

SERMON XXVII.

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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.—Matthew xxv. 34.

THE description of heaven is a work fitter for an Aaron, "the high priest of the Most High," when, upon Mount Hor, he is stripping himself of the vile body of sin; or for a Moses, when, on the top of Nebo, after a Pisgah-prospect, (as the Jews comment,) he died at the kiss of God, (Canticles i. 2,) refunding that "breath of life," (Gen. ii. 7,) and expiring his soul into the bosom of God: (Deut. xxxiv. 1—5 :) nay, more fit to be described by a pen taken from the wing of a cherubim, than the stammering tongue of any mortal man. For, whoever attempts to speak of a heavenly state while himself is on earth, his discourses of that must needs be like the dark dreams and imaginations of a child concerning the affairs of this world, while itself is yet swaddled and cradled in the womb. Yet discourses of heaven were never more seasonable upon earth. When Anaxagoras was accused as not studying politics for his country's good, he replied, "I have a very great care of my country,"* pointing up to heaven. If ever Christians had cause to make all honest haste to heaven, it is in a sinful and a "perverse generation." When the waters cover the earth, whither should a dove-like soul fly, but to the ark of God? When God's judgments and his avengers of blood threaten us on every hand, what city of refuge can we run to, but the sanctuary of God? When we know not how soon the members of Christ's body, in conformity to their Head, may be called to sweat drops of blood, it is wisdom for us with our bitter herbs to keep the passover, and to think on that "large upper room" wherein we may be feasted at the supper of the Lamb. (Luke xxii. 12.) Therefore, with holy David, when "the floods of ungodly men made him afraid," (Psalm xviii. 4,) let us take the "wings of a dove, fly away, and be at rest," in that desert of men, but Paradise of God, (Psalm lv. 6, 7,) while we meditate on these words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

A little before the text, you have such a division of this world as you shall never see (as many divisions as there are) till you come to judgment:—a herd of hairy, rough, lustful goats, on the left hand; which, like Pythagoras's second number, are accursed for departing

* Εμοι μὲν σφοδρὰ μέλει τῆς πατρίδος.—DIOGENES LAERTIUS.

from unity, and have a sharp sentence, with the unprofitable servant : *Διχοτομήσει αὐτον*, "Cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." (Matt. xxiv. 51.) But the sheep, on the right hand, are all folded up in the arms of Christ: "Come, ye blessed," &c.

In which words, you have,

I. *A possession.*

II. *The admission into that possession.*

In the possession,

(I.) *The nature and qualification of it*: It is a "kingdom."

(II.) *The preparation of it*: "From the foundation of the world."

In the admission,

1. *The title*: and that is inheritance.

2. *The heirs*: the "blessed of my Father."

3. *The formal introduction*: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

I. *The possession*; and in that,

(I.) *Its nature and quality*.—It is a "kingdom:" "God is the King of all the earth." (Psalm xlvii. 7.) "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitudes of isles be glad thereof;" (Psalm xcvi. 1;) for no places [are] so subject to tempests, inundations, and changes in the air and state, as they. Every creature pays him allegiance in the kingdom of his power. But the sceptre of his grace is stretched out over Zion: he is "King of saints;" (Rev. xv. 3;) who are not only subjects to his power, but his holy will, being made "willing in the day of his power." (Psalm cx. 3.) But yet the seeds of rebellion are in their hearts: but when they enter the kingdom of his glory, they shall not only become perfect subjects, but kings and conquerors over his and their enemies: "Come, enter into this kingdom prepared for you." Now, in every kingdom erected, there is something to be deposed, which they are to be divested of; something to be imposed, which they are to be invested in.

1. First, therefore, *to make way for this kingdom*,

(1.) *The black regiment of errors, ignorance, and misapprehension, shall be disbanded*.—Though all the subjects of Christ's kingdom here are freed from "damnable heresies," (2 Peter ii. 1,) and recovered from the absolute dominion of the prince of darkness, yet they are subject to such errors and mistakes as may make them troublesome, not only to the church of God, but to the world. Tertullian Montanizeth; Cyprian re-baptizeth; and Origen "brings" others from those errors [which] himself fell into,* (as he did St. Ambrose from the Valentinian heresy,) "to the orthodox faith."† But these and all other shadows on the minds of saints shall vanish when the morning shall appear, as the darkness of the night is routed by the rising sun. All those groundless scruples that now gravel tender hearts, and whatever "offends, shall be gathered out of this kingdom." (Matt. xiii. 41.)

* *Cujus ingenium ecclesiae sacramentum.*

† *Τῇ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ορθοδοξίας*

προστίθεται λόγος.—EUSEBIUS *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. 13.

All laborious studies, controversies, and polemical disputations, shall then have a final determination. All subtle distinctions, Jesuitical equivocations and evasions, (the usual masks and genuine vermilion of that scarlet whore, whereby to render the foulest actions specious to the eye of the world,) shall be then "swept away" as a "refuge of lies." (Isai. xxviii. 17.) Death will be the *πτεροβόησις*, "moulting-time," to deplume men of all those fantastic opinions and Mercurian fancies which they now wing their heads withal. All those scales of ignorance, wherein they pride themselves as the leviathan, and fling the world into estuations, (Job xli. 15, 31,) shall then drop off their eyes. (Acts. ix. 18.) Their leopard's spots and Ethiopian skins, (Jer. xiii. 23,) contracted by too hot a sun, and to open a converse with the prosperities of this world, shall be taken off. And though now upon our "eye-lids" sits the very "shadow of death," (Job xvi. 16,) yet there the meanest understanding shall confute the ignorant determinations of a whole sanhedrim of rabbis, and look down upon all the grandeur of human policies and reasons of state with as scornful an eye as we now look up with to the meanest cobweb in our windows.

(2.) *All that turbulent rout of affections shall be cashiered.*—As all those clouds of ignorance shall be blown over, so all that thunder and lightning of passion which they involve and travail with shall pass away. All those furious waves which now ebb and flow in men's hearts, according to the various and lunatic impressions of worldly interests and imaginations, which make men storm like the winds, rage like the seas, and "foam forth their own shame," (Jude 13,) shall be reduced to a calm. These murmuring Gadarenes and their swinish lusts shall be buried in a Dead Sea. We shall hold all these winds in our fists,* and these waves in the hollow of our hands. (Prov. xxx. 4; Isai. xl. 12.) All those peevish, fiery politics, ecclesiastics, and blinders of natural conscience, wherewith men sting one another in these days of sin, shall be eternally extinguished. Those mutinous commotions of spirits which now dethrone judgment and conscience in men's breasts, and therefore enforce judgment-seats without them to be set up, shall be as calmly subdued as the sun puts out the fire. Thunders, lightnings, pestilences, earthquakes, shake not the world so much as men's passions. The pride and envy of a Cæsar and a Pompey were able to enrol three hundred thousand heads in the dust. The impetuous motions of these lustful affections breed those miserable necessities [which] men talk of: but, as Augustine says, "those necessities will be ended, when these lusts are conquered."† Then men will be "more than conquerors;" (*ὑπερνικώμεν*. Rom. viii. 37;) and shall be able to conquer themselves, their passions, which victors themselves obtain not to do here. Men are now like brutes, staked down to particular interests, humours, and lusts: but then, and not till then, "free-will itself shall take up its free-

* *Æolus sis affectuum tuorum.*—NIEREMBERGIUS *De Arte Volendi*. "Be thou, like Æolus, the master of those winds, thine affections."—EDIT. † *Tum finiuntur istæ necessitates, quàm vincuntur illæ cupiditates.*—AUGUSTINUS in *Epist.* 70.

dom ;” * and all those “wills of the flesh” (Θεληματα σαρκος, Eph. ii. 3) shall have a total and final circumcision, when this eighth day and great sabbath of the saints is come.

(3.) *The whole body of bodily infirmities shall be shaken off.*—So long as the soul weareth the body, it carries an almanac about it, by virtue of those passions which “button” † soul and body together, and convey its distempers to the mind ; and the soul, on the other hand, as primarily affected with sin, [conveys its distempers to the body,] as a rusty sword infects the scabbard. But when the body, called נְקִינָה, *vagina*, “the sheath” of the soul, by the prophet Daniel, (Dan. vii. 15,) shall drop off, the soul, like the flaming sword, or cherubim rather, (Gen. iii. 24,) shall enter into the Paradise of God. How long is the soul, that “candle of the Lord,” (Prov. xx. 27,) in the dark lantern of the body, ere it shine at all ! And when it begins to flame forth, the lantern burns : one feverish distemper or other comes, and that is raked up as a spark in its ashes. That great publican of time, sleep, what an excise upon custom hath it out of our lives ! ‡ And our bellies are the graves of a great part of our days. § But “meats for the belly, and the belly for meats : but God shall destroy both it and them ;” (1 Cor. vi. 13 ;) that is, *quoad usum*, “as to their present use.” “As, in a ship, all the masts, sails, poop, and stern, abide, when in the haven, as they were in the voyage ; so all the tackling of the body may remain in heaven.” || Elijah dropped his “mantle,” none of his clothes : (2 Kings ii. 13 :) so the looser humours, dull phlegm, and melancholy, which clog us with indispositions, and make us “heavy-hearted and dull-spirited” in holy duties, ¶ shall be all drawn off ; and then we shall serve God without any lassitude, fainting, or tediousness. Heaviness “may endure for *this* night, but joy cometh in *that* morning,” (Psalm xxx. 5,) when, with the sun, we shall “rejoice as a giant to run our race.” (Psalm xix. 5.)

(4.) *All that legion of foul spirits, with their armoury of temptations, shall be confined for ever in their chains of darkness.* (Jude 6.)—The prince of this world shall be deposed, when this kingdom taketh place ; the great “old serpent, cast into the bottomless pit.” (Rev. xx. 3.) No serpent shall hiss in that Paradise. And though all this world, the πειραστηριον, “scene of his temptations,” (Job vii. 1, *juxta Sept.*) should remain after its purifying by fire, and all creatures, as man’s servants, be clothed with a better livery, when their master is advanced ; yet they could no more fasten a temptation on a saint in glory, than you can now shoot an arrow into the heart of the sun. Though Satan and the world are now always nibbling at a Christian’s heels, [so] that, as many ejaculations as the soul hath to God, it finds as many injections from the devil ; yet “the God of peace” will then finally “bruise Satan under their feet.” (Rom. xvi. 20.)

* *Liberum arbitrium erit liberatum.*—AUGUSTINUS. † Προσπεροναι.—JAMBlichus in *Vita Pythagoræ*. ‡ SENeca *De Brevitate Vitæ*. § *Venter vitæ Charybdæ*. “The belly is the greedy gulf of life.”—EDIT. || *Ut in carinâ prora puppisque, &c.*—TERTULLIANUS *De Resurrectione Carnis*. ¶ Οπισθοβαεις.—MARCUS ANTONINUS. Βαρυκαρδιοι.—Psalm. iv. 2, *juxta Septuaginta*.

The ground, that now lords it over men; and is the lordship, not the man; and ploughs up his heart with careful solitudes, and casts its furrows and wrinkles in his face; shall never give thorns and thistles to his eyes more: but he shall be able to serve God *απερισπαστως*, “without any vellications, convulsions, cramps, or distractions,” (1 Cor. vii. 35,) from the sour fermentations of the flesh and the world.

2. As these enemies shall be deposed and disappear; so there is something to be superinduced, in order to the consummation of this happiness.

(1.) First, therefore, *all the subjects of this state shall be clothed with long white robes, which “is the righteousness of the saints.”* (Rev. xix. 8.)—They shall be “in the beauties of holiness from the very womb” and first opening “of that morning.” (Psalm cx. 3.) Every infant grace shall then have its adolescence into “a perfect man, and to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. iv. 13.) Here is imperfection, intermission, and remission, in our devotions of the highest elevation. David himself, when his heart was most strung with divine affections and in the best tune, yet he had his cadences: his Hallelujahs and highest strains of praise came off with *Selah*, a “prostration” of voice and an affectionate pause.* But that choir of souls, once entered the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, “Holy of Holies,” shall sing, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever,” (Rev. v. 13,) with an “Amen; Hallelujah,” (Rev. xix. 4,) with the most distended faculties and intensions of soul to all eternity, in that “house of praises,”† and at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Here every Christian hath his garments “made white in the blood of the Lamb,” *candore sanguinis*, (Rev. vii. 14,) being justified from his iniquities by faith in Jesus: but when they shall be translated to that mountain of bliss, their faces shall appear as the sun, and their garments of light, as the top of Lebanon, shall shine as “white as snow,” *candore nivis*. (Matt. xvii. 2; Mark ix. 3.) Here, like poor common soldiers, some get one piece of armour; others, another: one is skilled at one weapon; others, at another. Job gets a helmet of patience; David, a girdle of truth on his loins; and Peter, a shield of faith; after they had been trained up to the use of them in many combats. But there every one shall have put upon him the whole “armour of light,” (Rom. xiii. 12,) not to fight, but triumph, in. For God will be to them “all in all:” (1 Cor. xv. 28;) and the Sun himself being their shield, (Psalm lxxxiv. 11,) [the] sanctuary and holy temple of his holy ones, (Rev. xxi. 22,) yea, the clothing of his saints; (Rev. xii. 1;) all sublunary glories, like your half-mooned honours, shall be under their feet; but an asterism and crown of everlasting righteousness shall be upon their heads.

(2.) As they shall have this royal apparel when they enter into this

* סלה *Prostravit*.—BUXTORFIUS. † בית הכללים *Hebrais domus nuptialis dicitur*. “Among the Hebrews the house where a wedding has taken place is called ‘the house of praises.’”—EDIT.

kingdom as their robes, so *they shall have their "palms in their hands."* (Rev. vii. 9.)—The doors of the Holy of holies were made of olive-trees; palms, cherubims, and open flowers [being] carved on them; (1 Kings vi. 33, 35;) which signified that absolute peace, complete victory, angelical felicity, and an "incorruptible" crown of glory, "that never fadeth away," to be *their "inheritance" that enter into that place.* (1 Peter i. 4.) There is no worm in the fruit of this Paradise, but tranquil order in the soul;* "the fruit of righteousness here being peace, and the effect of it" joy "and assurance for ever." (Isai. xxxii. 17.) Surely there, where we shall be "joined unto the Lord," and become "one spirit," (1 Cor. vi. 17,) his mind and will perfectly taking place in us; our "peace will be as a river, when our righteousness shall be as the waves of the sea." (Isai. xlvi. 18.) No reflections upon sins or sorrows past with bitterness of spirit, as now we have in our greatest triumphs and festivities; as the Jews, in their feasts of tabernacles, had their willow-boughs among their palms, (Lev. xxiii. 40,) while they remembered the dangers [through which] they passed in the wilderness, on their festival-revolutions: but every review (if actual felicity can possibly give way to it) will only widen and dilate the soul for a more ample fruition of the present state, even "that peace of God which passeth all understanding." (Phil. iv. 7.) So that, as Augustine says, "If you ask what this enjoyment is of God, what kind of action, or rather rest; to speak truth, I know not:"† and no wonder, when that which is enjoyed here "contains more than any understanding can comprehend:" † *Ἡ ὑπερχούσα πάντα νοῦν.*

(3.) *To make up the kingdom, there must be a crown; and so there is.*—But this crown is the King himself. Here the King of glory enters in at our everlasting gates; (Psalm xxiv. 7;) but there we shall enter in to the King of glory: "I am thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. xv. 1.) But there are three wreaths in this crown:—

(i.) *God, considered as the object of vision, the crystal ocean of all truth.*—And there we shall be able to read every truth in the original, and see it in him, as our faces in a glass; not only those truths that are so mainly conducing to our happiness, but those more speculative, "to the satisfaction of curiosity itself."‡ Luther, discoursing at supper the night before he died, said that, as Adam after his sleep knew his wife to be bone of his bone, and called all the creatures by their names; so after we shall "awake," we shall not only "be satisfied with God's image," (Psalm xvii. 15,) but shall know one another; yea, all things to be known. Philosophy will then be, not a dead contemplation, but a meditation of life: and every idiot now, shall then have the collection and pure extract of all the notions in the world; while the book of life lies open and legible before his face,

* *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis,—ordinata requies appetitionum, &c.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xix. cap. 14. "Peace is the tranquillity of order, the well-regulated repose of the desires."—EDIT.

† *Si quæris de visione Dei, qualis est actio, aut quies potius; ut verum dicam, nescio.*—*De Civitate Dei*, lib. xxii. cap. 29.

‡ *Etiâ curiositas satietur.*—ANSELMUS.

—the ideas and representations of all beings in God the Father, the mirrors of all grace and truth in Jesus Christ, the beauty of all delights and sweetnesses imaginable in the Holy Spirit; and all these in all, and all in one, with infinite variety in unity, transcendent to all imaginable reflexions of glory. But who of us dark creatures can bear this inaccessible light? * And therefore He appeared in the temple in divine darkness, (1 Kings viii. 10,) all the purest light in the world being but a shadow of God. If an idolatrous temple of Diana was so bright, that the door-keepers cried always to them that entered in, "Take heed to your eyes;" it is difficult to imagine how even an immortal eye should "see Him, and live." (Exod. xxxiii. 20.) Therefore to "him that overcometh He will give the morning star;" (Rev. ii. 28;) a light to strengthen the eye to behold his glory,† as all the stars can look upon the sun. We shall then not only have all the riddles of providence unfolded, seeing how one politician was used to crack another's crown, and one serpent broke the head of another; but the glorious majesty of God shall be reflected to us in the all-glorious body of Jesus Christ, as the "rainbow round about the throne." (Rev. iv. 3.) Nay, some think, the very angels shall assume airy bodies, to feed the eyes of the saints withal, and to be in a nearer capacity of conversing with them. Yea, St. Augustine says, we shall see God in his saints and their glorious actings, as well and as manifestly as we now see men's bodies in the vital actions of the bodies.‡

(ii.) The next wreath in this crown is *the perception of divine goodness, to the satisfaction of our love, as [well as of] all other desires.*—This is the great sabbath of loves; and the soul, like a phoenix, shall lie down in a bed of spices, and live, like a salamander, in those coals of juniper, (Canticles viii. 6,) desiring ecstasically to be in its best self and *archetypon*, [archetype,] God himself. But "who of us can dwell with the devouring flames? who of us can lie down with everlasting burnings?" (Isai. xxxiii. 14;) even the love wherewith God loveth himself, and loveth his saints. But then we shall find his love strengthening us to love him with his own love; and these dull, earthly hearts of ours, by beholding that Sun, shall be converted into fixed stars, reflecting back his own glory. We shall then feel the sweetness of God's electing love from all eternity; the love of our blessed Jesus, which was stronger than death. (Canticles viii. 6.) Yea, we shall then enjoy the Spirit of love, who is love itself, (1 John iv. 8,) and whose "loving-kindness is better than life." (Psalm lxxiii. 3.) And as one says of Paul, that "as iron, put into the fire, becomes all fire, so Paul, inflamed with charity and love, becomes altogether love;" § if the philosophers say, the reason of the iron's cleaving to the loadstone so continually is, because the pores of both bodies are alike, and so there are effluxes and emanations that slide through them and unite them together; now this will be the magnet-

* Ὅσπερ τα των νυκτεριδων ομματα προς το φεγγος, &c.—ARISTOTELES. "Like the eyes of bats, when they come in contact with the splendour of day."—EDIT.
 † *Lumen confortans, uti Scholastici loquuntur.* "A strengthening light, as the Schoolmen speak."—EDIT.
 ‡ *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xxii. cap. 29. § *Sicut ferrum, immissum in ignem, totum fit ignis, sic Paulus, accensus charitate, totus fit charitas.*

ism of heaven,—that our wills shall perfectly fall-in with the divine will, and nothing seem good to us, but what is good in God's esteem : so that we shall then need no threatenings to drive us, nor promises to lead us ; but divine goodness will so perfectly attract us, that we shall be naturalized to God and goodness, and be no more able to turn off from that ineffable sweetness than the loadstone is to convert itself to the west.

(iii.) The last wreath is the result of both the former : from vision and fruition of infinite truth and goodness, reflected in the centre of the soul, springs up *delight to all eternity*.—Heaven is nothing but “the joy of truth.” * After a tedious racking of our brains on a knotty problem, if we discover any satisfaction, with what an exultancy do we break out into the mathematician's phrase, “I have found, I have found,† what I a long time studied for!” What joy will it be, then, to see every truth in God, as our faces in a glass, without all studying! For the joys of heaven are therefore oftener compared to drink than meat in scripture, because there is no labour in chewing upon them, nor any diminution of them ; but they slide in smoothly, and fully replenish the soul with delight. The pleasures of sense are short, no longer than the œsophagus, a glib swallow, a grateful hogough [haut-gout] ; ‡ but there the choir of divine powers shall be fixed in an everlasting fruition of eternal felicities. Now the saints may have some fits of that joy ; but then they shall have their fill. Now they have many “a sweet hour, but a short one ;” § but then joy shall be a standing dish, and we shall be “satisfied with the fatness of God's house.” (Psalm xxxvi. 8.) Now their memories are slippery ; but then there shall be an actual sensation of divine joys continually, when we shall see God face to face. “The concupiscible part shall be filled with a fountain of righteousness ; the irascible, with perpetual tranquillity.” || We shall come within the verge of God's own happiness, when we shall “enter into our Master's joy,” (Matt. xxv. 21,) when we shall joy more in his happiness than in our own. There shall be “joy upon joy, joy above all joy, joy without which there is no joy.” ¶ “We shall be perfectly at leisure for God and see him, we shall see him and love him, we shall love him and praise him, in the end without all end.” ** For as the seventh day had no evening mentioned, (Gen. ii. 2,) and the New Jerusalem hath no night ; (Rev. xxi. 25 ;) its length, breadth, &c.,—all alike cubed for perpetuity : (Verse 16 :) And if ever we be happy, we must be assured of the eternity of that state : for, else, fear of the loss doth lessen our joy ; or else we think it is perpetual, and yet it is not, and so we are miserable in our ignorance and mistake : And as the joy of that state is not lessened by future fears, so neither by past or present

* *Gaudium de veritate*.—AUGUSTINUS, *alicubi*. † Εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα.—ARCHIMEDES. ‡ Ἀεὶ κίνησις καὶ ἀσυχλῆσις.—ARISTIPPUS in DIOGENE LAERTIO. “Gentle motion and placid repose.”—EDIT. § *Suavis hora, brevis mora*.—BERNARDUS. || *Concupiscibile replebitur fonte justitiæ ; irascibile, perpetuâ tranquillitate*.—Idem. ¶ *Gaudium super gaudium, gaudium vincens omne gaudium, gaudium extra quod non est gaudium*.—AUGUSTINUS *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xxii. ** *Facimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus, in fine sine fine*.—Idem, *ibid.* cap. 30.

Sorrows, "all tears" being then to "be wiped from their eyes:" (verse 4 :) and the view of their nearest relations in the bottomless pit shall no more be an alloy to their joy, than if they saw so many fish caught in a net; but they shall rejoice as well in the justice of God glorified in the ruin of his incorrigible enemies, as in the glory of his mercy in their own salvation. All those feeble affections that are now so strongly contracted to poor particularities, shall be divorced, when once we come to be espoused to those dilated joys in the immense Deity.

But yet there are two accessory coronets [which] we may add to this crown of happiness as completers of it :—

(i.) When *the bodies of the saints shall be re-united to their souls*, there shall be an accession of joy.—As the Schools say, the body must have its dowry, ere it be espoused to Christ. If the vile body of an ambitious and imperious Alexander had such a *crasis* and "temperament," that it gave a perfume to the air when he was dead; * doubtless those that have conquered the world, and are to triumph for ever in the world to come,—their very bodies shall give, as the flowers of that Paradise, a very fragrant smell; being members of the body of Christ, whose very crucified body was "an offering of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." (Eph. v. 2.) Anselm tells us, the bodies of saints shall be so endued with strength, that they will be able to remove the whole earth with one touch of their foot; when, on the contrary, the wicked shall be so weakened by sin and wrath, that they shall not be able to remove a very worm from feeding upon their eyes. And the prophet says, that Meshech and Tubal "are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living." (Ezek. xxxii. 27.) But the bodies of the saints shall be "spiritual bodies;" (1 Cor. xv. 44;) that is, *spiritui subdita*, "every way subject to the motions and desires of the soul," full of agility. As Macarius says, God made not man wings as birds, (though his nest be above the stars,) because, after the resurrection, he should have, in Tertullian's phrase, "angelified flesh;" † and, as the apostle says, *εν ατομῳ*, "in a moment we shall all be snatched, and changed," *εν ῥιπῇ οφθαλμου*, "in the twinkling of an eye, to meet the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 52.) There shall be such agility of body and nimble collection of the parts, that the body shall be no more liable to a stroke or a wound, than the air of the heavens or the sun itself. And as the soul now drinks in dark informations, obscure apprehensions, and cloudy notions, by the corporeal senses, those painted windows of these houses of clay; yet when the soul is become a vessel replenished with immortal and unspotted light, it will transmit such rays into the very body, that it "shall shine as the stars," nay, as the glorious body of the sun in "the firmament, for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 3; Matt. xiii. 43.)

(ii.) The second accessory to this crown is *the blissful society of all*

* *Referente* QUINTO CURTIO.

† *Carnem angelificatam.*—*De Resur. Carnis.*

the saints and angels about the throne.—In this life it is the happiness of true believers, that, “whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,” all their eloquence, learning, gifts, and graces,—they are all theirs for their benefit and spiritual advantage. (1 Cor. iii. 22.) But then, whether prophets or apostles, (whose imaginary relics some go many a weary pilgrimage to see,) all the martyrs with their glorious scars of honour; nay, angels, cherubims, seraphims, and all that blessed choir of spirits, who have done them, while they were in dangers here, many an invisible courtesy which they could never thank them for, they being “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;” (Heb. i. 14;) all these are theirs. If a Diogenes, when he saw his three sons crowned in one day at the Olympic games as victors, died away while he was embracing them for joy; and good old Simeon, when he saw Christ but in a body subject to the infirmities of our natures, and had him in his arms, cried out, “Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;” (Luke ii. 29, 30;) what unspeakable joy will it be, to see your Christian friends and relations, to whom you have been instrumental in their new birth and regeneration, all crowned in one day with an everlasting diadem of bliss which never shall decay! There shall be no hypocrite then for you to lose your love upon, which is now the great cooler of your charity, and keeps your affections in a greater reserve: but there none but true eagles and heaven-born souls will be able to look upon that Sun in glory. You shall then rejoice, that there are so many pure spirits able to praise and love that God whom you could never yet, nor will then be able to, love and praise enough, or as you desire.

When the glorious angels begin their hallelujahs, the saints shall also join in one common choir: they shall “be joyful in glory, and sing aloud upon their” everlasting “beds” of rest. (Psalm cxlix. 5.) O how the arches of heaven will echo, when the high praises of God shall be in the mouths of such a congregation! For, as, when one eye moves, the other rolls; and when one string in concord with another is struck, the other sounds; such a blend and sympathy of praises shall there be in that heavenly chorus, with these “high-sounding cymbals,” (Psalm cl. 5,) in most flourishing expressions and anthems upon the divine glory. If the sun, moon, and stars “did,” as Ignatius says, “make all a choir, as it were, about the star” that appeared at Christ’s incarnation;* and there be joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner; (Luke xv. 7;) no wonder, then, [that] “the morning-stars shall sing together, and all the sons of God shall shout for joy,” (Job xxxviii. 7,) when there shall be a “general assembly and church of the first-born, and the spirits of all the just shall be made perfect.” (Heb. xii. 23.) And though there may be “one star differing from another in glory,” (1 Cor. xv. 41,) yet there will be no envying [of] one another’s happiness; † but every one [will] bear his part, whatever it be, in the lower or higher praises of the

* Χορὸς ὡρνεύοντο τῇ ἀστρῇ.—In *Epist. ad Ephes.*

† Videbit civitas illa quiddam inferior non invidet.—AUGUSTINUS *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xxii. cap. 29.

God of glory, with a most harmonious variety, in perfect symphony. For there we shall love one another as ourselves, love God and our blessed Saviour better than ourselves; and he will love us better than we can love ourselves, or one another. "O how many and how great joys shall he possess, who shall keep an eternal jubilee in the enjoyment of so many and so great beatitudes and felicities of others, as truly as of his own!" *

I have done with the possession and its qualification: it is a "kingdom."

(II.) I now come to *its preparation*: "Prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But how is this kingdom of so long preparation, when Christ tells his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you," when he departed hence? (John xiv. 2.)

1. First, *Therefore, this kingdom was prepared even when the foundations of the world were laid.*—For there "the morning-stars did sing together." (Job xxxviii. 7.) God created the heavens, and then the earth; and the spiritual world of angels above, before the foundation of the earth below: though, as some judge, Moses mentioned it not,—being to teach a dull people by sensible objects, concealed the notion of spirits,—lest they should idolatrously worship, and attribute the creation of the world to, them. And so the empyrean heaven and seat of glory, some venture to say, God then made; and determinately, too, in the equinoctial east of Judea, called therefore "the navel of the whole earth." To confirm it, they tell us, Adam was made with his face toward the east; and so they worshipped eastward three thousand and odd years: and thence Christ [was] called *ανατολη*, "the east," or "day-spring," "from on high;" (Luke i. 78; with Zech. iii. 8: *נֶחֱמָצ* ["the Branch"]); and the blood was to be sprinkled on the mercy-seat eastward seven times. (Lev. xvi. 14.) But we may answer the curiosity of this inquiry about the *ubi*, and "determinate place," as he of old was answered, that asked what God was doing before he created the world: "He was making hell for such unbelieving querists, and heaven for the reward of an humble believer."

2. *It was prepared from the foundation of the world, in regard of Divine predestination.*—For that which is last in obtaining, is first in the intention of rational agents. So God, from eternity designing his own glory in the salvation of the elect and their blissful fruition of himself, may be said to have set the crown upon them while they were in the womb of his decree, and to have prepared them a kingdom before they were born. And though God made all the world for man, yet it was to be kept under his feet: He reserved Himself to be the crown of his hopes and portion of his heart: "He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world." (Eph. i. 4.) Therefore all was ready. But,

3. *In regard of Divine dispensation, the carrying on [of] the whole economy hath been from the foundation of the world; and so, being*

* *O quot et quanta gaudia obtinebit qui de tot et tantis beatitudinibus sanctorum jubitabit.*—ANSELMUS, *alicubi, ni fallor, in Libro de Beatitudine.*

[seeing] the kingdom is not yet given up all unto the Father, it may be still said to be preparing.—For though, God being our heaven, it was always ready; yet by our fall we lost our title to this Paradise. Christ intervenes to divert the flaming sword of vengeance, enters [into] a covenant with his Father, sends the glad tidings of it into the world before he came, (Gal. iii. 8,) typifies in “the fulness of time,” (Lev. xvi. 6; Heb. ix. 7; Gal. iv. 4,) makes atonement, (Rom. v. 11; 1 John ii. 2,) proclaims reconciliation and pardon to penitent sinners, sends his word and Spirit to wait to be gracious, to solicit the world, till all that are the truly-called guests are invited and brought-in. Then he shuts up the door of mercy, opens the grave, summons all to judgment by the last trumpet, makes the separation, and then pronounceth this benediction. So that, though the kingdom was from the foundations of the world prepared, yet, in regard [that] every kingdom includes subjects as well as sovereign, Christ, when he was going, that so he might send his Spirit to comfort his disciples and to gather in more subjects, may be said to “prepare a place for” them, though most significantly he went to prepare *them* for that kingdom. But parabolical and metonymical expressions must not have too rigid an interpretation exacted from them. But our Saviour having bid his disciples to go before and prepare a place for him to eat the passover with them in, he tells them that he is going to prepare the supper of the Lamb, and a place for them, to which “they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God:” (Luke xiii. 28, 29 :) and this, to raise the appetites of their faith and hopes, when a supper of so many thousand years’ preparation is the entertainment [which] they are invited to.

II. And so I come to the second part of the text; and that is *the admission into this prepared possession*: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

1. When a kingdom is proposed, every man is ready to be catching at a crown: but therefore our Saviour tells us, it must be had by inheritance; that is *the title by which we must be admitted*: Κληρονομιας, “Inherit.” As the Jews had Canaan divided and apportioned to the several tribes by lot, (Num. xxvi. 55,) so some too curiously and boldly adventure to assign to every saint a mansion bigger than the whole earth; which is true, indeed, in this sense, in regard [that] immensity and God himself is “the lot of their inheritance.” (Psalm xvi. 5.) But it is an inheritance in regard [that],

(1.) There is a claim made to it only by the new-born and first-born of God; and so *by right of birth*.—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John iii. 3.) The spirit of a slave cannot manage the sceptre of a prince. Nay, they that look to sit on thrones of glory with Christ, must “follow him in the regeneration” of the body, (Matt. xix. 28,) that must die ere it be quickened; (1 Cor. xv. 36;) for “flesh and blood” in corruption; moral or natural, “cannot inherit the kingdom of God:” (verse

50; Exod. xxxiii. 20 :) which made the father cry out, "O, then, Lord, let me die, lest I die, that so I may see thee!" * Now if an unregenerate body cannot enter, much less an unregenerate soul. "An infamous person" † in the civil law may be excepted against as not fit to be an heir; and shall the laws of men be purer than the laws of God? If the "pure in heart" only can "see God" here in reflexions, (Matt. v. 8,) and "through a glass darkly;" (1 Cor. xiii. 12;) then surely *they* must be "without spot or wrinkle," (2 Peter iii. 14,) *who* must see him face to face. Heaven is entailed upon holy souls: it is their birth-right: for, no other but *they* that keep "the commandments of God, have right to eat of the tree of life, or enter in through the gates into" that Jerusalem and vision of peace. (Rev. xxii. 14.)

(2.) They inherit *by right of adoption*.—For Christ is heir; and we, heirs of his righteousness, and so co-heirs of his glory, and "heirs of God: if sons, then heirs." (Rom. viii. 17.) Now we are the sons of God by adoption. Regeneration makes us not perfectly holy, and so not perfectly sons, and so not heirs: and therefore "we receive the adoption of sons;" (Gal. iv. 5;) and being "called to be, we are, sons;" (1 John iii. 1, 2;) and "if sons, then heirs." For if a son be passed by in his father's will, and not named, nor a reason of the passing of him by, the testament is invalid in civil law, when another is made heir: and God's nature and love transcend all the compassions of men, and are a greater obligation than any laws among them; so that, if thou canst make it out that thou hast the Spirit of adoption, thou art as sure to inherit this kingdom, as thou mayest be sure thou art not by name excepted from the inheritance in the gospel of Christ, which is his will and testament.

(3.) It is inherited *by right of donation and gift*.—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's will to give you the kingdom." (Luke xii. 32.) And though "the wages of sin be death," and men are but justly rewarded therein for their demerit; yet "eternal life is the gift of God." (Rom. vi. 23.) And it is not such a gift as is a salary or stipend for our work, *οψωνιον*, "pay" for our service: for, when we have done all that we can, "we are but unprofitable servants," (Luke xvii. 10,) and deserve nothing, unless it be to "be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.) It is not an honorary gift; as he that had lost an arm in battle—his commander-general gave him an arm of gold, as an honourable reward of his service: but, alas! *τι περισσοον*, "what singular thing" can we do, (Matt. v. 47,) to *emerit* any thing at God's hands? when, the more we do, we are the further from merit; in regard [that] we are the more indebted to our Master, who gave us the opportunity and grace to perform it. Nor is it an eleemosynary gift of charity, such as we extend to poor fellow-creatures; for that is but a piece of justice and self-love, if we have that in abundance which others want,—to relieve them. Every act of charity is but a piece of equity, a paying of our

* *Moriar, ne moriar, ut te videam*.—AUGUSTINI *Confessiones*.
 † *Turpis persona*.—JOACH. MYNSINGERI *Comment. in Instit. Civil.*

† *Turpis*

debts ; for we are to owe every man love. (Rom. xiii. 8.) But God owes us nothing : nor is he bound to pity our poverty, which we have by our own default contracted on ourselves ; but this gift of God is a mere *χαρισμα*, “gratuitous act of bounty and grace.” But when it is promised and given, then it is but an act of justice to grant possession : and so the title is inheritance, but by way of free donation.

(4.) *By right of redemption* they may be said to inherit.—For, under the law the next of kin was to redeem a sold or mortgaged possession. (Ruth iv. 3—5.) Accordingly Christ took our nature upon him, that he might be of our consanguinity. He became “a curse for us,” (Gal. iii. 13,) was “made sin ;” (2 Cor. v. 21 ;) that he might ransom penitent believers from the curse : and having satisfied “to the uttermost,” (Heb. vii. 25,) and bought us with a responsible price, (1 Cor. vi. 20,) he hath right to give his sheep eternal life ; (John x. 28 ;) and therefore it is called “the purchased possession.” (Eph. i. 14.) In law, he that buys a slave may dispose of him as he pleases by his will : accordingly Christ hath made his will, to dispose of all those [whom] he hath bought : “Father, I will that, where I am, these may be also.” (John xvii. 24.) And so they are heirs by will and testament of Him that took upon Him the right of redemption.

2. Now I come to the second thing in the second general ; and that is *the heirs of this inheritance*, described in these words : “Ye blessed of my Father.” “It is the father’s work to bless” his son ;* and when Isaac blessed Jacob, he made him his heir : so God’s blessing makes us a title to this inheritance.

(1.) First, then, “*ye that are blessed of my Father from the foundation of the world*” in his *electing love*.—And they whom he hath so blessed,—they shall be “blessed.” The word *ευλογημενοι* signifies “well-spoken to.” Now God’s eternal thoughts are his “words,” *verba mentis* ; and they that were in his thoughts from eternity,—their names were written in the book of life. God had eternal purposes of grace to them : “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” (John xvii. 6.) They were blessed in the thoughts of his heart before all generations. This is an elective kingdom ; yet we are “saved, not according to” the merit of “our works” done or foreseen, “but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (2 Tim. i. 9.) And in vain did Christ covenant with his Father, or make a testament for us, unless the heirs purchased were foreknown ; “heirs being the ground-work of a testament.” †

(2.) *Well-spoken to in the word of God by the powerful vocation of his Spirit*.—They are “called to be holy ;” (Rom. i. 7 ;) and he “blesseth them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places by Christ Jesus.” (Eph. i. 3.) There are none [who] come, but they that are invited, to the supper of the Lamb ; (Rev. xix. 9 ;) they that God hath persuaded to “dwell in the tents of Shem ;” (Gen. ix. 27 ; Canticles i. 4 ;) whom he hath “drawn with the cords of

* *Patris est benedicere.*

† *Hæres caput testamenti.*

his love," (Hosea xi. 4,) and made them a people of a free-will offering "in the day of his power;" (Psalm cx. 3;) whom "the day-spring from on high hath visited," (Luke i. 78,) and the womb of the morning of the day of grace hath brought them forth; those that God hath "allured, and brought into the wilderness," that he might "speak to their hearts." (Hosea ii. 14.) None shall be followers of the Lamb, but those that are "called, and chosen, and faithful." (Rev. xvii. 14.)

(3.) *Well-spoken of in the word and promises of the gospel.*—Those that are "meek, poor in spirit, pure in heart, merciful, persecuted for righteousness' sake, and merciful;" [?] for all these "shall obtain mercy;" (Matt. v. 3—12;) as it follows in the verses after the text, "Come, ye blessed," &c.: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And He said, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, these little ones, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv. 35, 36, 40.) "For not the hearers, but the doers," of the word are blessed: (Rom. ii. 13:) the heirs of these promises are the only heirs of glory. (Heb. vi. 17.)

(4.) *Blessed in the final pardon, absolution, and justification, which shall be pronounced at the last day.*—Ye shall inherit, whom the righteous Judge of all the world shall acquit and discharge from your sins; to whom God shall say, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee;" (Matt. ix. 2;) nay, *Euyē*, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into thy Master's joy: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." (Matt. xxv. 21.) O how good a word will this be to a soul, as soon as it is got up out of the wilderness of this world! Yet "thus shalt thou be blessed that fearest God." (Psalm cxxviii. 4.) He will give thee then, to be sure, "a new name, and a white stone," and "write upon" thee, as a pillar, or a trophy erected after victory, "his own name:" (Rev. iii. 12, 17:) and when God shall thus bless thee, and speak to thee, thou wilt need never a word more to make thee happy; but the generations that come up after thee shall, when they rise up to heaven, "call thee blessed."

3. And so I come to the third particular,—*the formal introduction of these blessed heirs into their inheritance*: "Come, ye blessed," &c.

(1.) *Δευτε vox advocantis*, "This ['Come'] is the speech of one that gives us an everlasting avocation from the troubles and vanities of this present world." Christ will speak to them in this manner, only in more emphatical significancies: "Come, poor souls; where have you been all this while? Poor sheep, where have you been wandering, upon the barren mountains of the earth, climbing the cliffs of preferment and worldly honours, as if you had been of the number of the goats, and had no title to the blessings on my right hand? In what a pickle have you been, in a nasty world which 'lies altogether in filthiness,' (1 John v. 19,) in a muddy body of sin,

*pepsed** with a number of temptations! You have lain a long time 'among the pots,' griming yourselves, and defiling your garments amongst the Egyptians on my left hand. Ay, but now you shall have 'the wings of a dove,' which are all 'covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' (Psalm lxxiii. 13.) I will never more give 'the soul of my turtle-dove' into the hands of her enemies; (Psalm lxxiv. 19;) you shall never more be cooped up in a cage with such a company of unclean birds. No; come, 'my love and dove,' and fly away." (Canticles v. 2.)

(2.) *Vox admittentis*, "It is the speech of one that admits us into this inheritance." Christ is pleased to condescend so low as to style himself "the door;" (John x. 7;) nay, the Keeper of the door. He opened a door of hope by his death, a door of faith by his preaching the gospel, a door of life by his resurrection, and heaven-gates, also, by this admission. And when he hath admitted his heirs of glory, and taken them out of this deluge of sin and sorrow into that ark of salvation, he will shut them in, as God did Noah; (Gen. vii. 16;) and though they have "an abundant entrance ministered to them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," (2 Peter i. 11,) yet, when entered, the door is shut, and no egress or back-door of apostasy can be found in that state. Adam was created out of Paradise, to show that his admission, even in his innocency, was of grace; much more is it of grace upon a recovery from his fall. Christ, while in the kingdom of his patience, doth call his to many a penitent groan, to mournful prayers and many tribulations, which make a very bed of dust to be a soft couch of repose; and he calls them thither: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." (Isai. xxvi. 20.) "Come, child, go to bed in the grave." O, but then his voice will be sweet, (Canticles ii. 14,) when he shall call to them to come up to "this mountain, to a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isai. xxv. 6.)

(3.) *Vox lætissimè excipientis*, "It is the speech of one that bids us welcome to the feast too:" "Come, my friends." Ay, it is, "Come, and welcome," now. "Come, poor heart: thou hast been coming a long time. I went myself to call thee. I 'sent my messengers, rising up early, and sending them continually,' to invite thee to come in. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.) I sent my Holy Spirit, also, like a dove from heaven; and it did light upon thee, and gave thee an olive-branch of peace in the wilderness of thy fears. When it allured thee, and called thee from all thy wanderings, then I sent my black rod for thee by that grim serjeant, death; to strip thee of thy foul body of sin, not to be touched but by the angel of death. Then I sent my angels, to bring thy soul to the courts of thy God. And now, by the sounding of the last trumpet, I have called for thy sleepy body to arise out of 'the dust of death.' (Psalm xxii. 15.) And now

* Perhaps a misprint for "pestered."—EDIT.

[that], after all these messengers, thou art come, I will not upbraid thee for thy delays: but come, come, blessed soul, with as many welcomes as there are saints and angels in glory. I have 'prepared a place for thee;' (John xiv. 2;) thou art 'come into my garden: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.'" (Canticles v. 1.)

INFERENCES.

And so I have done with the explication of the several branches of the text. Now let us see what fruit they bear, that may be "sweet to our taste." (Canticles ii. 3.)

INFERENCE I.

First, then, *if there be a kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world for the blessed saints and holy ones, then "what manner of persons" are we in all unholy conversation and godlessness in this generation!* (2 Peter iii. 11.)—Men are as dead to religion, as if heaven was but a dream; and as hot upon sin, as if hell had no fire, or was all vanished into smoke; as atheistical and wretched, as if neither heaven, hell, nor earth, did feel either a God or any memorandums of his providence. Therefore, a little to fortify this notion, which artificial wickedness hath endeavoured to expel and expunge out of natural consciences, I shall endeavour to confirm your faith by scripture and reason.

The Socinians deny the revelation of eternal life and a state to come to have been propounded under the Old Testament; and, the reward being only earth, their law and obedience to be but carnal and low: which is to level the Jews to the order of brutes; that so the Gentiles under the gospel might be advanced to the state of men; and so, by virtue of the new prize of immortal life proposed, they should have a new command, as their race to run: which is all as true as that all the tribes of Israel were converted into Issachars, "strong asses couching down between two burdens." (Gen. xlix. 14.) "But wisdom is justified of her children." (Luke vii. 35.) And the Chaldee Paraphrase renders those words, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen. iv. 7,) by this gloss: "Amend thy works in this world," *et remittetur tibi in seculo futuro*, "and thou shalt be forgiven in the world to come." And the Targum says, the very dispute betwixt Cain and Abel was concerning a world to come. And those carnal heretics that are "sensual, not having the Spirit; in what they know naturally, as brute beasts, corrupt themselves;—they are gone into the way of Cain." (Jude 10, 11, 19.) But when God tells Abraham, "I am thy exceeding great reward;" (Gen. xv. 1;) and Jacob cries out, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," even when about to die; (Gen. xlix. 18;) God, styling himself their God, "is not," by our Saviour's authority, "the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt. xxii. 32.)

Therefore God held out eternal life in the promises; yea, and in the very command too: "Do this, and live." (Lev. xviii. 3; Gen. iii. 12.) The reward of that obedience there enjoined was no less than this everlasting life; as appeareth by our Saviour's interpret-

ation, when the lawyer came to him, "saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answered, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live:" (Luke x. 25—28 :) that is, "Thou shalt have what thou desirest; namely, 'inherit eternal life.'" And the very reproach of the Sadducees, and the distinction of their sect from Pharisees and others, argue sufficiently [that] the world to come was a very common notion among all the Jews. And indeed the whole land of Canaan was but a comprehensive type and shadow of heaven; and all their religion, but "a shadow of good things to come" in the kingdom of heaven, (Heb. x. 1,) as well as in the kingdom of the Messiah; whose "day they then saw, and were glad." (John viii. 56.) And if the gospel contain the promise of eternal life, then they had it in Abraham's days; for "the gospel was preached before to" him; (Gal. iii. 8;) yea, and before to Adam,—that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head; (Gen. iii. 15;) and the skins of the sacrifices, wherewith he was clothed, might suggest the putting on of that promised Seed and his obedience, who was to be "bruised for the iniquities" of his people. (Isai. liii. 5.)

But now, to awaken atheistical souls, that deny not only the revelation of this kingdom of God under the Old Testament, but its reality and existence under the Old and New; consider these four things very briefly, as the limits of this Exercise command:—

1. *The whole creation is a book which always lieth open, wherein we may read that there is a God, who made the goodly structure and fabric of heaven and earth.*—Who else could be able to "hang" the vast body of "the earth upon nothing?" or to girdle the sea and all its mountainous waves with a rope of sand? (Job xxvi. 7, 10;) to "spread the heavens as a curtain," (Psalm civ. 2,) and hang up those vast vessels of light in the skies? There must be a Being [who is] existent from and of himself; and so, being improduced, is infinitely perfect, and comprehendeth all those perfections dispersed through the whole creation, and infinitely more. Yet what he makes is like himself: every creature bears his footsteps; but the "heavens are the works of his fingers," (Psalm viii. 3,) and man bears the very "image of God." (Gen. i. 27.)

We see [that], in the several stories and degrees of the creation, love and communicativeness to their offspring grow more and more, the higher you go; it grows more in brutes than plants, in men than in brutes. In God, therefore, love and goodness, which are most communicative, are most transcendent. Now, God himself is the heaven we plead for; he is the region of souls and spirits: and for the resurrection of the body, his infinite power can surely "give to every seed its own body." (1 Cor. xv. 38.) Though one part of our flesh was sublimated into the fire; another, precipitated into ashes, and cast into the midst of the sea, devoured by a fish, taken and eaten

again by men ; and another part, dissipated into the air, and sucked into some other body : yet, if a chymist can out of the ashes of a flower re-produce the flower in its former beauty ; nay, out of the dung of beasts re-produce the very herbs they have eaten, notwithstanding what is passed into nourishment, by the architectonical parts and spirits yet abiding in those relics ;* much more can God recover our bodies from all possible dispersions and conversions into other bodies, when all the world shall be his furnace, and every thing resolved into its first seminal parts by the reverberation of the flames ; and give to every body “ the flower of resurrection,” † and a refluorescence into glory.

2. *As there is a God, and so that kingdom, so there are heirs.*—And they are immortal souls, and therefore fitted to be “ in Divine conjunction.” ‡ For “ that which is contiguous to an eternal spiritual being, is eternal and spiritual.” § But man is here only himself, when in communion with God and spiritual things. And God,—when he infused the reasonable soul, he breathed into man נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים “ the breath of lives.” (Gen. ii. 7.) And Tertullian, who had too gross a conception of the nature of the soul, yet calls it “ the sheath and scabbard of Divine breath, heir of his bounty” [“ the priest of his religion, the sister of his Christ”]. || In the exercise of those acts of apprehension, judgment, and argumentation, it is impossible such steady and orderly, consequential actions should be performed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms ; or its reflexive acts much less by the purest flame ; no body being able to penetrate itself, nor to dive into itself, without a disorder of its parts.

But religion, rather than reason, being “ the great difference of a man from brutes,” ¶ it is a sign he is made for communion with a better being ; and therefore, as Augustine says, “ Thou hast made our heart, O Lord, for thee ; and it will never rest till it come to thee : and when I shall wholly inhere and cleave to thee, then my life will be lively ; but now, being not full of the enjoyments of thee, I am a burden to myself.” *** The world was made for brutes to live in, but for man to contemplate the wisdom and power of God. †† He made many brutes, but one man ; that he might be chiefly “ for the society of God, and keep coherence to his Maker.” †† And, alas ! the world is but a dry morsel to an immortal soul ; whose vast chaos of desires cannot be satisfied by it, though every drop of comfort in it were swelled into an ocean. There is upon the soul such a drought without God, as

* BORELLUS medicus Parisiensis ita refert. “ This is related by Borel, physician to the king of France.”—EDIT. † Florem resurrectionis.—TERTULLIANUS *De Resurrectione Carnis*.

‡ Εν Θεῷ ἐκαστῇ, uti Platonici. “ As the Platonists say.”—EDIT. § Omne contiguum æterno spirituali, est æternum spirituale. || *Flagitiam afflatus Divini, liberalitatis suæ heredem, religionis suæ sacerdotem, Christi sui sororem.* ¶ *Religio penè sola quæ hominem discernat a mutis.*—LACTANTIUS, lib. vii. *De div. Præmio*.

** *Quum tibi inhæsero ex toto me, viva erit vita mea, plena te tota : nunc autem, quia plenus tui non sum, oneri mihi sum.*—AUGUSTINI *Confessiones*.

†† Θεωπια Θεου ὁρασις.—LACTANTIUS, lib. vii. *De div. Præmio*. “ The Greek word for ‘ contemplation’ is derived from two words signifying ‘ seeing God.’”—EDIT. †† *Dei socius.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xii. cap. 20. *Ut cohareat Autori.*—Lib. xxii. cap. 1.

[that] all the waters in the world cannot quench it; (Canticles viii. 7;) such an endless thirst after truth and goodness in the general notion, as [that] it can never be satisfied, till it find out "the fountain" of this water "of life." (Psalm xxxvi. 9.)

3. *This eternal state is the common sense of the world; and the voice of natural conscience hath in all ages proclaimed it.*—Every nation hath some deity or other, and so a religion. Heathens sacrifice; though, it may be, it be to the devil, who cruelly sucks their very blood. Turks and Saracens must have the black drop cut out of their breast, and their circumcision. Every religion puts some restraints upon men's lusts and lives. Now, though I believe [that], though there were no reward or a future state, religion would be as good for our bodies as prunings are to trees, "health to our navels, marrow to our bones;" (Prov. iii. 8;) yet its severities would in no degree [go] down with men, were it not for the urgings and prickings-on of natural conscience. But Christians above "all men were most miserable, if in this life only they had hope;" (1 Cor. xv. 19;) whose principles enjoin the highest degree of self-denial, patience, and bearing of the cross.

But every good man,—let the mad world prate as it will, and vomit all its gall and bitterness in reproaches and persecutions; yet, if he suffer for righteousness' sake in innocent patience, his own conscience gives him an acquittance and a secret absolution, so as he can "glory even in tribulation." (Rom. v. 3.) Yea, every devout soul more or less tasteth of those first-fruits of heavenly delight, in being conscious of his duty discharged "in simplicity and godly sincerity," (2 Cor. i. 12,) whatever calamities may attend him in this life; which if they were not pledges of a fuller crop in that future harvest of joys, the best men were most unhappy by that great frustration and disappointment of their expectations. And so wicked men, though the world may applaud their actions as highly virtuous, by a sordid spirit of flattery; yet "their own consciences affright them, and smite them with many a deadly and deaf blow," * which nobody else doth hear or observe. Cain may build his cities and his walls as high as the clouds; yet there is that within (as *he* said to the emperor) that will ruin all. "His countenance falls;" (Gen. iv. 5;) and the guilt of his brother's blood maketh his soul to blush, and pulleth down his high looks.

The highest-formed sinners, that have sinned themselves into despair, have nothing left them "but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour such adversaries." (Heb. x. 27.) Others, that have sinned themselves into the highest presumptions, never come to any senseless ease, till they attain to "make a covenant with hell;" (Isai. xxviii. 15;) and can be content to suffer torments to eternity with the enemies of God, rather than to part with "the pleasures of sin" which are but "for a season;" (Heb. xi. 25;) and seem to have that written on the tables of their

* *Quos diri conscia facti*

Mens habet attonitos, et surdo verbera cædit.—JUVENALIS Sat. xiii. 194.

hearts, which that wretch subscribed under the image of God and the devil: "Lord, if thou wilt not, here is one that begs of me to be his; and his I will be."* Now if there be a law, a judge, punishments, and rewards in some degree here, then every man is a prophet in this case of this future state.

4. *The promiscuous dispensations and providences of God in this world, "all things coming alike to all;"* (Eccles. ix. 2;) *nay, the wicked, it may be, have their belly full of a large "portion in this life,"* (Psalm xvii. 14,) *when the godly have their "teeth broken with gravel-stones and covered with ashes:"* (Lam. iii. 16:) *these argue [that] there is a day to come, when the scales shall be turned.*—Abel is slain for his piety, when Cain lives and builds cities: Herod reigns, Herodias danceth, when John Baptist's head is served in a charger. And though God sometimes by extempore and sudden justice hangs up some wicked wretches in chains, yet many times the most wretched oppressors are too strong and high for justice in this world; and they that live like lions, die like lambs; they have liberty in their lives, and "no bands in their deaths." (Psalm lxxiii. 4.) Dionysius, a bloody tyrant, dies quietly in his bed; when David lies roaring all night, (Psalm xxxii. 3, 4,) and a good Josiah falls in battle: which made the prophet cry out, "Wherefore doth the wicked devour one more righteous than himself?" (Hab. i. 13.) "The just" must, therefore, "live by his faith" in the world to come; (Hab. ii. 4;) or else all piety will die. Therefore there shall be a judgment hereafter: "For God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love" and patience. (Heb. vi. 10.) "Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous: verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." (Psalm lviii. 11.)

INFERENCE II.

Is the life to come such a kingdom? Then here is field-room for all our ambition, avarice, and contention, to show itself.—Be ambitious for something: if we must be ambitious, let us all king it here. What scuffling and scrambling is there for crowns and sceptres in the world, out of that impetuous lust of domineering! whereas a profane Esau sold his birthright, which had a kingdom and a blessing too in it, for a mess of pottage; (Gen. xxv. 34;) Lysimachus, when inflamed with thirst, proffered his kingdom for a draught of cold water; and how much gold, or how many kingdoms, would Dives give, if he had them, for a drop of cold water, (Luke xvi. 24,) or to be delivered from that one kingdom of the devil! And shall Christians contend about these things?

Alas! Christian religion was never made for a secular engine: we may as soon turn axioms of truth into swords and spears, the rules of holy living into cannons and muskets, and prayers and tears into powder and shot, as make religion a troubler of the order and peace of the world, that is of a dove-like, innocent temper; (Matt. x. 16;) full of meekness, humility, "gentleness, easiness to be

* *Domine, si tu non vis, iste me rogat.*

entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy ;" (James iii. 17 ;) can suffer any evil, but do none ; can live and secure itself better by suffering, than the crafty world by acting. To use sinful means to avoid suffering or preserve worldly greatness, is like him that, when one hoped to see him at his diocess ere long, replied, he feared he should be in heaven before that time should come. It is not Christian religion, but that Anti-Christian spirit which diffuseth itself all over Christendom in its doctrines and agitations, its philters and poisons, that inflames it more with contentions and wars than any part of the world besides. (Matt. xii. 25.) For religion truly Christian takes only "the kingdom of heaven by violence." (Matt. xi. 12.) Let one Roman emperor busy himself in catching flies ; another gather cockle-shells with his army on the sands, after great preparations for an expedition ; silly emblems of the most valiant attempts of many highly-famed mortals ! But let Christians march with all zeal only for the holy land of promise.

All those *tittles* of honour (for we pronounce them too long) which the world plays with, as children with farthing-candles, blowing them in with one breath, puffing them out with another ; if they had never so good a patent,* yet what will they come to, when "the heavens shall roll up as a scroll?" (Isai. xxxiv. 4 ; Rev. vi. 14.) Much more shall these shrivel up as a piece of parchment before the flames, when all the arms and ensigns of honour shall be blazoned alike in a field-ardent at the judgment-day. Beauty, that blossom of flesh and blood, which now carries so many captives at her wheels, tyrannizing over fond mortals' affections, when we come to those beauties of glory, will be no more comely than a dry skull, in comparison of the ravishing lustre that will be in the most deformed body of the poorest lazarillo, whose brightness will transcend the loveliest face more than the rarest jewel doth a vile piece of jet. And though perhaps difference of sexes may remain, for all Scotus's gloss, that "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female ;" yet "they will only delight the eye, not incline to any vicious thought ;"† all lust being fired out, and no spark of concupiscence left in the saints ; but grace triumphing in those objects that conquered it here ; when they shall be "as the angels" of God, (Mark xii. 25,) only pure flames of divine love and joy. When all the pure gold in the world shall be melted out of the veins of the earth and men's coffers into one common stream, and all pearls and precious stones should lie as the gravel on the side of that river, yet they would scarcely be thought fit then to make a metaphor of for the very pavement of the New Jerusalem, one sight whereof will dim and deface all the glory of the world.

INFERENCE III.

Must the title be inheritance ? Then look to your evidences,—re-generation and adoption.—As ever you look for this kingdom, prove your Father's will, and yourselves sons. It is no matter how your

* *Membrana dignitatis.*—SENECA. "A patent of nobility."—EDIT.
in vitum, non inflectent ad vitium.

† *Delectent*

names are written on earth,—in dust or marble, in reproach or renown,—if they be written in heaven. Some say, this world is but a shadow of that above : (and it was so, before sin had blotted and defaced all :) therefore look for the lineaments of that kingdom above to be portrayed on you.

All are for a heaven ; but, as Eusebius says there were many spurious gospels,* so Basilides asserted three hundred [and] sixty-five heavens, as many heavens as days in a year. The Turks, delighting in flowers and their tulipomania, dream of such a Paradise. A silly countrywoman, coming upon the Exchange, was so amazed at the view, that she fell down, and said, [that] she had oft heard of heaven, but never was in it before. The voluptuous epicure will have his a poetical heaven of nectar and ambrosia ; the ambitious, a heaven of honours and gallantry. But holy Abraham passed all these, by “looking for a city that had foundations.” (Heb. xi. 10.) The kingdoms of the world want legs and foundations to stand upon ; and while men dream of such paradises, they do but build castles in the air, without any basis but imagination. But look you for the “new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (Isai. lxv. 17 ; 2 Peter iii. 13.) Get a copy of grace in your hearts out of scripture-records, the court-rolls of heaven ; and then you have “laid hold upon eternal life.” (1 Tim. vi. 19.) It is easy to be a saint of the earth, a state-saint, a designing saint, nay, a church-saint ; but it must be a heavenly saint, one truly holy, that is “meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Col. i. 12.) Examine, therefore, What authority and entertainment have the most searching truths and cutting providences of God with you ? What spiritual wickedness, that never hurt your body, purse, or fame, have you forsaken for Christ ? This sincere beauty of holiness is able to make you ornaments even to heaven itself.

INFERENCE IV.

Is this kingdom prepared for those that are blessed of the Father ? O, then, labour to obtain your Father's blessing, though you “seek it with tears.” (Heb. xii. 17.)—Now the Father says, “Blessed are the pure, the poor in heart, the merciful, they that pray for them who persecute them.” (Matt. v. 3—11.) Be careful not only to have “oil in your lamps,” grace in your hearts ; but get your lamps “trimmed ;” be upon your watch : for you know not [at] what hour your Master comes. (Matt. xxv. 4, 7, 13.) Look how you improve your talents, what good you do in the world. Remember, it runs thus in the last account : “I was an hungry, you fed me ; naked, you clothed me ; in prison, you visited me ;” (verses 35, 36 ;) and, “Every man shall be rewarded according to his works :” (Matt. xvi. 27 :) and the more you have of heaven and divine love here, the more you shall have hereafter ; for one piece of it will lie in comfortable reflections upon what good we have done in the world. Though every one hath

* *Ebionitarum, Encratitarum, Nazaræorum, &c.* “Those of the Ebionites, Encratites, Nazarenes,” &c. — EDIT.

his penny, that comes-in at the eleventh hour, (Matt. xx. 9,) namely, all that is essential unto happiness; yet "one star differeth from another star in glory." (1 Cor. xv. 41.) Art thou, therefore, in authority? Use it for God? Art [thou] rich? Alas! "riches make themselves wings, and fly away: (Prov. xxiii. 5 :) up, then, and be doing good, and make thyself wings of thy wealth for heaven by all charitable expressions. There is no way to "lay your treasure up in heaven," (Matt. vi. 20,) but by laying it out here; no way to lend God anything, but by giving to the poor. How will hopes of preferment nourish conformity?

Tully tells us, "A prince is to be fed with glory, and drawn to worthy acts by the allurements of honour and renown." Did but Christians feed more upon "the heritage of Jacob" and their immortal hopes, (Isai. lviii. 14,) they would act more for their immortal honour. Such meditations do, as the philosopher says of speculations, "immortalize" men,* and make them spiritual ones indeed; or, as Ambrose phraseth it, carry them upwards, as birds of Paradise,† all "upon eagles' wings," (Exod. xix. 4,) to soar on high.

INFERENCE V.

Will Christ say, "Come, ye blessed," &c.? Then here is an Io triumphe ["a song of triumph"] over all the world.—Let it look as grim as it will upon thee, yet Christ will smile. Though it gnash its teeth upon thee, yet Christ will open his lips, and "kiss thee with the kisses of his mouth." (Canticles i. 2.) Though the world *lapides loquitur*, "speak words as hard as stones" about Stephen's ears, yet Christ will speak comfortably. If the world say, "Go, get you hence;" yet Christ will say, "Come." If that say, "Go, ye cursed;" Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed." Though men say, "Go, ye cursed generation, who are hated of all men;" yet Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." They say, "Turn out;" Christ will say, "Turn in." They cry, "I way from houses and lands and wives and children and all for Christ's sake;" yet be not discouraged, poor heart; for Christ will recompense thee a hundred-fold, and thou shalt have a kingdom for thy cottage. And when they have done all this, they rejoice that their plot hath taken effect; for they designed your ruin long ago. Ay, but Christ's thoughts of love run higher yet: "Come, blessed soul; inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world." The world may thrust thee out with both hands; Christ will receive thee with both arms. When Cyrus gave one of his friends a kiss, another a wedge of gold; he that had the gold envied him that had the kiss, as a greater expression of his favour. What, if thou hast not the onions of Egypt, if thou have the quails and manna in the wilderness? If thou beest † "a man of God's hand," (Psalm xvii. 14,) if thou beest one of his heart, there is small ground to complain.

* *Ἀνοδοτριζέω*.—ARISTOTELIS *Ethica*.
 † *Volucris in spiritu factus*. "Hav-
 ing become like a bird in spirit."—EDIT.

† The insertion of *not* after the word
 "beest" seems to be required, since David in that passage prays to be delivered from
 such men.—EDIT.

Upon all: if an Epicurus was the best of the philosophers without an Elysium; if a Platonic lecture of the immortality of the soul made another cast his life away, that he might enter upon that state; if an Aristotle upon Euripus's banks, being not able to resolve himself of the cause of its motion, dissolved himself by casting himself into the stream, saying, "If I cannot take thee, take thou me:" when we have such a glory as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for those that love him:" (1 Cor. ii. 9:) how shamefully are we run aground, if we cannot "have" a kind of "lust" (τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων) "to be dissolved;" (Phil. i. 23;) and [if], when Christ holds this price in his hand, and cries, "Come, ye blessed," we do not answer, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!" (Rev. xxii. 20.)

SERMON XXVIII.

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THE CONCLUSION.

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.—2 Timothy i. 13.

At the beginning of this month's Exercise I entered upon this text, and then resolved the matter contained therein into these four **DOCTRINAL OBSERVATIONS**:—

1. Evangelical words are "sound words." Or, All gospel-truth is of a healing nature.
2. It is of great use and advantage, both for ministers and private Christians, to have the main, fundamental truths of the gospel collected and methodized into certain models and platforms.
3. Such forms and models are very carefully and faithfully to be kept.
4. Faith and love are, as it were, the two hands, whereby we may "hold fast" gospel-truth.

I singled out the second of these doctrines to be the subject of that first introductory sermon which fell to my lot in the course of this Morning Exercise. I shall now, for the conclusion of this service, make choice of the third doctrine; namely,

DOCTRINE II. *Such forms and collections of the special heads of gospel-doctrine are to be kept and observed with all care and diligence.*

The other two doctrines, namely, the first and last, may be useful somewhere or other in the managing of the present truth; which is, *that forms and models of gospel-truths are carefully to be kept, &c.*