix. 6—9, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand: to execute ven-

geance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people—this honour have all the saints.” O! what a strange turn of affairs will appear here! What an astonishing sight will it be, to see wicked men, formerly their unjust judges, standing as criminals before the saints whom formerly they condemned as heretics, rebels, and traitors! To see men of riches and power stand pale-faced, before those whom they oppressed! To see the mocker stand trembling before those whom he mocked! the worldly wise man, before those whom he accounted fools! Then shall the despised faces of the saints be dreadful faces to the wicked; and those, who sometimes were the song of the drunkards, shall then be a terror to them. All wrongs must be righted at length, and every one set in his proper place.

10. The Judge will pronounce the sentence of damnation on all the ungodly multitude. “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” ver. 41. Fearful doom! and that from the same mouth, from whence proceeded the sentence of absolution before. It was an aggravation of the misery of the Jews, when their city was destroyed, that they were ruined by one who was accounted the darling of the world. O what an aggravation of the misery of the wicked will it be also, that Christ will pronounce this sentence! To hear the curse from mount Zion, must needs be most terrible. To be condemned by him, who came to save sinners, must be double damnation. But thus it will be. The Lamb of God shall roar, as a lion, against them: he shall excommunicate, and cast them out of his presence for ever, by a sentence from the throne, saying, “Depart from me, ye cursed.” He shall adjudge them to everlasting fire, and the society of devils for evermore. And this sentence also we suppose, will be pronounced with an audible voice, by the man Christ. And all the saints shall say, “Hallelujah, true and righteous are his judgments.” None were so compassionate as the saints when on earth, during the time of God’s patience. But now that time is at an end: their compassion for the ungodly is swallowed in joy in the Mediator’s glory, and his executing just judgment, by which his enemies are made his footstool. Though, when on earth, the righteous man wept in secret places for their pride, and because they would not hear; yet he “shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,” Psalm lviii. 10. No pity shall then be shewn them from their nearest relations. The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the Judge, in the condemnation of her ungodly husband: the godly husband shall say *Amen* to the condemnation of her who lay in his bosom: the godly parents shall say *Hallelujah*, at the passing of the sentence

against their ungodly child: and the godly child shall, from the bottom of his heart, approve the condemnation of his wicked parents, the father who begat him, and the mother who bore him. The sentence is just; they are judged "according to their works," Rev. xx. 12.

There is no wrong done them, "For I was an hungered," saith our Lord, "and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not," ver. 42, 43. These are not only evidences of their ungodly and cursed state, but most proper grounds of their condemnation: for though good works do not merit salvation, yet evil works merit damnation. Sins of one kind only, namely, of omission, are here mentioned; not that these alone shall be then discovered, for the books lay all open but because these, though there were no more, are sufficient to condemn unpardoned sinners. And if men are condemned for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission. The omission of works of charity and mercy, is mentioned in particular, to stop the mouths of the wicked; for it is most just that he "have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy," James ii. 13. Taking notice of the omission of acts of charity and mercy towards the distressed members of Christ, intimates, that it is the judgment of those who have heard of Christ in the gospel, that is principally intended in this portion of Scripture; and that the slighting of Christ will be the great cause of the ruin of those who hear the gospel: but the enmity of the hearts of the wicked against Christ himself, is discovered by the entertainment they now give to his members.

In vain will they say, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst?" &c. ver. 44. For the Lord reckons, and will reckon, the world's unkindness to his people, unkindness to himself; "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me," ver. 45. O meat and drink unhappily spared, when a member of Christ was in need of it! O wretched neglect, that the stranger saint was not taken in! It had been better for them if they had quitted their own room, and their own bed, than that he wanted lodging. O cursed clothing, may the wicked say, that was in my house, locked up in my chest, or hanging in my wardrobe, and was not brought out to clothe such a one! O that I had stripped myself, rather than he had gone away without clothing! Cursed business that diverted me from visiting such a saint! O that I had rather watched whole nights with him! Wretch that I was! Why did I sit at ease in my house, when he was in prison, and did not visit him? But now the tables are turned: Christ's servants shall eat, but I shall be

hungry; his servants shall drink, but I shall be thirsty; they rejoice, but I am ashamed, Isa. lxx. 13. They are taken in, but I am cast out, and bid to depart; they are clothed with robes of glory, but I "walk naked, and they see my shame," Rev. xvi. 15. They are now raised up on high, beyond the reach of sickness or pain; but I must now "lie down in sorrow," Isa. l. 11. Now they will go to the palace of heaven, but I must go to the prison of hell.

But if our Lord thus resents men's neglecting to help his people under these, and the like distresses; what may they expect who are the authors and instruments of them? If they shall be fed with wrath, who fed them not when they were hungry; what shall become of those, who robbed and spoiled them? What a full cup of wrath shall be the portion of those, who were so far from giving them meat or drink when hungry or thirsty, that they made it a crime for others to entertain them, and made themselves drunken with their blood! They must lodge with devils for evermore, who took not in the Lord's people, when strangers: then, what a lodging shall those have, who drove them out of their own houses, out of their native land, and made them strangers! Men will be condemned for not clothing them, when naked: then, how heavy must the sentence of those be, who have stripped them, and made them go without clothing! Surely, if not visiting them in sickness, or in prison, shall be so severely punished; those shall not escape a most heavy doom, who have cast them into prisons, and have put them under such hardships, as have impaired their health, brought sickness on them, and cut short their days in prison, or out of prison.

To put a face upon such wicked practices, men will pretend to retain an honour for Christ and religion, while they thus treat his members, walking in his way, and keeping the truth. They are here represented to say, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" ver. 44. As if they should say, Our bread, drink, lodging, clothing, and visits, were indeed refused, but not to Christ; but to a set of men of a bad character, men who "turned the world upside down," Acts xvii. 6; who troubled Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 7; a humorous and fantastic sort of people, having laws diverse from all people, factious and rebellious; they did not keep the king's laws, and were therefore a dangerous set of men; it was not for the king's profit to suffer them, Esther iii. 8. But although men cast iniquity upon the godly, and give them ill names, that they may treat them as criminals, all these pretences will avail them nothing, in the great day, before the righteous Judge, nor before their own consciences, but the real ground of their enmity

against the saints will be found, to their own conviction, to be their enmity against Christ himself. This seems to be the import of the objection of the damned, ver. 44, and of the answer to it, ver. 45, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

11. Sentence being passed on both parties, the full execution of the same follows, ver. 46, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The condemned shall get no reprieve, but go to their place without delay; they shall be driven away from the judgment-seat into hell: and the saints "shall enter into the King's palace," Psalm xlv. 15, namely, into heaven, the seat of the blessed. But our Lord Christ, and his glorious company, shall keep the field that day and see the backs of all their enemies; for the condemned go off first.

In this day of the Lord, the great day, shall be the general conflagration; by which these visible heavens, the earth, and sea, shall pass away. Not that they shall be annihilated, or reduced to nothing, that is not the operation of fire; but they shall be dissolved, and purified by that fire, from all the effects of sin, and of the curse, upon them; and then renewed, and made more glorious and stable. Of this conflagration, the apostle Peter speaks, 2 Pet. iii. 10, "But the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." See also ver. 7, 12. And of the renewing of the world, he adds, ver. 13, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

It seems most agreeable to the Scriptures, and to the nature of the thing, to conceive this conflagration to follow after the general judgment; sentence being passed on both parties before it. And I judge it probable, that it will fall in with the putting of the sentence in execution against the damned; so as they shall, according to their sentence, depart, and the heavens and the earth pass away, together and at once, at that furious rebuke from the throne, driving them away, out of the world (in this fire) to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Even as, in the deluge, with which the apostle Peter compares the conflagration, or burning of the world 2 Pet. iii. 6, 7, the world itself, and the wicked upon it, perished together; the same water which destroyed the earth, sweeping away the inhabitants. For it is not likely that the wicked shall at all stand on the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet. iii. 13. And as for this earth, it shall "flee away,"

which seems to denote a very quick despatch, and it shall "flee from His face, who sits on the throne," Rev. xx. 11, "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." The execution of the sentence on the wicked is also thus expressed; they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence," or "from the face of the Lord," 2 Thess. i. 9. The original word is the same in both texts, which, being compared, seem to say, that these creatures, abused by the wicked, being left to stand, as witnesses against them, in the judgment, are, after sentence passed on their abusers, made to pass away with them from the face of the Judge. It is true, the fleeing away of the earth and the heavens is narrated, Rev. xx. 11, before the judgment; but that does not prove its going before the judgment, any more than the narrating of the judgment, ver. 12, before the resurrection, ver. 13, will prove the judgment to be before it. Further, it is remarkable, in the execution of the sentence, Rev. xx. 14, 15, that not only the reprobate are "cast into the lake," but "death and hell" are cast into it likewise: all effects of sin and of the curse are removed out of the world, for which very cause shall the conflagration be, and they are confined to the place of the damned. Besides all this, it is evident that the end of the world is by the conflagration: and the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." Which last, as it must be done before the end, so it seems not to be done, but by putting the sentence in execution, passed in the day of judgment, against the wicked.

Now, if the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, that are set forth for an example, Jude, ver. 7, was so dreadful, how terrible will that day be, when the whole world shall be at once in flames! How will wretched worldlings look, when their darling world shall be all on fire! Then shall strong castles and towering palaces, with all their rich furniture, go up together in one flame with the lowest cottages. What heart can fully conceive the terror of that day to the wicked, when the whole fabric of heaven and earth shall at once be dissolved by that fire? when that miserable company shall be driven from the tribunal to the pit with fire within them, and without on every hand of them; and fire awaiting them in the lake; whither this fire, for ought that appears, may also follow them.

As for the particular place of this judgment, though some point us to the valley of Jehoshaphat for it: yet our Lord, who infallibly

knew it, being asked the question by his disciples, "Where, Lord?" only said, "Wheresoever the body is, thither shall the eagles be gathered together," Luke xvii. 37. After which answer, it is too much for men to renew the question. As for the time, when it shall be, in vain do men search for what the Lord has purposely kept secret, Acts i. 7, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power." The apostle Paul, after having very plainly described the second coming of Christ, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, adds, chap. v. 1, 2, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you: for yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Nevertheless, some, in several ages, have made very bold with the time; and several particular years, which are now past, have been given out to the world, for the time of the end, by men who have pried into the secrets of God. Time has proclaimed to the world, their rashness and folly; and it is probable they will be no more happy in their conjectures, whose determinate time is yet to come. Let us rest in that "He cometh." God has kept the day hid from us, that we may be every day ready for it, Matt. xxv. 13, "Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh." And let us remember, that the last day of our life, will determine our state in the last day of the world: and as we die, so shall we be judged.

I shall now conclude this subject, with some application of what has been said.

USE I. Of comfort to all the saints. Here is abundance of consolation to all who are in the state of grace. Whatever be your afflictions in the world, this day will make up all your losses "Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," Psalm lxxviii. 13. Though the world reproach, judge, and condemn you, the Judge will at that day absolve you, and bring forth your righteousness as the light.—The world's fools will then appear to have been the only wise men who were in it. Though the cross be heavy, you may well bear it, in expectation of the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will then give you. If the world despise you, and treat you with the utmost contempt, regard it not: the day cometh wherein you shall sit with Christ in his throne. Be not discouraged by reason of manifold temptations. But resist the devil in confidence of a full and complete victory; for you shall judge the tempter at last. Though you have hard wrestling now with the body of sin and death; yet you shall get all your enemies under your feet at length, and be presented faultless before the pre-

sence of his glory. Let not the terror of that day dispirit you, when you think upon it; let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him, and to the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads, when they think of his coming: but lift you up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer, and your Advocate. You must appear before the judgment-seat, but you "shall not come into condemnation," John v. 24. His coming will not be against you but for you. He came in the flesh, to remove the lawful impediments of the spiritual marriage, by his death: he came in the gospel to you, to espouse you to himself; he will come, at last, to solemnize the marriage, and take the bride home to his Father's house. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

USE II. Of terror to all unbelievers. This may serve to awaken a secure generation, a world lying in wickedness, as if they were never to be called to an account for it; and slighting the Mediator, as if he were not to judge them. Ah! how few have lively impressions of the judgment to come! Most men live as if what is said of it from the word were but idle tales. The profane lives of many speak the thoughts of it to be far from their hearts, and in very deed make a mock of it before the world, saying, in effect, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The hypocrisy of others, who blind the eyes of the world with being a splendid profession, being in appearance Christ's sheep, while they are indeed the devil's goats, proves that the great separation of the sheep from the goats is very little laid to heart. How do many indulge themselves in secret wickedness, of which they would be ashamed before witnesses; not considering, that their most secret thoughts and actions will, at that day, be discovered before the great congregation! How eagerly are men's hearts set on the world, as if it were to be their everlasting habitation! The solemn assemblies, and public ordinances, wherein the Judge is upon a transaction of peace with the criminals, are undervalued: many hearts swim like feathers in the waters of the sanctuary, that sink like stones to the bottom in cares of this life; they will be very serious in trifles of this world, and trifle in the most serious and weighty things of another world: but, O consider the day that is approaching, in which Christ will come to judgment! the world shall be summoned, by the sound of the last trumpet, to appear before his tribunal. The Judge will sit on his throne, and all nations will be summoned before him; the separation will be made between the godly and the wicked; the books opened, and the dead judged out of them; one party will be adjudged to everlasting life, and the other to everlasting fire, according to their works.

It would be a sight, of admirable curiosity, if thou couldst wrap up thyself in some dark cloud, or hide thyself in the cleft of some high rock, from whence thou mightst espy wicked kings, princes, judges, and great ones of the earth, rising out of their marble tombs, and brought to the bar, to answer for all their cruelty, injustice, oppression, profanity, without any marks of distinction, but what their wickedness puts upon them: profane, unholy, and unfaithful ministers, pursued with the curses of their ruined people, from their graves to the judgment seat, and charged with the blood of souls, to whom they gave not faithful warning: mighty men standing trembling before the Judge unable to recover their wonted boldness, to outwit him with their subtleties, or defend themselves by their strength: delicate women cast forth of their graves, as abominable branches, dragged to the tribunal, to answer for their ungodly lives; the ignorant, suddenly taught in the law to their cost; and the learned declared before the world, fools and laborious triflers: the atheist convinced, the hypocrite unmasked; and the profane at length turned serious about his eternal state: secret murders, adulteries, thefts, cheats, and other works of darkness, which defied all human search, discovered and laid open before the world, with their most minute circumstances: no regard had to the rich, no pity shown to the poor: the scales of the world turned; oppressed and despised piety set on high, and prosperous wickedness at last brought low: all not found in Christ, arraigned, convicted, and condemned, without respect of persons, and driven from the tribunal to the pit; while those found in him, at that day, being absolved before the world, go with him into heaven. Nay, but thou canst not so escape. Whoever thou art, not being in Christ, thou must bear a part in this tragical and alarming scene.

Sinner, that same Lord Christ, whom thou now despisest, whom thou woundest through the sides of his messengers, and before whom thou dost prefer thy lusts, will be thy Judge. The neglected Saviour will be a severe Judge. O! what mountain, what rock, wilt thou get to fall on thee, and hide thee from the face of Him who sits on the throne? Thou hast now a rock within thee, a heart of adamant, so that thou canst count the darts of the word as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear: but that rock will rend at the sight of the Judge: that hard heart will then break, and thou wilt weep and wail, when weeping and wailing will be to no purpose. Death's bands will fall off, the grave will cast thee out; and the mountains shall skip from thee, and the rocks refuse to grind thee to powder. How will these cursed eyes abide the sight of the Judge? Behold, he cometh! Where is the profane swearer,

who tore his wounds? The wretched worldling, now abandoned of his God? The formal hypocrite, who kissed him and betrayed him? The despiser of the gospel, who sent him away in his messengers groaning, profaned his ordinances, and trampled under foot his precious blood? O murderer, the slain man is thy Judge: there is he whom thou didst so maltreat. Behold the neglected Lamb of God appearing as a lion against thee. How will thine heart endure the darts of his fiery looks? That rocky heart, which now holds out against him, shall then be blown up; that face, which refuses to blush now, shall then gather blackness: arrows of wrath shall pierce where arrows of conviction cannot enter now. What wilt thou answer him, when he rises up, and charges thee with thy unbelief and impenitence? Wilt thou say, thou wast not warned? Conscience within thee will give thee the lie; the secret groans and weariness of those who warned thee, will witness the contrary. If a child or a fool did tell you that your house was on fire, you would immediately run to quench it: but, in matters of eternal concern, men will first fill their hearts with prejudices against the messengers, and then cast their message behind their backs. But these silly excuses and pretences will not avail in the day of the Lord. How will these cursed ears, now deaf to the call of the gospel, inviting sinners to come to Christ, hear the fearful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" No sleepy hearer shall be there; no man's heart will then wander; their hearts and eyes will then be fixed on their misery, which they will not now believe. O that we knew, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace!

Lastly, Be exhorted to believe this great truth; and believe it so that you may prepare for the judgment betimes. Set up a secret tribunal in your own breasts, and often call yourselves to an account there. Make the Judge your friend in time, by closing with him in the offer of the gospel; and give all diligence, that you may be found in Christ at that day. Cast off the works of darkness; and live, as believing you are, at all times, and in all places, under the eye of your Judge, who will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing!" Be fruitful in good works, knowing that as you sow, you shall reap. Study piety towards God, righteousness and charity towards men. Lay up in store plenty of works of charity and mercy towards those who are in distress, especially such as are of the household of faith; that they may be produced, at that day, as evidences that you belong to Christ. Shut not up your bowels of mercy, now, towards the needy; lest you then find no mercy. Take heed, that in all your works you be single and sin-

cere; aiming, in them all, at the glory of the Lord, a testimony of your love to him, and in obedience to his command. Leave it to hypocrites, who have their reward, to proclaim every man his own goodness; and to sound a trumpet when they do their alms. It is a base and unchristian spirit, which cannot have satisfaction in a good work unless it be exposed to the view of others: it is utterly unworthy of one who believes that the last trumpet shall call together the whole world, before whom the Judge himself shall publish works truly good, how secretly soever they were done. Live in a believing expectation of the coming of the Lord. Let your loins be always girt, and your lamps burning; so when he comes, whether in the last day of your life, or in the last day of the world, ye shall be able to say with joy, "Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him."

PART V.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.—MATT. XXV. 34.

HAVING, from this portion of Scripture, which the text is a part of, discoursed of the general judgment; and being to speak of the everlasting happiness of the saints, and the everlasting misery of the wicked, from the respective sentences to be pronounced upon them in the great day, I shall take them in the order wherein they lie before us; and the rather that, as sentence is first passed upon the righteous, so the execution thereof is first begun, though probably the other may be fully executed before it is completed.

The words of the text contain the joyful sentence itself, together with an historical introduction thereto, which gives us an account of the Judge pronouncing the sentence, "the King," Jesus Christ; the parties on whom it is given, "them on his right hand;" and the time when, "then," as soon as the trial is over. Of these I have spoken already. It is the sentence itself we are now to consider, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. Stand back, O ye profane goats! away all unregenerate souls, not united to Jesus Christ! this is not for you. Come, O ye saints, brought out of your natural state into the state of grace! behold here the state of glory awaiting you.