

2 PET. i. 13, 14.

*Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance.
Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.*

AT the tenth verse of this chapter, the apostle sums up his foregoing precepts and exhortations in one great and most important duty, the “making sure of their calling and election.” This exhortation he enforceth on them by a most solemn and weighty motive, ver. 11. “Even an abundant entrance into the “everlasting kingdom.” No work of greater necessity or difficulty, than to make sure our salvation, no argument more forcible and prevalent, than an easy and free entrance into glory at death, an *ευθανασία*, a sweet and comfortable dissolution, to enter the port of glory before the wind, with our full lading of comfort, peace, and joy in believing, our sails full, and our streamers flying: Oh! how much better is this, than to lie wind-bound, I mean heart-bound, at the harbour’s mouth! tossed up and down with fears, doubts, and manifold temptations, making many a board to fetch the harbour; for so much is signified in his figurative and allusive expression, ver. 11.

And for their encouragement in this great and difficult work, he engageth himself by promise to give them all the assistance he can, whilst God should continue his life; and knowing that would be but a little while, he resolves to use his utmost endeavour to secure these things in their memories after his death, that they might not die with him. This is the general scope and order of the words.

Wherein more particularly we have,

1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work.

2. The consideration stimulating and provoking him thereunto.

1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work.

In which two things are remarkable, viz. (1.) The quality of his work, which was ** to stir them up, by putting them in remembrance*, to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal lively upon the altar of their hearts. He well knew what a sleepy disease the best Christians are troubled with, and therefore he had need to be stirring them up, and awaking them to their duty. (2.) The constancy of his work: *as long as I am in this tabernacle*; i. e. as long as I live in this world. The body is called a tabernacle, in respect of its

* *Διεγείρειν*, signifies to raise up, or awake, i. e. your minds, which are, as it were, sleepy or slumbering, and dull, &c. *Pool’s synopsis.*

moveableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house made without hands, *eternal in the heavens*. And it is observable how he limits and bounds his serviceableness to them, by his commoration in his tabernacle or body, as well knowing after death he could be no longer useful to them or any others in this world. Death puts an end to all ministerial usefulness: but till that time he judged it meet, and becoming him, to be aiding and assisting their faith: our life and labour must end together.

2. We have here the motive, or consideration, stimulating and provoking him to this diligence; “knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” In which words he gives an account of, (1.) The speediness; (2.) necessity; (3.) voluntariness of his death, and the way and means by which he knew it. All these must be considered singly and apart, and then valued all together, as they amount to a weighty argument or motive to excite him to diligence in his duty.

(1.) He reflects upon the speediness or near approach of his death. “I must [* shortly] put off this my tabernacle;” which is a form of speech of the same importance with that of Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 6. “The time of my departure is at hand,” my time in the body is almost at an end.

(2.) The necessity of his death: It is not *I may*, but *I must* put off this my tabernacle; yea, I must put it off shortly; for so the Lord hath shewed him; Christ had signified it expressly to him, John xxi. 18, 19. And beside this, most expositors think this clause refers to some special vision or revelation which Peter had of the time and manner of his own death; so that besides the natural necessity, or the inevitableness of his death by the law of nature, he was certified of it by special revelation. We have here also,

(3.) The voluntariness of his death; for voluntariness is consistent enough with the necessity of the event. I must put off, or lay down my tabernacle; he saith not, I must be torn, or rent by violence from it; but I must *depose*, or *lay it down*. † Camero will have the word here used for death, properly to signify the laying down of one’s garments: he made no more of putting off his body than his garment.

Upon the consideration of the whole matter, the speediness of

* Ταπεινὸν, *brevi futurum*. Every Christian knows not the time of his death, as Peter did, by special revelation.—But though we know it not by a word spoken to us in particular, we know it by a word written for all in common, Eccl. ix. 5. “The living know that they must die.”

† He calls it a putting off or laying down, thereby signifying his willingness to die for Christ. Pool.

his death which he knew to be at hand ; the necessity of it, that when it came he must be gone from, and could be no more useful to them ; and his own inclination to be with Christ in a better state, being as willing to be gone, as a weary traveller to be at home ; he judged it meet, or becoming him, as he was called of Christ to feed his sheep, as he was gifted extraordinarily for the church's service, full of spiritual excellencies, all which in a short time would be taken away from them by death : I say, upon all these accounts, he could not but judge it meet to be stirring them up, and every way striving to be as useful as he could. Hence the note will be,

Doct. How strong soever the affections and inclinations of souls are to the fleshly tabernacles they now live in, yet they must put them off, and that speedily.

The point lies very plain before us in the scriptures. That is a remarkable expression we have in Job xvi. 22. "When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return." In the Hebrew it is, * "When the years of number, or my numbered years are come ; years so numbered, that they are circumscribed in a very short period of time." When those few years are past, then I must go to my long home, my everlasting abode, never more to return to this world : "The way whence I shall not return ;" elsewhere called "the way of all flesh," Josh. xxiii. 15. and "the way of all the earth," 1 Kings ii. 2.

"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war," Eccl. viii. 8. By spirit understand the natural spirit, or breath of life, which, as I shewed before, connects or ties the soul and body together. This spirit no man can retain in the day of death. *We can (as one speaks) as well stop the chariot of the sun when posting to night, and chase away the shadows of the evening, as escape this hour of darkness that is coming upon us†.* A man may escape the wars by pleading privilege of years, or weakness of body, or the king's protection, or by sending another in his room ; but in this war the press is so strict, that it admits no dispensation ; young or old, weak or strong, willing or unwilling, all is one, into the field we must go, and look that last and most dreadful enemy in the face. It is in vain to think of sending

* *Anni numeri, (i. e.) qui numerati sunt adeo ut brevissima periodo circumscripti.*

† No diligence avoids, no happiness tames, and no power overcomes death, says Seneca.

another in our room, for no man dieth by proxy? or to think of compounding with death, as those self-deluded fools did, Isa. xxviii. 15. who thought they had been discharged of the debt by seeing the serjeant: No, there is no discharge in that war. *Nihil prodest ora concludere, et vitam fugientem retinere*, saith Hieron on that text; Let us shut our mouths never so close, struggle against death never so hard, there is no more retaining the spirit, than a woman can retain the fruit of her womb, when the full time of her deliverance is come. Suppose a man were sitting upon a throne of majesty surrounded with armed guards, or in the midst of a college of expert and learned physicians, death will pass all these guards to deliver thee the fatal message: Neither can arts help thee, when nature itself gives thee up.

The law of mortality binds all, good and bad, young and old, the most useful and desirable saints, whom the world can worst spare, as well as useless and undesirable sinners, Rom. viii. 10. "And if Christ (or though Christ) be in you, the body is dead "because of sin." Peter himself must put off his tabernacle, for they are but tabernacles, frail and moveable frames, not built for continuance; these will drop off from our souls, as the shells fall off from the bird in the nest; be our earthly tabernacles never so strong or pleasant, we must depose them, and that shortly; our lease in them will quickly expire, we have but a short term. James iv. 14. like a thin mist in the morning, which the sun presently dissipates; this is a metaphor chosen from the air: You have one from the land, where the swift post runs, Job ix. 25. So doth our life from stage to stage, till its journey be finished; and a third from the waters, there sail the swift ships, Job ix. 26. which weighing anchor, and putting into the sea, continually lessen the land, till at last they have quite lost sight of it: from the fire, Psal. lviii. 4. The lives of men are as soon extinct as a blaze made with dry thorns, which is almost as soon out as in. Thus you see how the Spirit of God hath borrowed metaphors from all the elements of nature, to shadow forth the brevity and frailty of that life we now live in these tabernacles; so that we may say as one did before us, *Nescio an dicenda sit vita mortalis, an vitalis mors*; I know not which to call it, a mortal life, or a living death.

The continuance of these our tabernacles or bodies is short, whether we consider them *absolutely*, or *comparatively*.

1. *Absolutely*. If they should stand seventy or eighty years, which is the longest duration, Psal. xc. 10. how soon will that time run out? What are years that are past but as a dream that is vanished, or as the waters that are past away? it is *in fluxu continuo*: there is no stopping its swift course, or calling back a moment that is past. Death set out in its journey towards us the

same hour we were born, and how near is it come this day to many of us? It hath us in chase, and will quickly fetch us up, and overtake us; but few stand so long as the utmost date.

2. *Comparatively.* Let us compare our time in these tabernacles, (1.) either with eternity, or with him who inhabits it, and it shrinks up into nothing; Psal. xxxix. 5. "Mine age is nothing unto thee." So vast is the disproportion, that it seems not only little, but nothing at all. Or (2.) with the duration of the bodies of men in the first ages of the world, when they lived many hundred years in these fleshly tabernacles. The length of their lives was the benefit of the world, because religion was then *απαρχοπαράδοτον*, a thing handed down from father to son; but certainly it would be no benefit to us that are in Christ, to be so long suspended the fruition of God in the everlasting rest.

The grounds and reasons of this necessity that lies upon all, to put off their earthly tabernacle so soon, are

1. The law of God, or his appointment.

2. The providence of God ordering it suitably to this appointment.

1. The law or appointment of God which came in force immediately upon the fall; Gen. ii. 17. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And accordingly it took place upon all mankind immediately upon the first transgression, Rom. v. 12. *Death entered by sin.* The threatening was not his immediate, actual, personal death in the day that he should eat, but a state of mortality to commence from that time to him and his posterity; hence it is said, Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed to all men once to die."

2. The providence of God ordering and framing the body of man suitably to this his appointment; * a frail, weak creature, having the seeds of death in his constitution: Thousands of diseases and infirmities are bred in his nature, and the smallest pore in his body is a door large enough to let in death. Hence his body is compared to a piece of cloth which moths have fretted, Psal. xxxix. 11. it is become a sorry rotten thing which cannot long hang together. And indeed it is a wonder it continues so long as it doth.

And both these, viz. the divine appointment and providence, are in pursuance of a double design, or for the payment of a two-fold debt, which God owes to the first and to the second Adam.

(1.) By cutting off the life, or dissolving the tabernacles of wick-

* We die daily, for some part of life is taken away daily, and then also when we increase, life decreases, for first we lose infancy, then youth, even to yesterday. Whatever part of time passes is lost.

ed men, God pays that debt of justice owing to the first Adam's sinful posterity, whose sins cry daily to his justice to cut them off. Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." And indeed it is admirable that his patience suffers ungodly men to live so long as they do, for he endures with much long-suffering, Rom. ix. 22. He sees all their sins, he is grieved at the heart with them; his forbearance doth but encourage them the more to sin against him; Eccl. viii. 11. "Because sentence," &c. yet forbears: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," Psal. xcv. 10. And it is wonderful that he hath so much patience under such a load. Habakkuk admired it, Hab. i. 13. "Thou art of purer eyes," &c. Yet he suffers them to spend lavishly upon his patience from year to year, but justice must do his office at last.

(2.) By cutting off the lives of good men, God pays to Christ the reward of his sufferings, the end of his death which was to bring many sons to glory, Heb. ii. 10. Alas! it answers not Christ's end and intention in dying, to have his people so remote from him; John xvii. 24. "He would have them where he is, that they might behold his glory." Two vehement desires are satisfied by this appointment of God, and its execution, viz.

1. Christ's.

2. The saints.

1. Christ's desires are satisfied; for this is the thing he all along kept his eye upon in the whole work of his mediation; it was to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Though he be in glory, yet his mystical body is not full till all the elect be gathered in by conversion, and gathered home by glorification, Eph. i. 23. The church is his fulness. He is not fully satisfied till he see his seed, the souls he died for, safe in heaven; and then the debt due to him for all his sufferings is fully paid him, Isa. liii. 11. He sees the travail of his soul; as it is the greatest satisfaction and pleasure a man is capable of in this world, to see a great design which hath been long projecting and managing, at last, by an orderly conduct, brought to its perfection.

2. The desires of the saints are hereby satisfied, and their weary souls brought to rest. Oh! what do gracious souls more pant after than the full enjoyment of God, and the visions of his face! the state of freedom from sin, and complete conformity to Jesus Christ! From the day of their espousals to Christ, these desires have been working in their souls. Love and patience have each acted its part in them, 2 Thess. iii. 5. Love hath put them into an holy ardour and longing to be with Christ: patience hath qualified and allayed those desires, and supported the soul under the delay. Love cries, come, Lord, come; patience commands us to wait the appointed time. This appointed time on which so great

hopes and expectations depend, is the time of dissolving these tabernacles; for till then the soul's rest is suspended; and if it were perfectly freed from all other loads and burdens, both of sin and affliction, yet its very absence from Christ would alone make it restless, for it is with the soul in the body, as it is with any other creature that is off its centre, it doth and must gravitate and pro-pend, it is still moving and inclining farther, and feels not itself easy and at rest where it is, be its condition in other respects never so easy. 2 Cor. v. 6. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we "are absent from the Lord." You have a little shadow, or emblem of this in other creatures: You see the rivers, though they glide never so sweetly betwixt the fragrant banks of the most pleasant meadows in their course and passage, yet on they go towards the sea; and if they meet with never so many rocks or hills to resist their course, they will either strive to get a passage through them, or if that may not be, they will fetch a compass, and creep about them, and nothing can stop them till by a central force they have finished their weary course, and poured themselves into the bosom of the ocean. Or as it is with yourselves, when abroad from your habitations and relations: this may be pleasing a little while; but if every day might be a festival, it would not long please you, because you are not at home.

The main motives that persuade gracious souls to abide here, are to finish the work of their own salvation, and further other men's; but as their evidences for heaven grow clearer to themselves, and their capacity of service less to others, so must their desires to be with Christ be more and more enflamed.

Now the case so standing, that Christ's condition in heaven, being a condition of desire and longing for the enjoyment of his people there, and all the glory of heaven would not content him without that; and the condition of his people on earth being also a state of longing, groaning, and panting to be with him, and all the pleasures and delights and comforts they have on earth, will not content them without it: How wise and gracious an appointment of heaven is it, that these our tabernacles shall and must be put off, and that shortly! For hereby a full and mutual satisfaction is given to the restless desires both of Christ's heart and of theirs: See the reflected flames of love betwixt them, in Rev. xxii. "The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst "come; Behold, I come quickly. Even so, Lord Jesus; Come "quickly." Delays make the heart sad, Prov. xiii. 12. should our commoration on earth be long, our patience had need be much greater than it is; but under all our burdens here, this is our relief, it is but a little while, and all will be well, as well as our souls can desire to have it.

Inf. 1. Must we put off these tabernacles? Is death necessary and inevitable? *Then it is our wisdom to sweeten to ourselves that cup which we must drink; and make that as pleasant to us as we can which we know cannot be avoided.* Die we must, whether we be fit or unfit, willing or unwilling: It is to no purpose to shrug at the name, or shrink back from the thing. In all ages of the world, death hath swept the stage clean of one generation, to make room for another, and so it will from age to age, till the stage be taken down, in the general dissolution.

But though death be inevitable by all, it is not alike evil, bitter, and dreadful to all. Some tremble, others triumph at the appearances of it. Some meet it half-way, receive it as a friend, and can bid it welcome, and die by consent; making that the matter of their election, which, in itself, is necessary and unavoidable; so did Paul, Phil. i. 23. But others are drawn, or rent by plain violence from the body, Job xxxvii. 1. when God draws out their souls.

That man is happy indeed, whose heart falls in with the appointment of God, so voluntarily and freely, as that he dare not only look death in the face with confidence, but go along with it by consent of will. Remarkable to this purpose, is that which the apostle asserts of the frame of his own heart, 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Here is both confidence and complacency, with respect to death, *Θαροῦμεν*. The word signifies courage, fortitude; or, if you will, an undaunted boldness and presence of mind, when we look the king of terrors in the face. We dare venture upon death, we dare take it by the cold hand, and bid it welcome. We dare defy its enmity, and deride its noxious power, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death! where is thy sting!" And that is not all, we have complacency in it, as well as confidence to encounter it. *Ευδοκῶμεν*, *we are willing*; the translation is too flat, *We are well pleased*; it is a desirable, a grateful thing to us to die; but yet not in an absolute, but comparative consideration, *ευδοκῶμεν μάλλον*, *we are willing rather*, i. e. rather than not see, and enjoy our Lord Jesus Christ; rather than to be here always sinning and groaning. There is no complacency in death; in itself it is not desirable. But if we must go through that strait gate, or not see God, we are willing rather to be absent from the body. So that you see death was not the matter of his submission only, he did not yield to what he could not avoid, but he balances the evils of death, with the privileges it admits the soul into, and then pronounces, *ευδοκῶμεν*, *we are content, yea, pleased to die.*

We cannot live always if we would, and our hearts should be wrought to that frame, as to say, we would not live always if we could, Job vii. 16. "I would not live always;" or *long*, saith he.

But why should Job deprecate that which was not attainable? “I would not live always; he needed not to trouble himself about that, it being impossible that he should: both statute and natural law forbid it. Ay, but this is his sense: supposing no such necessity as there is, if it were pure matter of election; upon a due balancing of accounts, and comparing the good and evil of death, I would not be confined always, or for any long time to the body. It would be a bondage unsupportable to be here always.

Indeed those that have their portion, their all, in this life, have no desire to be gone hence. They that were never changed by grace, desire no change by death; if such a concession were made to them, as was once to an English parliament, That they should never be dissolved, but by their own consent, when would they say as Paul, “I desire to be dissolved?” But it is far otherwise with them, whose portion and affections are in another world; they would not live always if they might; knowing, that never to die, is never to be happy.

Quest. If you say, *This is an excellent and most desirable temper of soul; but how did these holy men attain it? or what is the course we may take to get the like frame of willingness?*

Sol. They attained it, and you may attain it in such methods as these.

1. They lived in the believing views of the invisible world, and so must you, if ever death be desirable in your eyes, 2 Cor. iv. 18. “It is said of all that died comfortably, that they died in faith,” Heb. xi. 13. You will never be willing to go along with death, except you know where it will carry you.

2. They had assurance of heaven, as well as faith to discern it. Assurance is a lump of sugar, indeed, in the bitter cup of death; nothing sweetens like it. So 2 Cor. v. 1. so Job xix. 26, 27. This puts roses into the pale cheeks of death, and makes it amiable, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. and Rom. viii. 38, 39.

3. Their hearts were weaned from this world, and an inordinate affection to a terrene life, Phil. iii. 8. all was dung and dross for Christ; they trampled under foot what we hug in our bosoms. So it is said, Heb. x. 34. “Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves,” &c. And so it must be with us, if ever we obtain a complacency in death.

4. They ordered their conversations with much integrity, and so kept their consciences pure, and void of offence; Acts xxiv. 16. “Herein do I exercise myself,” &c. and this was their comfort at last, 2 Cor. i. 12. “This is our rejoicing,” &c. So Job xxvii. 5. “My integrity will I not let go till I die.” Oh! this unstings death of all its terrors.

5. They kept their love to Christ at the height: that flame was

vehement in their souls, and made them despise the terror, and desire the friendly assistance of death, to bring them to the sight of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 23. So Ignatius, *O how I long*, &c. Thus it must be with you, if ever you make death eligible and lovely to you, which is terrible in itself. There is a loveliness in the death, as well as in the life of a Christian: "Let me die the death of the righteous," said Balaam.

Inference 2. Must we put off these tabernacles of flesh? *How necessary is it, that every soul look in season, and make provision for another habitation?* * If you must be turned out of one house, you must provide another, or lie in the streets. This the apostle comforted himself with, that "if unclothed, he should not be found naked," 2 Cor. v. 1. a building of God, an house not made with hands. You must turn out, and that shortly, from these earthly habitations. Oh! what provision have you made for your souls against that day? The soul of Adrian was at a sad loss, when he saw he must be turned out of this world; *O animula vagula, blandula, heu quo vadis!* But it was Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's privilege, that God had prepared for them a city, Heb. xi. 16.

I know it is a common presumption of most men, that they shall be in heaven, when they can be no longer on earth. *Presumendo sperant, et sperando pereunt.* But a few moments will convince them of their fatal mistake; their poor souls will meet with a confounding repulse, like that, Matth. vii. 22. There is indeed a city full of heavenly mansions prepared for some; but who are they that are entitled to it, and may confidently expect to be received into it? To be sure, not the presumptuous, who make a bridge of their own shadows, and so fall and perish in the waters. Brethren, it is one of the most solemn enquiries you were ever put upon: and therefore I beseech you, see whether your characters set you among those men, or no.

1. Those that are new-born, shall be clothed with their new house from heaven, when death unclothes them of these tabernacles: the *New Jerusalem* hath none but new-born inhabitants, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. and Christ tells us, John iii. 3. *all others are excluded.* Glory is the privilege of grace. Let nature be adorned, and cultivated how it will, if not renewed by grace, there is no hope of glory. You must be born again, or turned back again from the gates of heaven disappointed. You must be regenerated, or damned. This alters the temper of thy heart, and suits it to the life of God, which is indispensably necessary to them that shall live with him.

* Many cry out on a death-bed, O send for ministers and Christians to pray! Alas! what can they do then? Is that a time for so great a work to be shuffled up in a hurry, amidst distractions, and agonies.

Else heaven would be no heaven to us, Rom. viii. 7. and therefore we must be brought this way to it, 2 Cor. v. 5. No privilege of nature, no duties of religion avail without this, Gal. vi. 15. If morality, without regeneration, could bring men to heaven, why are not the Heathens there? If strictness in duty, without regeneration, why are not the Pharisees there? Believe it, neither names, nor duties, no, nor the blood of Christ, ever did, or shall bring one soul to glory without it. O then, thou that boastest of a house in heaven, lay thine hand on thy heart, and ask it; Am I a new creature, i. e. Am I renewed, (1.) In my state and condition? 1 John iii. 14. past from death to life. (2.) In my frame and temper? Eph. v. 8. "Once darkness, now light in the Lord." (3.) In my practice and conversation? Eph. ii. 12, 13. 1 Cor. vi. 11. If not, my soul is destitute of an habitation in the city of God; and when I die, my body must lie in the lonely house of the grave, that dark vault and prison, and my soul be shut out from God into outer darkness.

2. Those that live as strangers, and pilgrims on earth, seeking a better place, and state, than this world affords them; for them God hath made preparations in glory, Heb. xi. 13, 16. If you be strangers on earth, you are the inhabitants of heaven. Now there be six things included in this character. 1. They look not on this world as their own home, nor on the people of it, as their own people, 2 Cor. v. 8. *ἐκδημησαι, to be unpeopled.* These are none of my fellow-citizens, we must go two ways at death. 2. They set not their affections on things present, as their portion, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Psal. xvii. 13, 14. Their bodies are here, their hearts in heaven. 3. Their carriage, and manner of life, not like the men of this world, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *ξενίζονται.* So the rule guides them, Rom. xii. 2. and so their course is steered; at least intended, Phil. iii. 20. *οὐ το πολίτευμα, our trade is in heaven.* (4.) Their dialect and language differ from the natives of this world. Their language is earthly, 1 John iv. 5, 6. but these have a *pure lip*, Zech. iii. 9. (5.) Their society, and chosen companions are not of this world, Psal. xvi. 3. They are a company of themselves, Acts iv. 21. (6.) Their spirit, and temper of heart are not after the world, 1 Cor. ii. 12. They have *another spirit*, Numb. xiv. 24. These things discover us to be strangers on earth, and consequently, the men for whom God hath prepared heavenly habitations when we die.

3. Those that live and die by faith, shall not fail to be received into a better habitation by death. This is another character of them that shall be received into glory, laid down in the same place, Heb. xi. 13. They lived by faith, and when they died, they died em-

bracing the promises, which is characteristical of those that shall dwell in that heavenly city; and implies, (1.) Intimate acquaintance with the promises, they are things well known, and familiarized to them. The word *ασπασαμενοι*, *Salutantes*, saluting them, is a metaphor, from the manner of parting betwixt two dear and intimate friends. The faith of a Christian embraces the promises in its arms, as dear friends use to do at parting, and saith, Farewell, sweet promises, from which I have sucked out so much relief and refreshment in all the troubles of my life; I must now live no more by faith on you, but by sight: O you have often cheered my soul, and been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. (2.) It implies the firm credit that a believer gives to things unseen, upon the grounds of the promises, as if he did sensibly take and grasp them in his very arms and bosom. They take Christ, and all the invisible things in the promises, into their sensible embraces, 1 Pet. i. 8. Faith is to them instead of eyes. (3.) It implies the sincerity of a believer's profession, who dares trust to that at the last gasp, which he professed to believe in the midst of life, and the comforts of this world. As he professed to believe in health, so you shall find his actings, when his eye and heart-strings are cracking, Rom. xiv. 9. Christ, in the promises, was his professed joy and life, and this is what he grasps at death, and lays his last hold on. (4.) It shews you whence all a believer's comforts come, in life and death. O, it is from the promises, Christ in the promises is the spring of their consolation. This they fetch their comfort from, when the world cannot administer one drop of refreshment to them. There be two great works faith performs for the saints, one in life, the other in death: in life, it is the principle of mortification to their sins; in death, it is the spring of consolation to their hearts; it makes them die whilst they live, and live when they die.

4. Those that love the person and appearance of Christ, have a mark that sets them among the inhabitants of heaven, and glory, 2 Tim. iv. 8. but then this love must be, (1.) Sincere, and without hypocrisy. (2.) Supreme, and above all other beloveds. (3.) Conforming the soul to Christ; if sincere and supreme, it will be transformative. (4.) Longing to be with him. Such love is a mark of souls for whom heaven is prepared.

Inf. 3. Must we put off our tabernacles, and that shortly? *What a spur is this to a diligent redemption, and improvement of time?* This is the use Peter made of it here, and every one of us should make. It was said of Bishop Hooper, he was spare in his diet, spare in his words, but most of all spare of his time. You have but a little time in these tabernacles; what pity is it to waste much out of a little?

(1.) Great is the worth and excellency of time, all the treasures of the world cannot protract, stop, or call back one minute of time. O what is man that the heavenly bodies should be wheeled about by Almighty Power in constant revolutions, to beget time for him! Psal. viii. 3.

(2.) More precious are the seasons and opportunities that are in time for our souls; those are the golden spots of time, like the pearl in the oyster-shell, of much more value than the shell that contains it. There is much time in a short opportunity. There is a day on which our eternal happiness depends, Luke xix. 41, 42. Heb. iv. 7.

(3.) Invaluable are the things which God doth for men's souls in time. There are works wrought upon men's hearts in a seasonable hour in this life, which have an influence into the soul's happiness throughout eternity. There is a time of mercy, a time of love, viz. of illumination, and conversion; and on that point of time, eternal life hangs in the whole weight of it.

(4.) Lost opportunity is never to be recovered by the soul any more, Ezek. xxiv. 13. Rev. xxii. 11. To come before the opportunity, is to come before the bird is hatched; and to come after it, is to come when the bird is flown. There is no calling back time, when it is once past. See this in the examples you find, Luke xiii. 26. Eccl. ix. 10.

(5.) It is wholly uncertain to every soul, whether the present day may not determine his lease in this tabernacle, and a writ of ejection be served by death upon his soul to-morrow, James iv. 13. Luke xii. 20.

(6.) As soon as ever time shall end, eternity takes place. The stream of time delivers souls daily into the boundless ocean of vast eternity. *Ab hoc momento pendet æternitas.* We are now measured by time, hereafter by eternity.

(7.) In eternity all things are fixed and unalterable. We have no more to do, all means and works are at an end, John ix. 4. and Eccl. xi. 3. "As the tree falls, so it lies." Oh that these weighty considerations might lie upon your hearts, as long as you are in these tabernacles! If they did, (1.) The unregenerate would not so desperately hazard their eternal happiness, by trifling away their precious seasons under the gospel. Oh how many aged sinners, gray-headed sinners, hear me this day, who in fifty or sixty years never redeemed one solemn hour, to take their poor souls aside out of the clutter and distracting noise of the world to ask and debate this question with them, *Oh my soul, how stands the case with thee in reference to the world to come!* They have found no time to bethink themselves in what world their souls shall be landed, when time shall deliver them up into eternity. Their whole life

hath been but a continual diversion from one trifle to another: they have been serious in trifles, and trifled in things most serious; this will afford horrid reflections in the world to come. (2.) The regenerate would not cast away the comfort of their lives, in the evidences of eternal life, at so cheap a rate as they do. May I not say to you as the apostle doth, Heb. v. 12. for the time you have had under the gospel you might have attained a rich treasure, both of grace and comfort; *Turpe est esse senex elementarius*. Is it not shameful and inexcusable, to be where you were twenty years past? Oh! let these things sink deep into every soul.

Inf. 4. Must we shortly put off these our tabernacles? *Then slack your pace, and cool yourselves; be not too eager in the prosecution of earthly designs.* O what bustling is here for the world, and for provision for futurity, whereas far less would serve the turn! We need not victual a ship to cross the channel to France, as if she were bound to the Indies. Most men's provisions, at least their cares and thoughts, are far beyond the preparations of their abode in this world. The folly of this, Christ discovers in that parable, Luke xii. 19. and on this very account gives him the title of a fool, who provided for years, many years; when poor soul, he had not one night to enjoy these provisions.

Oh the multitude of thoughts and cares this world needlessly devours! We keep ourselves in such a continual hurry and crowd of cares, thoughts, and employments about the concerns of the body, that we can find little time to be alone, communing with our own hearts about our great concerns in eternity. It is with many of us, in respect of our souls, and their great interests, as it is with a man that is deep in thoughts about some subject that wholly swallows him up, he seeth not what he seeth, nor heareth what he heareth of any other matter: his eyes seem to look upon this or that, but it is all one as if he did not. So it was with Archimedes, who was so intent upon drawing his mathematical schemes, that though all the city was in an alarm, the enemy had taken it by storm, the streets filled with dreadful cries, and dead bodies, the soldiers came into his particular house, nay, entered his very study, and plucked him by the sleeve, before he took any notice of it: even so many men's hearts are so profoundly immersed, and drowned in earthly cares, thoughts, projects, or pleasures, that death must come to their very houses, yea, and pull them by the sleeve, and tell them its errand, before they will begin to awake, and come to a serious consideration of things more important.

Inf. 5. If we must shortly put off these tabernacles, *then the groaning and mourning time of all believers is but short; how heavy*

soever their burden be, yet they shall carry it but a little way. It is said, 2 Cor. v. 4. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being "burdened." Good souls, in this state, are every where groaning under heavy pressures. Their burdens are of two sorts, sympathetic, whereby they grieve with, and on the account of others, and so every true member of the church of God ought to sympathize, both with God, Psal. cxxxix. 21. "Am not I grieved with them "that rise up against thee?" Psal. xlii. 10. "It is as with a sword "in their bones;" and with the people of God, Zeph. iii. 18. sorrowful for the solemn assembly; so 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is "offended, and I burn not?" And indeed, it is an argument of rich, as well as true grace, that we can, and do heartily mourn with, and for the interest and people of God, though our own lot in the world, as Nehemiah's, be never so comfortable. Or else our burdens are idiopathetical, i. e. such as we bear upon our own proper account and score. And where is the Christian that hath not his own burden, yea, many burdens on him at once? Some groan under the burden of sin, Rom. viii. 24. Scarce one day are the tears off from some eye-lids on this account. And who groans not under the burden of affliction, either inward upon the soul, Prov. xviii. 14. Job vi. 1, 2, 3. or outward upon the body, state, relations, &c. These things make the people of God a burden to themselves, Job vii. 20, 21. Yea, under these burdens they would sink, did not the Lord sustain them, Psal. lv. 22.

But God will put a speedy and final end to all these things. When you put off this tabernacle, you put off with it all those burdens, inward and outward. The soul presently feels a great load off his shoulders; it shall never groan more, God shall thenceforth wipe away all tears from their eyes; for why are those burdens now permitted and imposed by the Lord upon you, but (1.) To prevent sin, Hos. ii. 6. They are your clogs to keep you from straying. (2.) To purge out sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. (3.) To make you long more for heaven, and the rest to come. But all these ends are accomplished in that day you put off your tabernacles, for then sin is gone, and the rest is come.

Inf. 6. Must you shortly put off those tabernacles? *Then spare them not whilst you have them, but employ them for God with all diligence.* Shortly they shall be useless to you, yea, meat for worms; now they may be serviceable, and their service is their honour: you received them not for such low ends as you employ them for. See 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Glorify God in your souls and bodies, which "are his:" You expect to have them glorious bodies one day; O then let them be serviceable bodies now! Be not fond of them to that degree many are, who chuse rather to have them *eaten up*

with rust, than worn out with service *. It is your present honour to be active, and will be your singular comfort another day. What greater comfort, when you come to put them off at death, than this, that you have employed them faithfully for God

Inf. 7. Look beyond this embodied state, and learn to live now as you hope to live shortly; begin to be what you expect to be. You know the time is at hand, that you shall live above all bodily concerns and employments, the soul shall be a drudge to the body no more. You shall be as the angels, Matt. xxii. 30. not marrying, nor giving in marriage, which is, by a *synechdoche*, put for all carnal employments and enjoyments; eat no more, drink no more, sleep no more, buy and sell no more. Now suit yourselves as much as your state and the duties of religion will suffer you to that state before hand. The sum of what I aim at is in 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Be in all your relations as if you had none. Look on those things as if already they were not, which shortly must be none of yours; and both acquaint and accustom your thoughts to the life of separation from the body, which you must shortly leave. Which brings me home to the next point, *viz.* *The condition of human souls in the state of separation.*



HEB. xii. 23.

—ΚΑΙ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΝ ΤΕΤΕΛΕΙΩΜΕΝΩΝ.—*And to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

THE particular scope of this context falls in with the general design of the whole gospel, which is to persuade men to a life of holiness. The matter of the exhortation is most weighty, and the arguments enforcing it most powerful: He doth not talk, but dispute; he doth not say, but prove, that greater and more powerful engagements unto holiness lie upon those who live under the gospel, than upon the people who lived under the law. And thus the argument lies in this context.

If God, at the delivering of the law upon *mount Sinai*, strictly enjoined, and required so great purity and holiness in that people, signified by the ceremonies of two days preparation, the washing of their clothes, abstinence from conjugal society, &c. Exod. xix. 10. much more doth he require, and expect it in us, who are come under a much more excellent and heavenly dispensation than theirs was.

* Ambrose said of Valentinian,—No man was ever such a servant to his master, as Valentinian's body was to his soul.

To make good the *sequel*, he compares the *legal* and *evangelical* dispensations in many particulars, ver. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. giving the gospel the preference throughout the whole comparison.

Hence the privileges of the New-Testament believers are stated, both *negatively* and *positively*.

1. *Negatively*, By shewing what we are exempted from.

2. *Positively*, Shewing what we are to come unto.

1. *Negatively*, What we are exempted, or freed from; ver. 18, 19, 20, 21. "We are not come unto the mount that might be "touched," &c.

The sum of all is this, that the promulgation of the law was accompanied with amazing dread and terror. For, after Moses, by command from God, had sanctified the *mount*, and set rails about it, that neither priest nor people, man nor beast, might touch the very borders of it, lest they die; the Lord descended in fire upon the top of the *mountain* the third day, in the morning, with most terrible tokens of divine majesty, *to wit*, with thunderings, lightnings, dark clouds, and the noise of a *trumpet*, exceeding loud; the *mount* was covered with smoke, as the smoke of a furnace, and * flames mounting up into the midst of heaven, the whole mountain shaking and trembling exceedingly: Out of this horrid tempest the awful voice of God was heard, all the people in the camp trembling, yea, and Moses himself quaking for fear.

This was the manner of the law's promulgation: But to such a terrible dispensation as this we are not come, which is the negative part of our privilege.

2. He opens the positive privileges to which we are come.

(1.) "Ye are come, saith he, to mount Sion,] not the earthly, but the spiritual Sion. Mount Sion was the place celebrated above all the world for the worship of God, Psal. lxxxvi. 7. "All my "springs, saith God, are in thee." There was the temple, the ark of the covenant, the glory of the Lord dwelling between the *cherubims*. The *priests* that attended the service of God had their residence there, as the angels have in heaven. Thither the tribes went up from all quarters of Judea, Psal. lxxxiv. as the children of God now do to heaven, from all quarters of the world. Judea was the best kingdom in the world; Jerusalem the best city in that kingdom; and Sion the most glorious place in that city. Here Christ taught his heavenly doctrine; near to it he finished his glorious work of redemption. Hence the everlasting gospel went forth into all the world: And, on these considerations, it is put to signify the gospel-church, or state in this place, and is therefore called *the heavenly Jerusalem*, in the following words, We do not

* *Crebris micat ignibus æther*; i. e. The sky shines with frequent lightnings,
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come to the literal *Sion*, nor to the *earthly Jerusalem*; but to the gospel-church, or state, which may be called a heaven upon earth, compared with that *literal Jerusalem*.

(2.) Ye are come “to an innumerable company of angels.”] To * *myriads of angels*, a *myriad* is ten thousand, but myriads in the plural number, and set down indefinitely too, may note many millions of angels: And therefore we fitly render it, “to an innumerable company of angels.”

They had the ministry of angels as well as we, thousands of them ministered to the Lord in the dispensation of the law at Sinai, Psal. lxxviii. 17. But this notwithstanding, we are come to a much clearer knowledge, both of their present ministry for us on earth, Heb. i. 14. and of our fellowship and equality with them in heaven, Luke xx. 36.

(3.) “Ye are come to the general assembly, and church of the “first-born, whose names are written (or enrolled) in heaven.”] This also greatly commends and amplifies the privileges of the New-Testament believers. The church of God in former ages was circumscribed and shut up within the narrow limits of one small kingdom, which was a garden inclosed out of a waste wilderness: But now, by the calling in of the Gentiles, the church is extended far and wide, Eph. iii. 5, 6. It is become a great assembly, comprising the believers of all nations under heaven; and so speaking of them collectively, it is the general convention or assembly, which is also dignified, and ennobled by two illustrious characters, viz. (1.) That it is *the church of the first-born*, i. e. consisting of members dignified and privileged above others, as the first-born among the Israelites did excel their younger brethren. (2.) That their *names are written in heaven*, i. e. registered or enrolled in God’s book, as children and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, as the first-born in † Israel were registered in order to the priesthood, Numb. iii. 40, 41.

(4.) Ye are come “to God, the Judge of all.”] But why to God the Judge? This seems to spoil the harmony, and jar with the other parts of the discourse. No, they are come to God as a righteous Judge, who, as such, will pardon them, 1 John i. 9. *Crown* them, 2 Tim. iv. 8. and *avenge* them on all their oppressing and persecuting enemies, 1 Thes. i. 5, 6, 7.

(5.) “And to the spirits of just men made perfect.”] A most glorious privilege indeed; in which we are distinctly to consider,

* *Μυριάσιν αγγέλων*, i. e. Myriads of angels. The Hellenists use the word *μυριάδας*, i. e. Myriads, without any addition to signify an innumerable multitude. Grot.

† The first-born of the Israelites were registered in an earthly register, but these in an heavenly register.

1. The quality of those with whom we are associated or taken into fellowship.

2. The way and manner of our association with them.

1. The quality of those with whom we are associated, or to whom we are said to be come; and they are described by three characters, viz.

(1.) Spirits of men.

(2.) Spirits of just men.

(3.) Spirits of just men perfected, or consummated.

(1.) They are called spirits, that is, immaterial substances, strictly opposed to bodies, which are no way the objects of our exterior senses, neither visible to the eye, or sensible to the touch, which were called properly souls whilst they animated bodies in this lower world; but now being loosed and separated from them by death, and existing alone in the world above, they are properly and strictly stiled spirits.

(2.) They are the *spirits of just men*.] Man may be termed *just* two ways, (1.) By a full discharge and acquittance from the guilt of all his sins, and so believers are *just men*, even whilst they live on earth, groaning under other imperfections, Acts xiii. 39.

Or, (2.) By a total freedom from the pollution of any sin. And though in this sense there is not “a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not,” Eccl. vii. 22. yet even in this sense Adam was just before the fall, Eccl. vii. 29. according to his original constitution; and all believers are so in their glorified condition; all sin being perfectly purged out of them, and its existence utterly destroyed in them. On which account,

(3.) They are called the spirits of just men *made perfect*,] or consummate. The word perfect is not here to be understood absolutely, but by way of *synecdoche*; they are not perfect in every respect, for one part of these just men lies rotting in the grave: but they are perfected, for so much as concerns their spirit; though the flesh perish and lie in dishonour, yet their spirits being once loosed from the body, and freed radically and perfectly from sin, are presently admitted to the facial vision and fruition of God, which is the culminating point (as I may call it) higher than which the spirit of man aspires not; and attaining to this, it is, for so much as concerns itself, made perfect. Even as a body at last lodged in its centre, gravitates no more, but is at perfect rest; so it is with the spirit of man come home to God in glory, it is now consummate, no more need to be done to make it as perfectly happy as it is capable to be made; which is the first thing to be considered, viz. the quality of those with whom we are associated.

2. The second follows, namely, the way and manner of our as-

sociation with these blessed spirits of just men, noted in this expression, [*we are come.*] He saith not, *we shall come* hereafter, when the resurrection had restored our bodies, or after the general judgment; but, *we are come* to these spirits of just men. The meaning whereof we may take in these three particulars.

(1.) We that live under the gospel-light, are come to a clearer apprehension, sight, and knowledge of the blessed and happy estate of the souls of the righteous after death, than ever they had, or ordinarily could have, who lived under the types and shadows of the law, Eph. iii. 4, 5. And so we are come to them in respect of clearer apprehension.

(2.) We are come to those blessed spirits in our representative, Christ, who hath carried our nature into the very midst of them, and whom they all behold with highest admiration and delight. By Christ, who is entered into that holy place where these spirits of just men live, we are come into a near relation with them: for he being the common head, both to them in heaven, and to us on earth, we and they consequentially make but one body or society, Eph. ii. 10. Whereupon (notwithstanding the different and remote countries they and we live in) we are said “to sit down with them in heavenly places,” Eph. iii. 15. and ii. 6.

(8.) *We are come.*] That is, we are as good as come, or we are upon the matter come; there remains nothing betwixt them and us but a puff of breath, a little space of time, which shortens every moment: We are come to the very borders of their country, and there is nothing to speak of betwixt them and us: And by this expression, *we are come*, he teacheth us to account and reckon those things as present which so shortly will be present to us, and to look upon them as if they already were, which is the highest and most comfortable life of faith we can live on earth. Hence the note is,

Doct. *That righteous and holy souls, once separated from their bodies by death, are immediately perfected in themselves; and associated with others alike perfect in the kingdom of God.*

That the spirits of just men at the time of their separation from their bodies do not utterly fail in their beings, nor that they are so prejudiced and wounded by death, that they cannot exert their own proper acts in the absence of the body, hath been already cleared in the foregoing parts of this treatise, and will be more fully cleared from this text.

But the true level and aim of this discourse is at a higher mark, viz. the far more excellent, free, and noble life the souls of the just begin to live immediately after their bodies are dropt off from

them by death, at which time they begin to live like themselves, a pleasant, free, and divine life. So much at least is included in the apostle's epithet in my text, spirits of just men made perfect; and suitable thereto are his words in 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known."

These two adverbs, *now* and *then*, distinguish the twofold state of gracious souls, and shew what it is whilst they are confined in the body, and what it shall be from the time of their emancipation and freedom from that clog of mortality. *Now* we are imperfect, but *then* that which is perfect takes place, and that which is imperfect is done away, as the imperfect twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect day.

And it deserves a serious animadversion, that this perfect state doth not succeed the imperfect one after a long interval, (as long as betwixt the dissolution and resurrection of the body) but the imperfect state of the soul is immediately done away by the coming of the perfect one. The glass is laid by as useless, when we come to see face to face, and eye to eye.

The waters will prove very deep here, too deep for any line of mine to fathom; there is a cloud always overshadowing the world to come, a gloom and haziness upon that state: Fain we would, with our weak and feeble beam of imperfect knowledge, penetrate this cloud, and dispel this gloom and haziness, but cannot. We think seriously and closely of this great and awful subject, but our thoughts cannot pierce through it: we reinforce those thoughts by a sally, or thick succession of fresh thoughts, and yet all will not do, our thoughts return to us either in confusion, or without the expected success. For alas! how little is it that we know, or can know of our own souls now whilst they are embodied! much less of their unembodied state. The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. ii. 9. "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And another apostle adds, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John iii. 2.

Yet all this is no discouragement to the search and regular enquiry into the future state; for though reason cannot penetrate these mysteries, yet God hath *revealed them to us*, (though not perfectly) *by his Spirit*. And though we know not particularly, and circumstantially what we shall be, yet this we know, that "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And it is our privilege and happiness, that we are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, i. e. to a clearer knowledge of that state than was ordinarily attainable by believers, under former dispensations.

These things premised, I will proceed to open my apprehensions of the separate state of the spirits of just men made perfect, in *twelve propositions*: whereby, as by so many steps, we may orderly advance as far as safely and warrantably we may, into the knowledge of this great mystery, clearing what afterwards shall remain obscure, in the solution of several questions relating to this subject, and then apply the whole, in several uses of this great point: And the first proposition is this:

Proposition 1. There is a twofold separation of the soul from the body: viz. one mental, the other real: Or,

1. Intellectual, by the mind only.
2. Physical, by the stroke of death.

1. Of intellectual, or mental separation *, I am first to speak in this proposition; and it is nothing else but an act of the understanding, or mind, conceiving, or considering the soul and body, as separate and parted from each other, whilst yet they are united in a personal oneness by the breath of life. This mental separation may, and ought to be frequently and seriously made, before death make the real and actual separation; and the more frequently and seriously we do it, the less of horror and distraction will attend that real and fatal stroke, whenever it shall be given. For hereby we learn to bear it gradually, and, by gentle essays, to acquaint our shoulders with the burden of it. *Separation* is a word that hath much of horror in the very sound, and useth to have much more in the sense and feeling of it, else it would not deserve that title, Job viii. 14. "The kind of terrors," or the most terrible of all terribles: But acquaintance and familiarity abates that horror, and that two ways especially.

(1.) As it is preventive of much guilt.

(2.) As it gains a more inward knowledge of its nature.

(1.) The serious and fixed thoughts of the parting hour, is preventive of much guilt; and the greatest part of the horror of death rises out of the guilt of sin; "The sting of death is sin," 1 Cor. xv. 56. † Augustine saith, "Nothing more recalls a man from sin, than the frequent meditation of death." I dare not say it is the strongest of all curbs to keep us back from sin, but I am sure it is a very strong one.

Let ‡ a soul but seriously meditate what a change death will

* Mental separation, is a conceiving of two things separately, which really are united. *Conimbr. on the soul*, p. 595.

† *Nihil sic revocat a peccato, quam frequens mortis meditatio.* Aug.

‡ He who considers, what he will be in death, will always act with a fear of caution, and live as in the sight of his Creator, he desires nothing that is transitory, and considers himself as almost dead, because he knows he must soon die. *Greg. Mer.* 12.

make shortly upon his person and condition; and the natural effects of such a meditation, through the blessing of God upon it, will be a flattening and quenching of its keen and raging appetite after the ensnaring vanities of this world (which draw men into so much guilt) a conscious fear of sin, and an awakened care of duty. It was once demanded of a very holy man (who spent much more than the ordinary allowance of time in prayer, and searching his own heart) why he so macerated his own body by such frequent and long-continued duties! His answer was, *O! I must die, I must die!* Nothing could separate him from duty, who had already separated his soul from his body, and all this world, by fixed and deep thoughts of death.

(2.) Hereby we gain a more inward knowledge and acquaintance with it, the less it terrifies us. A lion is much more dreadful to him that never saw him, than he is to his keeper who feedeth him every day. A pitched battle is more frightful and scaring to a new-listed soldier, that never took his place in the field before, nor saw the dreadful countenance of an army ready to engage, nor heard the thundering noise of cannon, and volleys of shot, the shouts of armies, and groans of dying men on every side, than it is to an old soldier who hath been used to such things. The like we may observe in seamen, who it may be trembled at first, and now can sing in a storm.

Scarce any thing is more necessary for weak and timorous believers to meditate on, than the time of their separation. Our hearts will be apt to start and boggle at the first view of death; but it is good to do by them as men use to do by young colts; ride them up to that which they fright at, and make them smell to it, which is the way to cure them. "Look, as bread, saith one *, is "more necessary than other food, so the meditation of death is "more necessary than many other meditations." Every time we change our habitations, we should realize therein our great change: our souls must shortly leave this, and be lodged for a longer season in another mansion. When we put off our clothes at night, we have a fit occasion to consider, that we must strip nearer one of these days, and put off, not our clothes only, but the body that wears them too.

Holy Job had, by frequent thoughts, familiarized death and the grave to himself, and could speak of them as men use to speak of their houses and dearest relations, Job xvii. 14. "I have said to "corruption, Thou art my father, to the worm, Thou art my "mother and sister." But it needs much grace to bring, and to

* *Sicut panis necessarius est præ cæteris alimentis, ita intenta mortis meditatio necessaria est præ cæteris donis et exercitiis.* Dionys.

hold the heart to this work ; and therefore Moses begs it of God, Psal. xc. 12. " So teach us to number our days ; and David, Psal. xxxix. 4. " Lord, make me to know my end." Yea, the advantages of it have been acknowledged by men, whose light was less, and diversions more than ours. The Jews, for this use and end, had their sepulchres built before-hand, and that in their gardens of pleasure too, that they might season the delights of life with the frequent thoughts of death, John xix. 41.

Philip of Macedon would be awakened by his page every morning with this sentence, *memento te esse mortalem* : Remember, O king, that thou art a mortal man. A great emperor of Constantinople, not only at his inauguration, but at his great feasts, ordered a mason to bring two stones before him, and say, " * Chuse, " O emperor, which of the two stones thou wilt for thy tomb-stone?" Reader, thou wilt find mental separation much easier than real separation : it is easier to think of death, than it is to feel it ; and the more we think of it, the less we are like to feel it.

Prop. 2. Actual separation may be considered either in fieri, in the previous pangs, and foregoing agonies of it ; or in facto esse, in the last separating stroke, which actually parts the soul and body asunder, lays the body prostrate and dead at the feet of death, and thrusts the soul quite out of its ancient and beloved habitation.

Let it be considered in the previous pangs and forerunning agonies, which commonly make way for this actual dissolution : and to the people of God, this is the worst and bitterest part of death (except those conflicts with Satan, which they sometimes grapple with on a death-bed) which they encounter at that time. There is (saith one) no poinard in death itself, like those in the way or prologue to it. I like not to die, said another) but I care not if I were dead ; the end is better than the way. The conflicts and struggles of nature with death are bitter and sharp pains, unknown to men before, whatever pains they have endured : nor can it be expected to be otherwise, seeing the ties and engagements betwixt the soul and body are so strong, as we shewed before.

The soul will not easily part with the body, but disputes the passages with Death, from member to member, like resolute soldiers in a stormed garrison, till at last it is forced to yield up the fort-royal into the hands of victorious Death, and leave the dearly beloved body a captive to it.

This is the dark side of death to all good men ; and though it be not worth naming, in comparison with the dreadful consequences of death to all others, yet in itself it is terrible.

* *Elige ab his saxis ex quo, invictissime Cæsar, tibi tumultum me fabricare velis.*

* Separation is not natural to the soul which was created with an inclination to the body; it is natural indeed to clasp and embrace, to love and cherish its own body; but to be divided from it, is grievous and preternatural.

The agonies of death are expressed in scripture, by a † word which signifies “the travailing pains of a woman,” yea, by the sharpest and most acute pains they at that time feel, Acts ii. 24.

And yet all are not handled alike roughly by the hands of death; some are favoured with a desirable *ευθανασία*, gentle and easy death.

It is the privilege of some Christians to have their souls fetched out of their bodies, as it were by a kiss from the mouth of God, as the Jewish Rabbins use to express the manner of Moses’ death. Mr. Bolton felt no pain at his death, but the cold hand of his friend, who asked him what pain he felt. Yea, holy Bayneham in the midst of the flames, professed it was to him as a bed of roses.

Every believer is equally freed from the sting and curse of death; but every one is not equally favoured in the agonies and pains of death.

2. Separation from the body is to be considered *in facto esse*, i. e. in the result and issue of all those bitter pangs and agonies, which end in the actual dissolution of soul and body. “† Death, “or actual separation, is nothing else but the dissolving of the tie “or loosing of the bond of union betwixt the soul and body.” “§ Some call it the privation of the second act of the soul, that is, “its act of informing or enlivening the body.” Others, according to the scripture-phrase, the departing of the soul from the body. So Peter stiles it, 2 Pet. i. 15. *μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἐξοδὸν*, after my departure, i. e. after my death. Augustine || calls it the laying down of a heavy burden, provided there be not another burden for the soul to bear afterwards, which will sink it into hell.

In respect of the body, which the soul now forsakes, it is called “the putting off this tabernacle,” 2 Pet. i. 14. and, “the dissolving the earthly house or tabernacle,” 2 Cor. v. 1.

In respect of the *terminus a quo*, the place from which the soul removes at death, it is called our departure hence, Phil. i. 23. or

* Seeing the separation made by death is not natural, nor even violent, it follows, from the approved opinion of philosophers, that it may be called preternatural. *Conimb.*

† *Τὰς ὠδύνας τῆς θανάτου, mortis dolorem.*

‡ *Θάνατος ἐστὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος διαλύσις, vel animæ a corpore discessus. Vives.*

§ *Privatio actus secundi ejusdem animæ, id est, informationis seu unionis erga corpus Conimb.*

|| *Relictio corporis depositio sarcinæ gravis, modo alia sarcina non patietur, qua homo præcipitetur in gehennam. August.*

our weighing anchor, and loosing from this coast or shore, to sail to another.

In respect of the *terminus ad quem*, the place to which the spirits of the just go at death, it is called our going to, or being with the Lord, Phil. i. 23. To conclude, in respect of that which doth most lively resemble and shadow it forth, it is called our falling asleep, Acts vii. 60. our sleeping in Jesus, 1 Thes. iv. 14. This metaphor of sleep must be stretched no farther than the Spirit of God designed in the choice of it, which was not to favour and countenance the fancy of a sleeping soul after death, but to represent its state of placid rest in Jesus' bosom, if it refer at all to the soul; for I think it most properly respects the body; and thence the sepulchres, where the bodies of the saints were laid, got the name of κοιμητήρια, dormitories, or sleeping places*.

This is its last farewell to this world, never more to return to a low animal life more. Job vii. 9, 10. "For as the cloud is consumed and vanished away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more: he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." The soul is no more bound to a body, nor a retainer to the sun, moon, or stars, to meat, drink, and sleep, but is become a free, single, abstracted being, a separate and pure spirit, which the Latins call *lemures*, *manes*, ghosts or souls of the dead, and my text, *Spirits made perfect*; a being much like unto the angels, who are, δυναμεις ασωματους, bodiless beings. An angel, as one speaks, is a perfect soul, a soul is an imperfect angel: I do not say, that upon their separation, they become angels, for they will still remain a distinct species of spirits. Angels have no inclination to bodies, nor were ever fettered with clogs of flesh, as souls were†. And by this you see what a vast difference there is betwixt these two considerations of death: how ghastly and affrighting is it in its previous pangs! how lovely and desirable in the issue and result of them! which is but the change of earth for heaven, men for God, sin and misery, for perfection and glory.

Prop. 3. The separation of the soul and body, makes a great and wonderful change upon both, but especially upon the soul.

There is a twofold change made upon man by death, one upon his body, another upon his soul. The change upon the body is great and visible to every eye. A living body is changed into a dead carcase: a beautiful and comely body into a loathsome spectacle: that which was lately the object of delight and love, is

* *Locus sepulturæ consecratus. κοιμητήριον, hoc est, dormitorium appellatur.*

† *Semper a corporis compedibus et nexibus liberi, i. e. Always free from the clogs and fetters of the body.*

hereby make an abhorrence to all flesh; "Bury my dead out of my sight," Gen. xxiii. 4.

What the sun is to the greater, that the soul is to the lesser world. When the sun shines comfortably, how vegete and cheerful do all things look! how well do they thrive and prosper! the birds sing merrily, the beasts play wantonly, the whole creation enjoyeth a day of light and joy: but when it departs, what a night of horror followeth! how are all things wrapt up in the sable mantle of darkness! or if it but abate its heat, as in winter, the creatures are, as it were, buried in the winding-sheet of winter's frost and snow: just so is it with the body, when the soul shineth pleasantly upon it, or departs from it.

That body which was fed so assiduously, cared for so anxiously, loved so passionately, is now tumbled into a pit, and left to the mercy of crawling worms. The change which judgment made upon that great and flourishing city Nineveh, is a fit emblem to shadow forth that change which death makes upon human bodies: that great and renowned city was once full of people, which thronged the streets thereof; there you might have seen children playing upon the thresholds, beauties shewing themselves through the windows, melody sounding in its palaces: but what an alteration was made upon it, the prophet Zephaniah describes, chap. ii. 14. "Flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it: their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds, for he shall uncover the cedar-work."

Thus it is with the body when death hath dislodged the soul: worms nestle in the holes where the beautiful eyes were once placed; corruption and desolation is upon all parts of that stately structure. But this being a vulgar theme, I shall leave the body to the dust from whence it came, and follow the soul, which is my proper subject, pointing at the changes which are made on it.

The essence of the soul is not destroyed or changed by the body's ruin; it is substantially the self-same soul it was when in the body. The supposition of an essential change would disorder the whole frame and model of God's eternal design for the redemption and glorification of it, Rom. viii. 29, 30. But yet, though it undergo no substantial change at death, yet divers great and remarkable alterations are made upon it, by sundering it from the body. As,

1. It is not where it was: it was in a body, immersed in matter, married unto flesh and blood; but now it is out of the body, unclothed and stript naked out of its garments of flesh, like pure gold melted out of the ore with which it was commixed; or as a bird let

out of her cage into the open fields and woods. This makes a great and wonderful change upon it.

2. Being free from the body, it is consequently discharged and freed from all those cares, studies, fears and sorrows to which it was here enthralled and subjected upon the body's account: it puts off all those passions and burdens with it: never spends one thought more about food and raiment, health and sickness, wives and children, riches or poverty, but lives henceforth after the manner of angels, Mat. xxii. 30. It is now unrelated to, and therefore unconcerned about all these things.

3. In the unbodied state it is perfectly freed from sin, both in the acts and habits; a mercy it never enjoyed since the first moment it dwelt in the body. The cure of this disease was indeed begun in the work of sanctification; but it is not perfected till the day of the soul's glorification. It is now, and not till now, a spirit made perfect; that is, a soul enjoying its perfect health and rectitude: No more groans, tears, or lamentations, upon the account of indwelling sin.

4. The way and manner of its converse with, and enjoyment of God is changed. There are two *mediums* by which souls converse with God in the body, viz.

(1.) One internal, *to wit*, faith.

(2.) The other external, *to wit*, ordinances.

(1.) If a man walk with God on earth, it must be in the use and exercise of faith, 2 Cor. v. 7. Nor can there be any communion carried on betwixt God and the soul without it, Heb. xi. 6.

(2.) The external *mediums* are the ordinances of God, or duties of religion, both public and private, Psal. lxxiii. 2. Betwixt these two *mediums* of communion with God, this remarkable difference is found: The soul may see and enjoy God by faith, in the want or absence of ordinances; but there is no seeing or conversing with God, in the greatest plenty and purity of ordinances, without faith, Heb. iv. 2.

But in the same moment the soul is cut off from union with the body, it is also cut off from both these ways of enjoying God, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Isa. xxxviii. 11. But yet the soul is no loser; nay, it is the greatest *gainer* by this change. The child is no loser by ceasing to derive its nourishment by the navel, when it comes to receive it by the mouth, a more noble way, whereby it gets a new pleasure in tasting the variety of all delectable food. Hezekiah bemoaned the loss of ordinances upon his supposed death-bed, saying, "I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living:" q. d. Now farewell temple and ordinances; I shall never go any more into his temple, where my soul hath been so often cheered and refreshed with the displays of his grace and goodness; I shall

never more join with the assembly of his people on earth. And suppose he had not, sure he would have lost nothing, had he then exchanged the temple at Jerusalem, for the temple in heaven; and communion with sinful imperfect saints on earth, for fellowship with angels, and “the spirits of just men made perfect.” By this change we lose no more than he loseth, who whilst he stands delightfully contemplating the image of his dearest friend in a glass, hath the glass snatched away by his friend, whom he now seeth face to face.

Upon this change of the mediums of communion, it will follow, that the communion betwixt God and the separate soul, excels all the communion it ever had with him on earth, in

- (1.) The clearness.
- (2.) The sweetness.
- (3.) The constancy of it.

(1.) Its visions of God, in the state of separation, are more clear, distinct, and direct than they were on earth; clouds and shadows are now fled away: The soul now seeth as it is seen, and knoweth as it is known; its apprehensions of God there, differ from those it had here, as the crude and confused apprehensions of a child do, from those we have in the manly state.

(2.) They are also more sweet and ravishing: As our visions are, so are our pleasures; perfect visions produce perfect pleasures: The faculties of the soul now, and never till now, lie level to that rule, Matth. xxii. 37. The visions of God command, and call forth all the heart and soul, mind, and strength, into acts of love and delight. It was not so here; if the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak; but there the clog is off from the foot of the will.

(3.) More constant, fixed, and steady. It is one of the greatest difficulties in religion to fix the thoughts and cure the wildness and roving of the fancy: the heart is not steady with God; and hence are its ups and downs, heatings and coolings; which are things unknown in the perfect state. By all which it appears, the change by dissolution is great and marvellous, both upon the body and soul, but upon the soul more especially.

Proposition 4. *The souls of the righteous, at the instant of their separation, are received by the blessed angels, and by them transferred unto the place of blessedness.*

Though angels are by nature a superior order of spirits, differing from men in dignity, as the nobles and barons in the kingdoms of this world, differ from inferior subjects; yet are they made ministering spirits, i. e. serviceable creatures in the kingdom of providence, to the meanest of the saints, Heb. i. 14. And herein the Lord put a singular honour upon his people, in making such excellent crea-

tures as angels serviceable to them : Luther assigns to them a double office, to wit, to sing the praises of God on high, and to watch over his saints here below. Their ministry is distinguished into three branches : *Νεθετικον*, for admonition or warning ; *φυλακτικον*, for protection and defence ; *βοηθετικον*, for succour, help, and comfort. This last office they perform more especially at the soul's departure : Like tender nurses, they keep us whilst we live, and bring us home in their arms to our Father's house when we die.

They are about our death-beds, waiting to receive their precious charge into their arms and bosoms. When Lazarus breathed out his soul, the text saith it was " carried by angels into Abraham's " bosom," Luke xvi. 23. And upon this account, Tertullian calls them *evocatores animarum*, the callers forth of souls. At the translation of Elijah, they appeared in the form of horses and chariots of fire, 2 Kings ii. 11. Horses and chariots are not only designed for conveyance, but for conveyance in state, and truly, it is no small honour to have such a noble convoy and guard to attend our souls to heaven.

Object. If it be demanded, *What need is there of their help or company? Cannot God by his immediate hand and power gather home the souls of his people to himself at death? He inspired them into our bodies without their help, and can receive them again when we expire them, without their aid.*

Sol. True, he can do so ; but it hath pleased him to appoint this method of our translation, not out of mere necessity, but bounty. Souls ascend not to God in the virtue of the angels wings, or arms, but of Christ's ascension. Had he not ascended as our head and representative, all the angels in heaven could not have brought our souls thither : He ascended by his own power, and we ascend by virtue of his ascension. It is therefore rather for state and *decorum*, than any absolute necessity, that they attend us in our ascension.

God will not only have his people brought home to him safely, but honourably : They shall come to their Father's house in a becoming equipage, as the children of a king. This puts honour upon our ascension-day ; that day is adorned by the attendance of such illustrious creatures upon us. It is no small honour which God herein designs for us, that creatures of greater dignity than ourselves, shall be sent from heaven to attend and wait upon us thither.

Yea, that our ascension-day, should, in this, resemble Christ's ascension, is an honour indeed. When he ascended, there were multitudes of these heavenly creatures to wait upon him, Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18. " The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even " thousands of angels ; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the

“the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high,” &c. A cloud was prepared as a royal chariot, to carry up the king of glory to his princely pavilion; and then a royal guard of mighty angels to wait upon his chariot; if not for support, yet for the greater state and solemnity of their Lord’s ascension. And O what jubilations of blessed angels were heard that day in heaven! How was the whole city of God moved at his coming! The triumph is not ended to this day, no, nor ever shall.

Now, herein God greatly honours his people, that there shall be some resemblance and conformity betwixt their ascension and Christ’s: * Angels rejoice to attend those to heaven, who must be their fellow-citizens for ever in heaven! It is convenient also, that those who had the charge of us all our life, should attend us to our Father’s house at our death: In the one they finish their ministry; in the other they begin their more intimate society.

Moreover, the angels are they whom God will employ, to gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven, at the great day, Matth. xxiv. 31. And who more fit to attend their spirits to heaven singly, than those who must collect them into one body at last, and wait upon that collective body, when they shall be brought to Christ? Psal. lxxv. 14.

Object. *But the sight and presence of angels is exceeding awful and overwhelming to human nature: It will rather astonish and terrify, than refresh and cheer us, to find ourselves, all on a sudden, surrounded, and beset with such majestic creatures. We see what effects the appearance of an angel hath had upon good men in this world: “We shall die, (saith Manoah) for we have seen God,” Judges xiii. 22. So Eliphaz, “a spirit passed before my face; “the hair of my flesh stood up,” Job iv. 15.*

Sol. True, whilst our souls inhabit these mortal and sinful bodies, the appearance of angels is terrible to them, and cannot be otherwise, partly upon a *natural*, and partly upon a *moral* account. The dread of angels naturally falls upon our animal spirits: They shrink and tremble at the approach of spirits; not only the spirits of men, but of beasts, quail at it. A dog, or an ass is terrified at it, as well as a man, Numb. xxii. 25. The dread of spirits strikes the animal, or natural spirits primarily; and the mind, or rational soul by consent. There is also another cause of fear in man, upon the sight or presence of angels, viz. a consciousness of guilt. Wherever there is guilt, there will be fear, especially upon any extraordinary appearance of God to us, though it be but mediately by an angel.

* As they, (i. e. angels) served the head, in like manner do they serve the members. They rejoice to serve them on earth, whom they shall have afterwards for companions in heaven. *Gerhard.*

But when the soul is freed, both from flesh and sin, and shall enjoy itself in a nature, like to these pure and holy spirits, the dread of angels is then vanished, and the soul will take great content and satisfaction in their company and communion: The soul then finds itself a fit companion for them; looks upon them as its fellow-servants, for so they are, Rev. xix. 10. And the angels look upon the spirits of just men, not as inferiors, or underlings, but with great respect, as spirits, in some sense, nearer to Christ than themselves: So that henceforth no dread falls upon us from the presence of these excellent creatures; but each enjoyeth singular delight in each others society. And thus we see in what honourable and pleasing company the souls of the just go hence to their Father's house, and bosom.

Prop. 5. The soul is not so maimed and prejudiced by its separation from the body, but that it both can, and doth live, and act without it; and performs the acts of cogitation and volition, without the aid and ministry of the body.

I know it is objected by them that assert the soul's sleeping till the resurrection, that though its essence be not destroyed by death, yet its operations are obstructed by the want and absence of the body, its tool and instrument. And thus they form their objection.

Object. All that the soul understands, it understands by species: that is, the images of things which are first formed in the phantasy: As when we would conceive the nature of a house, a ship, a man, or a beast: we first form the image, or species thereof in our fancy, and then exercise our thoughts about it: But this depending upon bodily organs, and instruments, the separated soul can form no such images: It hath no such innate species of its own, but comes into the world an ablasta tabula, white paper; and being deprived by separation of the help of senses and phantasms, it consequently understands nothing.*

Thus the soul, in its state of separation, is represented to us as wounded in its powers and operations, to that degree, which seems to extinguish the very nature of it. But,

Sol. 1. We deny that the soul knows nothing now but by phantasms†, and images; for it knows itself, its own nature and powers, of which it cannot possibly feign, or form any image, or represen-

* There are three conditions requisite for the acts of the understanding. 1. The object, a being that is real and intelligible. 2. The phantasm, or sensible image lurking in the phantasy. 3. The intelligible image, which is a spiritual accident, representing to the understanding, in an ideal way, the material object that exists without the understanding.

† The understanding contemplates objects incorporeal and immaterial, such as God and intelligent beings. But these by no means affect the phantasy, for they are beyond the reach of corporeal powers. *Conimb. on the soul.* l. 5. c. 8. q. 8.

tation. What form, shape, or figure, can the fancy of a man cast his own soul into, to help him to understand its nature?

And what shall we say of its understanding during an ecstasy, or rapture? Doth the soul know nothing at such a time? Doth a dull torpor seize and benumb its intellectual powers? No; the understanding is never more bright, clear, apprehensive, and perfect, than when the body, in an ecstasy is laid aside, as to any use or assistance of the mind: The soul for that space uses not the body's assistance, as the very words *ecstasy* and *rapture* convince us.

2. * To understand by *species*, doth not agree to the soul naturally and necessarily, but by accident, as it is now in union with the body: Were it but once loosed from the body, it would understand better without them, than ever it did in the body by them. A man that is on horseback, must move according to the motion of the horse he rides; but if he were on foot, he then uses his own proper motion as he pleaseth; so here. But though we grant the soul doth in many cases now make use of phantasms, and that the agitation of the spirits, which are in the brain and heart, are conjunct with its acts of cogitation and intellection: Yet, as a searching † scholar well observes, the spirits are rather subjects than instruments of those actions; and the whole essence of those acts is antecedent to the motion of the spirits: As when we use a pen in writing, or a knife in cutting, there is an operation of the soul upon them, before there can be any operation by them: They act as they are first acted, and so do these bodily spirits. So that to speak properly, the body is bettered by the use the soul makes of it in these its noble actions; but the soul is not advantaged by being tied to such a body; it can do its own work without it; its operations follow its essence, not the body to which it is for a time united.

Upon the whole; it is much more absonous and difficult to conceive a stupified, benumbed, and unactive soul, whose very nature is to be active, lively, and always in motion, than it is to conceive a soul freed from the shackles and clogs of the body, acting freely according to its own nature. I wish the favourers of this opinion may take heed, lest it carry them farther than they intend, even to a denial of its existence and immortality, and turn them into downright *Somatists* or *Atheists*.

Proposition 6. *That the separated souls of the just having finished all their work of obedience on earth, and the Spirit having finished*

* For if this belongs not to the nature of the soul, but by accident agrees to it, namely from this, that it is tied to the body, as the Platonists affirm, then the question is easily solved. For the soul being loosed from the body, will return to its own nature. *Aquin. p. 1. Q. 8. Art. 1.*

† Howe's *Blessedness*, p. 174, 175.

all his work of sanctification upon them, they ascend to God, with all the habits of grace inherent in them; and all the comfortable improvements of their graces accompanying and following them.

This proposition is to be opened and confirmed in these four branches.

(1.) When a gracious soul is separated from the body, all its work of obedience in this world is finished. Therefore death is called the “finishing of our course,” Acts xx. 24. “The night when man works no more,” John ix. 4. “There is no working in the grave,” Eccl. ix. 10. for death dissolves the *compositum*, and removes the soul immediately to another world, where it can act for itself only, but not for others, as it was wont to do on earth. “I shall see man no more (saith Hezekiah) with the inhabitants of the world,” Isa. xxxviii. 11. That which was said of David’s death, is as true of every Christian, that “having served his generation according to the will of God, he fell asleep,” Acts xiii. 36.

I do not say this lower world receives no benefit at all by them after their death; for though they can speak no more, write no more, pray for, and instruct the inhabitants of this world no more, nor exhibit to them the beauty of religion in any new acts or examples of theirs (which is what I mean by saying *they have finished all their work of obedience on earth*); yet the benefit of what they did whilst in the body, still remains after they are gone: As the apostle speaks of Abel, Heb. xi. 4. “Who being dead, yet speaketh.” This way indeed abundance of service will be done for the souls of men upon earth, long after they are gone to heaven. And this should greatly quicken us to leave as much as we can behind us, for the good of posterity, that *after our decease* (as the apostle speaks, 2 Pet. i. 15.) they may have our words and examples in remembrance. But for any service to be done *de novo*, after death, it is not to be expected: We have accomplished, as a hireling, our day, and have not a stroke more to do.

(2.) As all our work of obedience is then finished by us, so at death all the work of God is finished by his Spirit upon us. The last hand is then put to all the preparatory work for glory, not a stroke more to be done upon it afterwards; which appears as well by the immediate succession of the life of glory, (whereof I shall speak in another proposition) as by the cessation of all sanctifying means and instruments, which are totally laid aside as things of no more use after this stroke is given; *Adepto, fine, cessant media*, means are useless when the end is attained. *There is no work* (saith Solomon) *in the grave*. How short soever the soul’s stay and abode in the body were, though it were regenerated one day, and separated the next, yet all is wrought upon it, which God ever in-

tended should be wrought in this world, and there is no preparation-work in the other world.

(3.) But though the soul leave all the means of grace behind it, yet it carries away with it to heaven all those habits of grace which were planted and improved in it in this world, by the blessing of the Spirit upon those means: Though it leave the ordinances, it loseth not the effects and fruits of them; though they cease, their effects still live. "The truth dwelleth in us, and shall be in us for ever," 1 John ii. 17. "The seed of God remaineth in us," 1 John iii. 9.

Common gifts fail at death; but saving grace sticks fast in the soul, and ascends with it into glory. Gracious habits are inseparable; glory doth not destroy, but perfect them: They are the soul's meetness for heaven, Col. i. 12. and therefore it shall not come into his presence, leaving its meetness behind it. In vain is all the work of the Spirit upon us in this world, if we carry it not along with us into that world, seeing all his works upon us in this life have a respect and relation to the life to come.

Look, therefore, as the same natural faculties and powers which the soul had (though it could not use them) in its imperfect body in the womb, came with it into this world, where they freely exerted themselves in the most noble actions of natural life; so the habits of grace, which, by regeneration, are here implanted in a weak and imperfect soul, go with it to glory, where they exert themselves in a more high and perfect way of acting than ever they did here below. The languishing spark of love is there a vehement flame; the faint, remiss and infrequent delight in God is there at a constant, ravishing and transporting height.

(4.) To conclude, As all implanted habits of grace ascend with the sanctified soul to heaven; (for the soul ascends not thither as a natural, but as a new creature) so all the effects, results, and sweet improvements of those graces which we gathered as the pleasant fruits of them on earth, these accompany and follow the soul into the other world also; "Their works follow them," Rev. xiv. 13. They go not before in the notion of merits, to make way for them, but they follow or accompany them as evidences and comfortable experiences. I doubt not, but the very remembrance of what passed betwixt God and the soul here, betwixt the day of its espousals to Christ, and its divorce from the body, will be one sweet ingredient in their blessedness and joy, when they shall be singing in the upper region the song of Moses and of the Lamb. They were never given to be lost, or left behind us. And thus you see with what a rich cargo the soul sails to the other world, though if it had no other, it would never drop anchor there.

Prop. 7. The souls of the just when separated from their bodies, do not wander up and down in this world, nor hover about the sepulchres where their bodies lie; nor are they detained in any purgatory, in order to their more perfect purification; nor do they fall asleep in a benumbed stupid state: but do forthwith pass into glory, and are immediately with the Lord.

When once the mind of man leaves the scripture guidance and direction, which is it to what the compass or pole-star is to a ship in the wide ocean, whither will it not wander? In what uncertainties will it not fluctuate? and upon what rocks and quick-sands must it inevitably be cast? Many have been the foolish and groundless conceits and fancies of men about the receptacles of departed souls.

1. Some have assigned them a restless, wandering life, now here, now there, without any certain dwelling-place any where. The only grounds for this fancy, is the frequent apparitions of the ghost or spirits of the dead, whereof many instances are given; and who is there that is a stranger to such stories? Now, if departed souls were fixed any where, this world would be quiet and free from such disturbances.

I make no doubt, but very many of these stories, have been the industrious fictions and devices of wicked and superstitious votaries, to gain reputation to their way, speaking lies in hypocrisy, to draw disciples after them. And many others have been the tricks and impostures of Satan himself, to shake the credit of the saints' rest in heaven, and the imprisonment of ungodly souls in hell, as will more fully appear when I come to speak to that question more particularly.

2. Others think, when they are loosed from the body at death, they hover about the graves and solitary places where their bodies lie, as willing, seeing they can dwell no longer in them, to abide as near them as they can; just as the surviving turtle keeps near the place where his mate died, and may be heard mourning for a long time about that part of the wood. This opinion seeks countenance and protection from that law, Deut. xviii. 10, 11. which prohibits men to consult with the dead; of which restraint there had been no need or use, if it had not been practised; and such practices had never been continued, if departed souls had not frequented those places, and given answers to their questions. But what I said before of Satan's impostures, is enough for the present to return to this also.

3. The Papists send them immediately to purgatory, in order to their more thorough purification. This purgatory * Bellarmine

* Bellarmin. lib. 2. de Purg. cap. 6.

thus describes: "It is a certain place wherein, as in a prison, souls are purged after this life, that were not fully purged here, to the intent they may enter pure into heaven; and though the church (saith he) hath not defined the place, yet the schoolmen say, it is in the bowels of the earth, and upon the borders of hell." And, to countenance this profitable fable, divers scriptures are by them abused and misapplied, as 1 Cor. iii. 15. Matth. v. 25, 26. 1 Pet. iii. 19. All which have been fully rescued out of their hands, and abundantly vindicated by our divines, who have proved, God never kindled that fire to purify souls; but the *Pope* to warm his own *kitchen*.

4. Another sort there are, who affirm, they neither wander about this world, nor go into purgatory, but are cast by death into a swoon or sleep; remaining in a kind of benumbed condition, till the resurrection of the body. This was the error of Beryllus; and Irenæus seems to border too near upon it, when he saith, * "The souls of disciples shall go to an invisible place appointed for them of God, and shall there tarry till the resurrection, waiting for that time: and then receiving their bodies, and perfectly, i. e. corporeally, rising again, as Christ did, they shall come to the sight of God."

All these mistakes will fall together by one stroke; for if it evidently appear (as I hope it will) that the spirits of the just are immediately taken to God, and do converse with, and enjoy him in heaven; then all these fancies vanish, without any more labour about them particularly. Now there are four considerations which to me put the immediate glorification of the departed souls of believers beyond all rational doubt.

1. Heaven is as ready and fit to receive them as ever it shall be.
2. They are as ready and fit for heaven as ever they will be.
3. The scripture is plainly for it. And,
4. There is nothing in reason against it.

1. Heaven is as fit and ready to receive them when they die, as ever it shall be. Heaven is prepared for believers, (1.) By the purpose and decree of God, and so far it was prepared from the foundation of the world, Matth. xxv. 34. (2.) By the death of Christ, whose blood made the purchase of it for believers, and so meritoriously opened the gates thereof, which our sins had barred up against us, Heb. x. 19, 20. (3.) By the ascension of Christ into that holy place, as our representative and fore-runner, John xiv.

* *Discipulorum animæ abibunt in invisibilem locum, definitum eis a Deo; et ibi usque ad resurrectionem comorabuntur, sustinentes resurrectionem; post, recipientes corpora, et perfecte resurgentes, i. e. corporaliter, quemadmodum et Dominus resurrexit, sic venient ad conspectum Dei.* Iren. lib. 5.

2. This is all that is necessary to be done for the preparation of heaven; and all this is done, as much as ever God designed should be done to it, in order to its preparation for our souls; so that no delay can be upon that account.

2. The departed souls of believers are as ready for heaven as ever they will be: for there is no preparation-work to be done by them, or upon them after death, John ix. 3. Eccl. ix. 10. Their justification was complete before death, and now their sanctification is so too; sin which came in by the union, going out at the separation of their souls and bodies. They are *spirits made perfect*.

3. The scripture is plain and full for their immediate glorification; Luke xxiii. 43. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke xvi. 22. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Phil. i. 21. "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better." The scripture speaks but of two ways by which souls see and enjoy God, viz. faith and sight; the one imperfect, suited to this life; the other perfect, fitted for the life to come; and this immediately succeeding that, for the imperfect is done away, by the coming of that which is perfect, as the twilight is done away, by the advancing of the perfect day.

4. To conclude; there is nothing in reason lying in bar to it. It hath been proved before, that the soul in its unembodied state is capable to enjoy blessedness, and can perform its acts of intellection, volition, &c. not only as well, but much better than it did, when embodied. I conclude therefore, that seeing heaven is already as much prepared for believers as it need be, or can be; and they as much prepared from the time of their dissolution, as ever they shall be; the scriptures also being so plain for it, and no bar in reason against it; all the forementioned opinions are but the dreams and fancies of men, who have forsaken their scripture-guide; and this remains an unshaken truth, that the spirits of the just go immediately to glory from the time of their separation.

Prop. 8. At the time of a gracious soul's separation from the body, it is instantly and perfectly freed from sin, which, till that time, dwelt in it from its beginning; but thenceforth shall do so no more.

Immediately upon their separation from the body, they are *spirits made perfect*, as my text stiles them; and that epithet **perfect* could never suit them, if there were any remaining root or habit of corruption in them.

The time, yea, the set time is now come, to put an end to all the

* Therefore he calls them consecrated or perfect, because they are no more subject to the infirmities of the flesh, the flesh itself being laid aside. *Marlorate on the place.*

dolorous groans of gracious souls, upon the account of indwelling sin. What the angel said to Joshua, Zech. iii. 3, 4. the same doth God say of every upright soul, at the time of its separation. "Take away the filthy garments from him, and clothe him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head." Thus the garments spotted with the flesh, are taken away with the body of flesh, and the pure unchangeable robes of perfect holiness, clothed upon the soul, in which it appears without fault before the throne of God, Rev. xiv. 5.

There is a threefold burdensome evil in sin under which all regenerated souls groan in this life; *viz.* (1.) The guilt; (2.) The filth; (3.) The inherence of it in their nature. And there is a threefold remedy or cure of these evils: the guilt of sin is remedied by justification; the filth of sin is inchoatively healed by sanctification: the inherence of sin is totally eradicated by glorification; For as it entered into our persons by the union of our souls and bodies, so it is perfectly cast out by their disunion or separation at death: the last stroke is then given to the work of sanctification, and the last is evermore the perfecting stroke: sin languished under imperfect sanctification in the time of life, but it gives up the ghost under perfected sanctification, from and after death: sanctification gave it its deadly wound, but glorification its final abolition. For it is with our sins, after regeneration, as it was with that beast mentioned, Dan. vii. 12. which, though it was "wounded with a deadly wound, yet its life was prolonged for a season." And this is the appointed season for its expiration. For if at their dissolution they are immediately received into glory (as it hath been proved they are, in our seventh proposition) they must necessarily be freed from sin, immediately upon their dissolution; because, nothing that is unclean can enter into that pure and holy place; they must be, as the text truly represents them, "the spirits of just men made perfect."

For, if so great holiness and purity be required in all that draw nigh to God upon earth, as you read, Psal. xciii. 5. certainly those who are admitted immediately to his throne, must be without fault, according to Rev. vii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

When a compounded being comes to be dissolved, each part returns to its own principle; so it is here: the spirit of man, and all the grace that is in it, came from God; and to him they return at death, and are perfected in him and by him: the flesh returns to earth, whence it came, and all that body of sin is destroyed with it; neither the one or the other shall be a snare or clog to the soul any more. A Christian in this world, is but gold in the ore; at death, the pure gold is melted out and separated, and the dross cast away and consumed.

Hence three consecratories offer themselves to us.

Consecratory 1. That a believer's life and warfare end together.

We lay not down our weapons of war, till we lie down in the dust, 2 Tim. iv. 7. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." The course and conflict you see are finished together: though they commence from different terms, yet they always terminate together. Grace and sin have each acted its part upon the stage of time, and the victory hovered doubtfully, sometimes over sin, and sometimes over grace; but now the war is ended, and the quarrel decided, grace keeps its ground, and sin is finally vanquished. Now, and never before, the gracious soul stands triumphing like that noble *Argive*,

In vocuo solus sessor, plausorque theatra.

not an enemy left to renew the combat; the war is ended, and with it all the fears and sorrows of the saints.

Consecratory 2. Separated souls become impeccable, or free from all the hazard of sin, from the time of their separation: for, there being no root of sin now inherent in them, consequently no temptation to sin can fasten upon them; all temptations have their handles in the corruptions of our natures: did not Satan find matter prepared within us, dry tinder fitted to his hand, he might strike in temptations long enough, before one of his hellish sparks could catch or fasten upon us. Temptations are grievous exercises to believers; they are darts, Eph. vi. 16. they are thorns, 2 Cor. xii. 7. But the separate soul is out of gunshot; it were as good discharge an arrow at the body of the sun, as a temptation at a translated soul.

Consecratory 3. Separated souls are more lovely companions, and their converses more sweet and delightful than ever they were in this world. It was their corruption which spoiled their communion on earth; and it is their spotless holiness which makes it incomparably pleasant in heaven. The best and loveliest saints have something in them which is distasteful; even sweet briars and holy thistles have their offensive prickles: but when that which was so lovely on earth is made perfect in heaven, and nothing of that remains in heaven, which was so offensive in them on earth; O what blessed, delightful companions will they be! O blessed society! O most desirable companions! let my soul for ever be united to their assembly. I love them under their corruptions; but how shall my soul be knit to them, when it seeth them shining in their perfections?

Proposition 9. *The pleasure and delights of the separate spirits of the just, are incomparably greater and sweeter than those they did, or at any time could experience in their bodily state.*

With what a pleasant face would death smile upon believers!

what roses would it raise in its pale cheeks, if this proposition were but well settled in our hearts by faith! And if we will not be wanting to ourselves, it may be firmly settled there, by these four considerations, which demonstrate it.

Consideration 1. *Whatsoever pleasure any man receives in this world, he receives it by means of his soul.* Even all corporeal and sensitive delights have no other relish and sweetness, but what the soul gives them, which is demonstrable by this; that if a man be placed amidst all the pleasing objects and circumstances in the world, if he were in that centre, where he might have the confluence of all the delights of this world; yet if the spirit be wounded, there is no more relish or savour in them, than in the white of an egg. What pleasure had Spira in his liberty, estate, wife and children; these things were indeed proposed and urged, again and again, to relieve him? but instead of pleasure they became his horror: let but the mind be wounded, and all the mirth is marred: one touch from God upon the spirit, destroys all the joy of this world. Nay,

Let but the intention of the mind be strongly carried another way, and for that time, (though there be no guilt or wound upon the soul) the most pleasant enjoyments lose their pleasure. What delight, think you, would bags of gold, sumptuous feasts, or exquisite melody have afforded to Archimedes, when he was wholly intent upon his mathematical lines? By this then it is evident, that the rise of all pleasure is in the mind, and the most agreeable and pleasing objects and enjoyments signify nothing without it: the mind must be found in itself, and at leisure to attend them, or we can have no pleasure from them.

Consid. 2. *Of all natural pleasures in the world, intellectual pleasures are found to be most agreeable, and connatural to the soul of man.*

The more refined and remote from sense any pleasure is, the more grateful is it to the soul; those are certainly the sweetest delights that spring out of the mind. A drop of intellectual pleasure is valued by a generous and well-tempered soul, above the whole ocean of impure joys, which come to it sophisticated and tinged through the muddy channels of sense.

No sensualists in the world can extract such pleasure out of gold, silver, meat and drink; as a searching and contemplating mind finds in the discovery of truth. * Heinsius, that learned library-keeper of Leyden, professed, "That when he had shut up himself among so many illustrious souls, he seemed to sit down there, as in the very lap of eternity, and heartily pitied the rich and covetous worldlings, that were strangers to his delights."

* *In qua simulac pedem posui, foribus pessulum obdo, et in ipso æternitatis gremio, inter tot illustres animas sedem mihi sumo, cum ingenti quidem animo: ut subinde magnatum misereor, qui hanc felicitatem ignorant.* Epist. prin.

And when * Cardan tells us, "That to know the secrets of nature, and the order of the universe, hath greater pleasure and sweetness in it, than the thought of man can fathom, or any mortal hope for." "Yea, such beauties, saith † Plutarch, there are in the study of the *mathematics*, that it were unworthy to compare such baubles and bubbles, as riches with it." "Yea, saith another, it were a sweet thing to be extinguished in those studies ‡."

Julius Scaliger was so delighted with poetry, that he protested he had rather be the author of twelve verses in Lucan, than emperor of Germany. And to say truth, "there is a kind of enchanting sweetness in those intellectual pleasures and feasts of the mind; such a delight as hardly suffers the mind to be pulled away from them §." These pleasures have a finer edge, a higher gust, a more agreeable savour to the mind than sensitive ones; as approaching much nearer to the nature of the soul, which is spiritual.

Consid. 3. And as intellectual pleasures do as far exceed all sensitive pleasures, as those which are proper to a man, do those which we have in common with beasts: *So divine pleasures do again much more surmount intellectual ones.* For what compare is there betwixt those joys which surprize a scholar in the discovery of the secrets of nature, and those that overwhelm and swallow up the Christian in the discovery of the glorious mysteries of redemption by Christ, and his own personal interest therein.

To solve the *phænomena* of nature is pleasant, but to solve all the difficulties about our title to Christ and his covenant, that is ravishing. Archimedes' *εὕρηκα*, "I have found it," was but the frisk, or skip of a boy, to that rapturous voice of the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." These are entertainments for angels, 1 Pet. i. 11. a short salvation for the season it is felt and tasted, 1 Pet. i. 8. after these delights, all others are insipid and dry. And yet one step higher.

Consid. 4. *All that divine pleasure, which ever the holiest and devoutest soul enjoyed in the body, is but a sip or prelibation, compared with those full draughts it hath in the unembodied state.*

Whilst it is embodied, it rejoiceth in the earnest and pledges of joy; but when it is unembodied, it receives the full sum; Psal. xvi.

* *Arcana cæli, naturæ secreta, ordinem universi scire; majoris felicitatis et dulcedinis est, quam cogitatione quis assequi potest, aut mortalis sperare.*

† *Talis est mathematicum pulchritudo, ut his indignum sit divitiarum phaleras istas et bullas et puerilia spectacula comparari.*

‡ *Dulce est extinguere mathematicarum artium studio.* Leon. Digg.

§ *Talis suavitas, ut cum quis ea degustaverit, quasi Circeis poculis captus, non potest unquam ab illis divelli.* Cardan.

11. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This fulness of joy is not to be expected, because not to be supported in this world. The joy of heaven would quickly make the hoops of nature fly. When a good man had but a little more than ordinary joy of the Lord poured into his soul, he was heard to cry, Hold, Lord, hold ! thy poor creature is but a clay vessel, and can hold no more ! These pleasures the soul hath in the body, are of the same kind indeed with those in heaven, but are exceeding short of them in divers other respects.

1. The spiritual pleasures the soul hath in the body, are but by reflection ; but those it enjoys out of the body, are by immediate *intuition*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. now in a glass, then face to face.

The pleasures it now hath, though they be of a divine nature, yet they are relished by the vitiated appetite of a sick and distempered soul ; the embodied soul is diseased and sickly, it hath many distempers hanging about it. Now we know the most pleasant things lose much of their pleasure to a sick man ; the separate soul is made perfect, thoroughly cured of all diseases, restored to its perfect health ; and consequently, divine pleasures must needs have a higher gust and relish in heaven, than ever they had on earth.

3. The pleasures of a gracious soul on earth are but rare and seldom, meeting with many and long interruptions. And many of them occasioned by the body, which often calls down the soul to attend its necessities, and converse with things of a far different nature ; but from these, and all other ungrateful and prejudicial avocations, the separated soul is discharged, and set free ; so that its whole eternity is spent in the highest delights.

4. The highest pleasures of a gracious soul in the body, are but the pleasures of an uncentered soul, which is still gravitating and striving forward, and consequently can be but low and very imperfect, in comparison with those it enjoys, when it is centered and fixed in its everlasting rest. They differ as the shadow of the labourer, for an hour in the day, from his rest in his bed, when his work is ended.

To conclude ; the pleasures it hath here, are but the pleasures of hope and expectation, which cannot bear any proportion to those of sight and full fruition. O see the advantages of an unbodied state !

Prop. 10. That gracious souls, separate from the body, do attain to the perfection of knowledge, with more ease than they attained any small degree of knowledge whilst they dwelt in the body.

Great are the inconveniences, and prejudices, under which souls labour, in their pursuits after knowledge in this life, *Veritatis in puteo*, Truth lies deep. And it is hard, even with much labour,

pains, and study, to pump up one clear notion; for the soul cannot now act as it would, but is fain to act as it can, according to the limitations and permissions of the body, to which it is confined. By heedful observations, and painful researches it is forced to deduce one thing from another, and is too often deceived and imposed upon by such tedious and manifold connections.

Beside, truth is now forced, in compliance with our weakness, and distance from the fountain, to descend from heaven under vails*, shadows, and umbrages, thereby to contract some kind of affinity with our fancies and exterior senses first, that so it may with more advantage transmit itself to our understanding. It must come under some veil or other to us, whilst we are veiled with mortality, because the soul cannot behold it with its native lustre, nor converse otherwise with it.

And hence it was that Augustine made his rational conjecture, Why men used to be so much delighted with metaphors, because they are so much proportioned to our senses, with which our reason in this embodied state, hath contracted such an intimacy and familiarity: But when the soul lays aside its veil of flesh, truth also puts off her veil, and shews the soul her naked, beautiful, and ravishing face; it henceforth beholds all truth in God, the fountain of truth. There are five ways by which men attain the knowledge of God, say the schools, four of which the soul makes use of in this world; but the fifth, which is the most perfect, is reserved for the separate state. Men discern God here,

(1.) *In vestigio*, By his footsteps in the works of creation. God hath imprest the marks of his wisdom and power upon the creatures, by which impressions we discern that God hath been there. Thus the very Heathens arrive to some knowledge of a God, Rom. i. 20. Acts xvii. 24, 27.

(2.) *In umbra*, By his shadow: If you see the shadow of a man you guess at his stature and dimensions thereby. Thus Christ made some discovery of himself to the world, in the *Mosaical* ceremonies, and ancient types and umbrages, Heb. x. 1.

(3.) *In speculo*, In a glass: This gives us a much clearer representation of a person, than either his *footsteps* or *shadow* could: this is an imperfect or darker vision of his face, by way of reflection. And thus God is seen in his word and ordinances, wherein, "as in a glass, we behold the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(4.) *In Filio*, in his own Son, who is the living image and express character of his Father. Thus we sometimes see a child so

* The light from above never descends without a veil: for it is impossible that divine light could otherwise shine to us, unless it be covered with a variety of sacred shadowings. *Dionys. Arcop. de celest. Hier. c. 1.*

lively representing his father in speech, gate, gesture, and every lineament of his face, that we may say,

—*Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat*;—

“Just so his father spake, so he went, and just such a one he was.”

Thus we know God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. who is the express image of his Father, Heb. i. 3. and John xiv. 9. This is the highest way of attaining the knowledge of God in this life. But then, in the unbodied state, we see him,

(5.) *Face to face*, with a direct vision. This is to *see him as he is*. The believer is a candidate for this degree now, but cannot be invested with it, till he be divested from this body of flesh. Yet the soul, when unbodied, and made perfect, attaineth not to a comprehensive knowledge of God, for it will still remain a finite being, and so cannot comprehend that which is infinite. That question, Job xi. 7. “Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” may be put to the highest graduate in heaven. And yet,

1. To see God face to face, and know him as he is, will be a knowledge of the divine essence itself. To see the divine essence, is to see God as he is; i. e. to see him so perfectly and fully, that the understanding can proceed no farther in point of knowledge, concerning that great question, *What is God?* Thus no man hath seen or can see God in this world. Even Moses himself could not see God, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, 20. But the spirits of the just made perfect, have satisfying apprehensions, though not perfect comprehensions of the Divine essence.

2. In this light they clearly discern those deep mysteries which they here racked their thoughts upon, but could not penetrate in this life. There they will know what is to be known of the union of the two natures in the wonderful person of our Emmanuel; and the manner of the subsistence of each person, in the most glorious and undivided Godhead, John xiv. 20. The several attributes of God will then be unfolded to our understandings; for his essence and attributes are not two things, Rev. iv. 8, 9, 10, 11. Oh! what a ravishing sight will this be!

The mysteries of the scriptures and providences of God will be no mysteries then: Curiosity itself will be there satisfied.

3. This immediate knowledge and sight of God face to face, will be infinitely more sweet, and ravishingly pleasant than any, or all the views we had of him here by faith ever were, or possibly could be. There is a joy unspeakable in the visions of faith, 1 Pet. i. 8. but it comes far short of the facial vision. Who can tell the full importance of that one text, Rev. xxii. 4. “The throne of the Lamb shall be in it, and they shall see his face?” Oh! for such a heaven (said one) as to get one glimpse of that lovely face! Earth cannot bear such sights. This light overwhelms, and confounds

the inadequate faculties of imperfect and embodied souls. But there is *lumen confortans*, a cheering, strengthening, pleasant light, as the light of *the morning star*, Rev. ii. 28.

4. This sight of God will be appropriative and applicative. We there see him as our own God and portion. Without a clear interest in him, the sight of him could never be beatifical and satisfying. Sight without interest is like the light of a glow-worm, light without heat. All doubts and objections are solved and answered in the first sight of this blessed face.

5. To conclude: This perfect, and most comfortable knowledge, is attained without labour by the separate soul. Here every degree of knowledge was with the price of much pains. How many weary hours and aching heads did the acquisition of a little knowledge stand us in! But then it flows in upon the soul easily. It was the saying of a great usurer, *I once took much pains to get a little*, (meaning the first stock) *but now I get much without any pains at all*. Oh lovely state of separation! That body which interposed, clogged, and clouded the willing and capable spirit, being drawn aside (as a curtain) by death, the light of glory now shines upon it, and round about it, without any interception, or let.

Prop. 11. The separated souls of the just do live in a more high and excellent way of communion with God, in his temple-worship in heaven, than ever they did in the sweetest gospel-ordinances, and most spiritual duties, in which they conversed with him here on earth.

That saints on earth have real communion with God, and that this communion is the joy of their hearts, the life of their life, and their relief under all pressures and troubles in this life, is a truth so firmly sealed upon their hearts by experience, as well as clearly revealed in the word, that there can remain no doubt about it, among those that have any saving acquaintance with the life and power of religion.

This communion with God is of that precious value with believers, that it unspeakably endears all those duties and ordinances to them, which, as means and instruments are useful to maintain it.

At death, the people of God part with all those precious ordinances and duties, they being only designed for, and fitted to the present state of imperfection, Eph. iv. 12, 13. but not at all to their loss, no more than it is to his that loses the light of his candle by the rising of the sun. A candle, a star is comfortable in the night; but useless when the sun is up, and in its meridian glory. Christian, pray much, hear much, and be as much as thou canst among the ordinances of God, and duties of religion: For, the time is at hand that you shall serve, and wait on God no more this way.

But yet think not your souls shall be discharged from all worship and service of God when you die: No, you will find heaven to be a temple built for worship, and the worship there to be much transcendent to all that in which you were here employed. The sanctuary was a pattern of heaven in this very respect, Heb. ix. 23. And, on this very account, it is called *Sion* in my text, and the *heavenly Jerusalem*; as denoting a church state, and the spiritual worship there performed by the spirits of just men made perfect.

Some help we may have to understand the nature thereof, by comparing it with that worship and service which we perform to God here in this state of imperfection, and by considering the agreements and disagreements betwixt them. In this they agree, that the worship above and below are both addressed and directed to one and the same object, Father, Son, and Spirit; all centers and terminates in God. They also agree in the general quality and common nature; they are both spiritual worship. But there are divers remarkable differences betwixt the one and the other, as will be manifest in the following collation.

1. All our worship on earth is performed and transacted by faith, as the instrument and means thereof, Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh to God must believe," &c. In heaven, faith ceaseth, and sight takes place of it, 1 Cor. v. 7. There we see what here we only believe. There are now before us ordinances, scriptures, ministers, and the assemblies of saints in the places of worship: But if we have any communion with God, by, or among these, we must set ourselves to believe those things we see not. By realizing and applying invisible things, we here get sometimes, and with no small pains, a taste of heaven, and a transient glance of that glory. In this service our faith is put hard to it, it must work and fight at once; resolutely act whilst sense and reason stand by, contradicting and quarrelling with it. And if, with much ado, we get but one sensible touch of heaven upon our spirits, if we get a little spiritual warmth and melting of our affections towards God, we call that day a good day, and it is so indeed.

But in heaven all things are carried at a high rate, the joy of the Lord overflows us without any labour, or pain of ours to procure it.

We may say of it there, as the prophet speaks of the dew and showers upon the grass, "which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," Micah v. 7.

2. No grace is, or can be acted here, without the clog of a contrary corruption, Rom. vii. 21. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Every beam of faith is presently darkened by a cloud of unbelief, Mark ix. 24. "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." "We often read in the book of experience (saith

"* one) what an inconsistent fickle thing the heart is in duties : " Now it is with us, by and by it is fled away and gone ; we know " not where to find it : It is constant only in its inconstancy and " lubricity." There is iniquity in our most holy things, which needs pardon, Exod. xxviii. 38. Our best duties have enough in them to damn us, as well as our worst sins : But in that perfect state above, grace flows purely out of the soul, as beams do from the sun, or crystal streams from the purest fountain. No impure or imperfect acts proceed from spirits made perfect.

3. Here the graces of the saints are never, or very rarely acted in their highest and most intense degree. When they love God most fervently, there is some coldness in their love. Who comes up to the height of that rule, Mat. xxii. 37. " Thou shalt love the Lord " thy God, with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy " strength?" When we meditate on God, it is not in the depth of our thoughts, without some wanderings and extravagancies ; it is very hard, if not impossible, for the soul to stand long in its full bent to God.

But in heaven it doth so, and will do so for ever, without any relaxation or remission of its fervour. Christ, among the saints and angels in heaven, is as a mighty load-stone cast in among many needles, which leap to him, and fix themselves inseparably upon him. They all act in glory as the fire doth here, to the utmost of their power and ability. There is no note lower than " Glory to God in the highest."

(4.) The most spiritual souls on earth, who live most with God, have, and must have their daily and frequent intermissions. The necessities of the body, as well as the defectiveness of their graces, require, and necessitate it to be so. Our hands with Moses will hang down and grow weary. Our affections will cool and fall, do what we can.

But as the spirits of just men made perfect know no remissions in the degree, so neither any intermissions in the acting of their grace : " They shall serve him day and night in his temple," Rev. vii. 15. You that would purchase the continuance of your spiritual comforts but for a day, with all that you have in this world, will there enjoy them at full, without any intermitting, through eternity.

5. If the best hearts on earth be at any time more than ordinarily enlarged in spiritual comforts, they need presently some humbling providence to hide pride from their eyes. Even Paul

* *Sæpe in libro experientiae legimus quomodo a corde nostro relinquimur : Nunc est nobiscum, nunc alibi ; nunc evolat, nunc recurrit : in sola lubricitate manet.* Bern.

himself must have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Bernard could never perform any duty with comfortable enlargement, but he seemed to hear his own heart whisper thus, *Bene fecisti, Bernarde*, O well done, Bernard.

But, in heaven the highest comforts are enjoyed in the deepest humility; and the entire glory is ascribed to God, without any unworthy defalcations. Rev. iv. 10. They put not the crown upon their own heads, but Christ's: They cast down their own crowns, and fall down at the feet of him that sitteth upon the throne.

6. All assemblies for worship in this world are mixed; they consist of regenerate and unregenerate, living and dead souls: This spoils the harmony, and allays the comfort of mutual communion. In a congregation consisting of a thousand persons, Ah! how few comparatively are there that are heartily concerned in the duty? But it is not so above. There are ten thousand times ten thousand, even thousands of thousands before the throne, loving, adoring, praising, and triumphing together, and not a jarring string in all their harps.

7. Here the worship of God is impure, mixed, and adulterated by the sinful additions and inventions of men. This gracious souls groan under as a heavy burden, sighing and praying for reformation; as knowing they can expect no more of God's presence, than there is of his order and institution in worship. But, above, all the worship is pure, the least pin in the heavenly *tabernacle* is according to the perfect pattern of the divine will.

8. We have here duties of divers kinds and natures to perform. All our time is not to be spent in loving, praising, and delighting in God; but we must turn ourselves also to searching, watching, and soul-humbling work. Sometimes we are called to get up our hearts to the highest praise, and then to humble them to the dust for sin and judgments; one while to sing his praises, and another while to sigh even to the breaking of our loins; But the spirits of just men made perfect, have but one kind of employment, *viz.* praising, loving, and delighting in God. There is no groaning, sighing, searching, or watching-work, in that state.

9. The most illuminated believers on earth have but dark and crude apprehensions of Christ's intercession-work in heaven, or of the way and manner in which it is there performed by him. We know indeed that our High-priest is for us entered within the vail, Heb. vi. 20. That he appears in that most holy place for us, Heb. ix. 24. That he there represents his sufferings for us to God, standing before him as a lamb that had been slain, Rev. v. 6. That he offers up our prayers with his incense to God, Rev. viii. 3.

But the immediate intuition of the whole performance, by the person of Christ in heaven, the beholding of him in his work there, with the smiles and honours, the delight and satisfaction of the Father in his person and work. Certainly, this must be a far different thing, and what must make more deep and suitable impressions upon our hearts than ever the most affecting view of them by faith at this distance, could do.

10. *In such ravishing sights and joyful ascriptions of glory to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore, all the separated spirits of the just are employed and wholly taken up in heaven, as they come in their several times thither; and will be so employed in that temple-service unto the end of the world, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to his Father, and thenceforth God shall be all in all.*

The illustration and confirmation of this assertion we have in these two or three particulars.

(1.) That all the spirits of just men, from the beginning of the world, until Christ's ascension into heaven, did enter into heaven, as a place of rest, as a city prepared for them of God, Heb. xi. 16. and did enjoy blessedness and glory there. But yet there seems to be an alteration even in heaven itself, since the ascension of Christ into it, and such an alteration as advanceth the glory thereof both to angels and saints. "Heaven itself (saith one * who is now there) ' was not what it is, before the entrance of Christ into the sanctuary for the administration of his office. Neither the saints departed, nor the angels themselves, were participant of that glory ' which now they are. Neither yet doth this argue any defect in ' heaven, or the state thereof in its primitive constitution; For ' the perfection of any state hath respect unto that order of things ' which it is originally suited unto. Take all things in the order ' of the first creation, and in respect thereunto, heaven was perfect in glory from the beginning, &c.

' Whatever was their rest, refreshment, and blessedness; what- ' ever were their enjoyments of the presence of God, yet was there ' no throne of grace erected in heaven, no high-priest appearing ' before it, no lamb as it had been slain, no joint ascription of ' glory unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb ' for ever; † *God having ordained some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*, Heb. xi. 40.

Now both the angels and saints in heaven, do behold Christ in his priestly office within that sanctuary; a sight never seen in heaven before.

* Dr. Owen's *Christologia*, p. 158—355.

† *Priusquam ad nostra tempora preventum est.* Camero.

(2.) This frame of heavenly worship will continue as it is unto the end of the world, and then another alteration will be made in the manner of his dispensatory kingdom; "For then he must deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all," as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. So that as the present state of heaven is not, in all respects, what it was before Christ's ascension thither; so after the consummation of the mediatorial kingdom, and the gathering of all the elect into glory, it will not in all respects be what now it is.

Christ will never cease to be the immediate head of the whole glorified creation. God having gathered all the elect, both angels and men, unto a head in him, and he being the knot and centre of that collective body, the whole frame of the glorified church would be dissolved, should he lose his relation of a head to it. Yea, I doubt not but he will for ever continue to be the medium of communion betwixt God and his glorified church: God will still communicate himself to us through Christ, and our adherence, love, and delight, will still be through Christ; In a word, whatever change shall be made, the person of Christ shall still continue to be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship, Rev. xxii. 4.

But when he shall have gathered home all his elect to glory, he will resign his present dispensatory * kingdom, and become subject (*as man, and as head of that body which he purchased*) to his Father himself, "that God may be all in all," as it is 1 Cor. xv. 28.

(1.) *All in all*, that is, all the saints shall be filled, and abundantly satisfied, in and from God alone; there shall be no emptiness, no want, no complaint: For, as there is water enough in one sea to fill all rivers, light enough in one sun to illuminate all the world; so all souls shall be eternally filled, satisfied and blessed in one God. Surely, there is enough in God for millions of souls. For if there be enough in God for all the angels, Mat. xviii. 10. yea, enough in God for Jesus Christ, Col. i. 19. there must be enough for all our souls. The capacity of angels is larger than ours; the capacity of Christ is larger than that of angels: He that fills them, can, and will therefore fill us, or be all in all to us.

(2.) *All in all*, that is, complete satisfaction to all the saints, in the absence of all other things, out of which they were wont to

* For if this dispensatory kingdom (of Christ) had never been delivered up, then he (viz. God) would never receive the full use of his natural kingdom. *Junius.*

suck some comfort and delight in this world. He will now be instead of all; eminently all without them. We shall suck no more sweetness out of food, sleep, relations, ordinances, &c. there will be no more need or use of them, than there is of candles in the sun-shine, Rev. xxii. 5.

(3.) *All in all*, that is, God only shall be loved, praised, and admired by all the saints; they shall love no creature out of God, but all in God, or rather God in them all. This is that blessed state to which all things tend, for which the angels and glorified souls in heaven long. Hence it is that there is joy in heaven upon the conversion of any poor sinner on earth; because thereby the body of Christ mystically advanceth towards its fulness and completeness, Luke xv. 10. No sooner is a poor soul struck by the word to the heart, and sent home crying, O sick! sick! sick of sin, and sick for Christ! but the news of it is quickly in heaven, and is matter of great joy there, because they wait as well as Christ for the time of consummation. To conclude, those that went first to heaven before Christ's ascension, were fully at rest in God, and blessed in his enjoyment, and yet upon Christ's ascension thither, their happiness was advanced: It is a new heaven, as it were, to feed their eyes upon the *man Christ Jesus* there. Those that now stand before the throne, ravished with the face of Christ, and ascribing glory to him for ever, are also in a most blessed state, and are filled with the joy of the Lord. And yet, two things still remain to be farther done, before they arrive at their consummation, viz. the restitution of their bodies, which yet lie in the dust, and the delivering up of the dispensatory kingdom, upon the coming in of the fullness of all their fellow saints; and after that no more alteration for ever, but they shall be both in soul and body for ever with the Lord. What tongue of man or angel can give us the complete emphasis of that word, *ever with the Lord*? or that, of God's being *all in all*? O what hath God prepared for them that love him!

Prop. 12. It pleaseth God at some times, even in this life, to give some men the foresight and foretaste of that blessedness, which holy separated souls do now enjoy, and themselves shall shortly enjoy with God in glory.

Specimens and earnest of heaven are no unknown things upon earth. As the grapes of Eshcol, so the joy of heaven may be tasted before we come thither, and these foresights and prelibations of heaven are either,

1. Extraordinary, or
2. Ordinary.

1. Extraordinary, for the way and manner; when the soul is either, (1.) Caught from the body for a short time in an ecstasy,

when in a visional way heavenly things are presented to it; or, (2.) When the bodily eye is elevated and strengthened above its natural vigour and ability, to behold the astonishing objects of the other world.

(1.) Of the first sort and rank was that famous rapture of Paul, mentioned 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. "I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven," &c. * It is questionable indeed, whether the soul of the apostle was really separated from his body, whilst he suffered that ecstasy, or whether his senses were only laid, as it were, asleep for that time; he himself could not determine the question, much less can any other. But whether so or no, this seems evident, that his senses were for that time utterly useless to him. If his body was not dead, it was all one as if it had been so, for any use his soul then made of it.

† In ecstasies, all the senses and powers are idle, except the "understanding." His soul, for that time, seemed to be disjointed from the body, much as a flame of fire, which you shall sometimes see to play and hover at a distance from the wood, and then catching the fuel again. Probably, this was that trance he fell into, in the temple, when he was praying, mentioned in Acts xxi. 17.

In this rapture his soul ascended above this world, it was caught up into paradise, into the third heaven, the place in which Christ's soul was after his death; and there he heard those *αἰνῆτα ῥημάτων*, unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter; For, alas! poor mortals cannot pronounce the *Shibboleth* of heaven. The heavenly inhabitants talk in no other dialect; but the language of heaven is not properly spoken by any but the inhabitants of heaven. Now Paul was not admitted into their society at that time, as he was at his death, but was only a spectator, a stander-by, as the angels are in the assemblies of the saints here on earth. But, O what a day was that day to his soul! It was as one of the days of heaven; no words could signify to another man what he felt, what he tasted in that hour. Such favours will not be indulged to many: he was a chosen vessel, and appointed to extraordinary sufferings for Christ, and it was necessary his supports and encouragements should be answerable.

* It does not appear with certainty, whether the soul of Paul was then separated from the body; seeing he himself owns his ignorance as to that matter: Hence we cannot determine what befel him as to abstraction from the senses, namely, whether the senses were extinct, his body being dead, through the separation of the soul: Or only sopited, the body not being dead. *Colleg. Conimbr. lib. 3. Art. 3. p. 512.*

† *In extasie fieri omnes potentias præter intellectum.* Abulen.

It was no less an extraordinary and wonderful vision, which Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and John had *; such representations of God as overwhelmed them, and made nature faint under them; and no wonder, for if the eyes of creatures are so weak that they cannot directly behold such a glorious creature as the sun, how much less can they bear the glorious excellency and majesty of God?

(2.) And sometimes, without an ecstasy, representations of Christ, and the glory of heaven, have been made, and the very bodily eye fortified and elevated above its natural vigour and ability to behold him. Thus it was with Stephen at his martyrdom. Acts vii. 55, 56. "Who being full of the Holy Ghost, looked stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God." This was not a sight of faith, but an extraordinary sight by the bodily eye, is evident, from its effect upon his outward man; it made his face to shine as the face of an angel.

2. There are also, beside this, ordinary, and more common foretastes of heaven, and the glory to come, with which many believers are favoured in this world; and such are those which come into the heart, upon the steady and more fixed views of the world to come, by faith, and the more raised spiritual actings of grace in duty. "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. χαρὰ δειδοξασμενῇ, with a glorified joy, or a joy of the same kind and nature with the joy of glorified spirits, though in an inferior and allayed degree.

And yet, with the allowance of its allay and rebatement, it is like new wine put into old and crazy bottles, which is ready to make them fly, and would do so, should they be of any long continuance, "Stay me (saith the spouse) with flaggons, comfort me with apples, I am sick of love," Cant. ii. 5. The sickness was not the sickness of desire or of grief; of that she had complained before; but the sickness of love, i. e. she was ready to faint under the unsupportable weight of Christ's manifested and sealed love, not able to bear what she felt, pained with the love of Christ; and the desired cure speaks this to be her case, "Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples." As if she had said, Lord, support, and under-prop my soul, for it reels, staggers, and fails under the pressure and weight of thy love. Much like the case of a holy man, who cried out under the overwhelming sense of the love of Christ, shed abroad into his heart in prayer, Hold, Lord, hold, thy poor creature is a clay vessel, and can hold no more. Though these joys bring not the soul into a perfect *ecstasy*, they certainly

* Isa. vi. 1, 2. Ezek. i. 1. Dan. x. 8, 9. Rev. i. 17.

bring it as near as may be to it. Mr. * Fox tells us of one Giles of Brussels, a godly martyr, who in prison spent most of his time apart from the rest, in secret prayer; in which his soul was so ardent and intent, that he often forgot himself, and the time; and when he was called to meat, he neither saw nor heard those that stood by him, till he was lifted up by the arms: and then he would gladly speak to them, as one newly awaked out of a sweet sleep. These foretastes of heaven may, from the manner of their conveyance, be distinguished into,

1. Mediate. And

2. Immediate.

1. *Mediate*, in, and by the previous use and exercise of faith, heart-examination, &c. The Spirit of God concurring with, and blessing such duties as these, helps the soul by them to a sight of its interest in Christ, and the glory to come; which being gained, joy is no more under the soul's command. I have, with good assurance, this account of a minister, 'Who being alone in a journey, and willing to make the best improvement he could of that day's solitude, set himself to a close examination of the state of his soul, and then of the life to come, and the manner of its being, and living in heaven, in the views of all those things which are now pure objects of faith and hope. After a while, he perceived his thoughts begin to fix, and come closer to these great and astonishing things than was usual; and as his mind settled upon them, his affections began to rise with answerable liveliness and vigour.

'He therefore (whilst he was yet master of his own thoughts) lifted up his heart to God in a short ejaculation that God would so order it in his providence, that he might meet with no interruption from company, or any other accident in that journey; which was granted him: For, in all that day's journey, he neither met, overtook, or was overtaken by any. Thus going on his way, his thoughts began to swell, and rise higher and higher, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, till at last they became an overflowing flood. Such was the intention of his mind, such the ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such the full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost a sight and sense of this world, and all the concerns thereof; and, for some hours, knew no more where he was, than if he had been in a deep sleep upon his bed. At last he began to perceive himself very faint, and almost choaked with blood, which running in abundance from his nose, had coloured his clothes and his horse from the shoulder to the hoof. He found himself almost spent, and nature to faint under the pres-

* Acts and Mon., p. 811.

‘ sure of joy unspeakable and insupportable; and at last, perceiv-
‘ ing a spring of water in his way, he, with some difficulty, alight-
‘ ed to cleanse and cool his face and hands, which were drenched
‘ in blood, tears, and sweat.

‘ By that spring he sat down and washed, earnestly desiring, if
‘ it were the pleasure of God, that it might be his parting place
‘ from this world: He said, death had the most amiable face in his
‘ eye, that ever he beheld, except the face of Jesus Christ, which
‘ made it so; and that he could not remember (though he believed
‘ he should die there) that he had one thought of his dear wife, or
‘ children, or any other earthly concernment.

‘ But having drank of that spring, his spirits revived, the blood
‘ stanch'd, and he mounted his horse again; and on he went in the
‘ same frame of spirit, till he had finished a journey of near thirty
‘ miles, and came at night to his inn, where, being come, he greatly
‘ admired how he came thither, that his horse, without his direc-
‘ tion had brought him thither, and that he fell not all that day,
‘ which passed not without several trances, of considerable conti-
‘ nuance.

‘ Being alighted, the innkeeper came to him, with some astonish-
‘ ment, (being acquainted with him formerly) O Sir, said he, what
‘ is the matter with you? You look like a dead man. Friend, re-
‘ plied he, I was never better in my life. Shew me my chamber,
‘ cause my cloak to be cleansed, burn me a little wine, and that is
‘ all I desire of you for the present. Accordingly it was done, and
‘ a supper sent up, which he could not touch; but requested of the
‘ people that they would not trouble or disturb him for that night.
‘ All this night passed without one wink of sleep, though he never
‘ had a sweeter night’s rest in all his life. Still, still the joy of the
‘ Lord overflowed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of the
‘ other world. The next morning being come, he was early on
‘ horseback again, fearing the divertisement in the inn might be-
‘ reave him of his joy; for he said it was now with him, as with a
‘ man that carries a rich treasure about him, who suspects every
‘ *passenger* to be a *thief*: But within a few hours he was sensible
‘ of the ebbing of the tide, and before night, though there was a
‘ heavenly serenity and sweet peace upon his spirit, which continued
‘ long with him, yet the transports of joy were over, and the fine
‘ edge of his delight blunted. He many years after called that day
‘ one of the days of heaven, and professed he understood more of
‘ the light of heaven by it, than by all the books he ever read, or
‘ discourses he ever had entertained about it.’ This was indeed,
an extraordinary fore-taste of heaven for degree, but it came in the
ordinary way and method of faith and meditation.

There are also immediate illapses of heavenly joy in the hearts of believers at some times; of which we may say as the prophet doth of the dew and rain, "that it tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men;" a surprising light and joy, like that, Cant. vi. 12. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of "Aminadab."

There is a witness of the Spirit, distinct from that of water and blood, 1 John v. 8. that is, a witness, or sealing, which comes not in an argumentative way, by reasoning from either justification or sanctification, but seems to come immediately from the Spirit. I know both sorts of testimonies, how clear and sweet soever they are for the present, are liable afterwards to be called into question; but certainly, during the abode of them upon the soul, they are no less than *a short salvation*, a real participation of the joy of the Lord. And that which makes them so ravishing and transporting is,

(1.) The infinite weight with which the concerns of eternity lie upon the hearts and thoughts of the people of God; nothing lies so near to their spirits in all the world, as the matters of salvation do, and have still done ever since God thoroughly awakened them in their first effectual conviction. It is said of Luther, "* There "was such a strong impression of God upon his spirit, in his first "conviction, that there was neither heat, nor blood, nor sense, "nor speech discernible in him." Though it rise to that height but in a few, yet it settles into a deep, serious, and most solemn sense and solicitude in all. This heightens the joy.

(2.) The restlessness of the soul, whilst matters of salvation hang in a dubious suspense, must needs proportionably overflow it with joy, when God shall clear it. It was the saying of one, and is the sense of many more, "I have borne (said she) seven children, and they have all cost me dear; yet could I be well content to bear them all over again, for one glimpse of the love of God to my soul." This heightens the joy above expression.

And now, having explained the substance of the doctrine in these twelve *propositions*, it remains, that, as a *mantissa*, or cast upon the whole, I farther clear what belongs to this subject, in the solution of several *queries* about the soul, in its unbodied and separated state; and though the nature of some of these *queries* may seem too curious, yet I shall labour to speak according to the rules of sobriety, and contain myself within the line of modesty, in what I shall speak about them. And the first is this;

Query 1. *Whether any notion or conception can be formed of a*

* *Nec calor, nec sanguis, nec sensus, nec vox supresset.* Ep. ad. Melanct.

separate soul; And if so, how we may be assisted duly to form it, and conceive of it?

Sol. 1. It must be acknowledged not only very difficult, but an impossible task, for a soul immersed in matter, and so unacquainted with its own nature and powers, as it is in its embodied state, to gain a perfect, clear, and adequate conception of what it shall be in the world to come. Expect not then a perfect image, much less any magnificent draught of this excellent creature; this would be the same thing, as to go about to paint the sun in its glory, motions, and influences with a pencil. I shall think I have done enough, if I can but give you any unbrage, or faint representation of this sublime and spiritual being, and the manner of its subsisting and acting out of the body. For, seeing it is by nature invisible, and in most of its actions (whilst it is in the state of composition) it makes the same use of the body and natural spirits, that a scribe doth of his pen and ink, without which he cannot decypher the characters which are formed in his fancy; it must needs be difficult to conceive how it subsists and acts in a separate state.

Sol. 2. But though we acknowledge it to be a great difficulty to trace it beyond the limits of this world, though we perceive nothing to depart from the body at the instant of its expiration, but a puff of breath which vanishes like smoke into the air: and though atheistical* wits daringly pronounce an immaterial substance to be a mere jargon, a contradiction in *terminis*; which, being joined together, destroy one another: yet all this doth not make the notion of a separate soul impossible, much less undermine its existence in its unbodied and lonely state; the scriptures having so abundantly obviated all these atheistical suggestions by so many plain discoveries of the happiness of some, and misery of others after this life; yea, my text answers us, that death is so far from destroying or annihilating, that it perfects the spirits of the just.

Sol. 3. There can be no more difficulty in conceiving of a separate soul, than there is in conceiving of an angel. For it is certain, that a separated soul, and an angel, are the liveliest and clearest representations of each other in the whole number of created beings†. Some make the difference betwixt them little more than of a sword in the scabbard, from one that is naked. A soul is but a *genius* in the body, and a *genius* (or angel) is a soul out of the body. An angel (saith another, is a complete and perfect soul, a soul an imperfect and incomplete angel.

The separate soul doth not become an angel by putting off the

* Hobb's *Leviathan*, chap. xxxvi.

† Dr. More's immortality of the soul, l. 2. c. 17. § 4, et 8. *Bell. de Ascen. mentis*:

body ; they are, and still will be divers species : but in this they agree, that in their common nature they are both spirits, that is, immaterial substances, endued with understanding, will, and active powers. And I know not why the one should not be as intelligible as the other ; or if there be any advantage, the soul certainly must have it, seeing our acquaintance with souls is much more intimate than with angels. Angels indeed have larger capacities, and have no natural inclination to be embodied as souls have ; but their common nature, as they are spirits are the same : and if we can conceive of one we may also of the other.

Sol. 4. But the difficulty seems to lie in this, how the soul can subsist alone without a body ; and how the habits of grace, which were infused into it in this life by sanctification, do inhere in it, or can be reduced into act by it, when it hath no bodily organs to work by.

As to the first, there is no difficulty at all, if we once rightly apprehend what is meant, when we call it a spiritual substance ; that is, a being by itself, independent upon any other creature as to its existence, as was opened before : the soul depends not for its life upon the body, but the body upon the soul. It is the same sword when it is drawn, as it was when sheathed in its scabbard ; the soul is as much itself, when separated from the body, as it was when united with it ; its being is independent on it, it can live and act in a body, and it can do so without it ; for it is a distinct being from its body ; a substantial being itself. And,

Sol. 5. As for the habits of grace which accompany it to heaven, it would much facilitate our apprehensions of it, if we but compare acquired and infused habits with each other. It is true, they are of different natures and originals, but the soul is the subject of them both, and their inhesion and improvement is much after the same manner.

Take we then an acquired habit into consideration, which is nothing else but a permanent quality rendering the subject of it prompt and ready to perform a work with ease : suppose that of music or writing, and we shall find these habits to be safely lodged in the soul, as well when the body is laid into the deepest sleep, which is the image of death, as when it is awake and most active ; for they are both artists when asleep, and need learn no new rules to play or write when you awake them ; which shews the habits to be permanently rooted in their minds.

Infused habits of grace are as deeply rooted in the soul, yea, deeper than any acquired habits can be : for when knowledge and tongues shall be done away, love abideth, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. viz. after death, when the body is asleep in the grave.

Sol. 6. Add hereto, that these habits of grace are inseparably rooted or lodged in a subject, which is by nature a *spirit*, that is to say, an intelligent, active being, able to use its faculties of understanding *, will, and affections, and consequently, in their use, to reduce these habits of grace inherent in them, into act, without the help of the body: for to suppose otherwise, were to despirit it, and destroy the very nature of it.

Moreover, let the spirit, thus furnished with gracious habits, be now considered in separation from the body, in which state it enjoyeth and rejoiceth in a double privilege it never had before, viz. perfection both of itself, and of its graces, and the nearest access to God it is capable of, 2 Cor. v. 6. "Absent from the body, "and present with the Lord." It hath now no body to clog or cloud it, nor can it complain of distance from God as it did in this world. Oh! at what rate must we conceive the love and delight of a soul under these great advantages, to cast out their very spirits, as I may say, in their glorious activities and exercises! Well then, here you find 'a spirit naturally endued with understanding, will, 'and affections: in these faculties and affections, the habits of 'grace are permanently rooted, which therefore accompany it in its 'ascension to glory: an ability to use and exercise these faculties 'and graces, and that in a more excellent degree and manner, 'than it did or could in this world, the subject and habits inherent being now both made perfect: the clog of flesh knocked 'off, and all distance from God removed, by its coming home to 'him, even as near as the capacity of the soul can admit. Con- 'ceive such a spirit so qualified, now ranked in its proper order 'among innumerable other holy and blessed spirits, which sur- 'round the throne of God, beholding his face with infinite delect- 'ation, and acting all its powers and grace to the highest, in 'worshipping, praising, loving, and admiring him that sitteth 'on the throne, and the Lamb for evermore.' And then you have a true, though imperfect idea or notion of the spirit of a *just man made perfect*.

I will not here make use of the other glass to represent a damned soul, separate for a time from its body, and for ever from the Lord: that will be shewn you in its proper place.

Query 2. Whether there be any difference in the separation of gracious souls from their bodies? And if so, in what particulars doth the difference appear?

Sol. For the clear stating and satisfying this question, I will lay

* The understanding and will are the primary faculties of the soul, and therefore are called *inorganical*, because not fixed to any member of the body, as the sensitive appetite and loco-motive powers are to their proper organs. The soul therefore hath the free use and exercise of them in its separate state.

down some things negatively, and some things positively about it. On the negative part, I desire two things may be noted.

1. That there is no difference betwixt the separation of one gracious soul and another, in point of safety. Every regenerate soul is fully secured, in and by Jesus Christ, from the danger of perishing, and is out of hazard of the wrath to come.

This must needs be so, because all that are in Christ are equally justified by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, without difference, to them all; Rom. iii. 22. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference:" by virtue whereof, they are all equally secured from wrath to come, one as well as another. As all that sailed with Paul, so all that die in Christ come safe to the shore of glory, and not one of them is lost. The sting of death smites none that are in Christ.

2. There is no difference betwixt the departing souls of just men, in respect of the supporting presence of God with them in that their hour of distress; that promise belongs to them all, Psal. xci. 15. "I will be with him in trouble," and so doth that, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Their God is certainly with them all, to order the circumstances of their death, and all the occurrences of that day, to his glory, and their good. *Supports* I have, (said a good man in such an hour) though *suavities* I want; and so they have also who meet with the hardest conflict at death.

But notwithstanding their equality in these privileges, there is a great difference betwixt the departing souls of just men. And this difference is manifest both in the

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| 1. External | } circumstances of their death. |
| 2. Internal | |

1. In the external circumstances of their death, all have not one and the same passage to heaven in all respects; for,

(1.) Some go thither by the ordinary road of a natural death from their beds, and the arms of lamenting friends, to the arms and bosom of Jesus Christ, but others swim through the Red-sea to Canaan: from a scaffold to the throne; from a gibbet or stake to their Father's house; from insulting enemies to their triumphant brethren, the palm-bearing multitude. This is a rough, but honourable way to glory.

(2.) Some lie long under the hand of death, before it dispatch them; it approaches them by slow and lingering paces, they feel every step of death distinctly as it comes on towards them; but others are favoured with a quick dispatch, a short passage from hence to glory. Hezekiah feared a pining sickness, Isa. xxviii. 10, 12. what he feared, many feel. O how many days, yea, weeks

and months, have many gracious souls dwelt upon the brink of the pit, crying, *How long, Lord, how long?*

The pains and agonies of death are more acute and sharp to some of God's people than to others: death is bitter in the most mild and gentle form of it. Two such dear and intimate friends as the soul and body are, cannot part without some tears, groans, or sighs; and those more deep and emphatical than the groans and sighs of the living use to be: but yet, comparatively speaking, the death of one, may be stiled sweet and easy to another's. Latimer and Ridley found it so, though burnt in the same flame.

In this respect all things come alike to all, and the same difference is found in the worst, as well as in the best men; some like sheep are laid in the grave, *Psal. xlix. 14.* others die in the bitterness of their soul, *Job xxi. 25.* and by this no man knows either love or hatred.

2. There are besides these, some remarkable internal differences in the dissolution of good men: the sum whereof is this.

1st. That some gracious souls have a very hard, strait, difficult entrance into heaven: just as it is with ships that sail by a very bare wind; all their art, care, and pains, will but just weather some head-land or cape: they steer fast by some dangerous rock or sand, and with a thousand fears and dangers, win their port at last. Saved they are, but yet to use the apostle's phrase, scarcely saved, or saved as by fire. And this difficulty ariseth to them from one, or all these causes.

(1.) It ordinarily ariseth from the weakness of their faith, which is in many souls, without either the light of evidence, or strength of reliance; neither able to dissolve their doubts nor steadily repose their hearts: and thus they die, much at the rate they lived, poor doubting, and cloudy, though gracious souls. They can neither speak much of the comfort of past experiences, nor of the present foretastes of heaven.

(2.) The violent assaults and batteries of temptations make the passage exceeding difficult to some. O the sharp conflicts and dreadful combats many poor souls endure upon a death-bed! O the charges of hypocrisy, fortified by neglects of duty, formality and by-ends in duty, falls into sin after conviction and humiliation, &c. all which the soul is apt to yield to, and admit the dreadful conclusion.

These are the last, and therefore oft-times the most violent conflicts. The malice of Satan will send them halting to heaven, if he cannot bar them out of it.

(3.) To conclude: The hiding of God's face, puts terror into the face of death, and makes a dying day, a dark and gloomy day.

All darkness disposes to fear, but none like inward darkness. They must like a ship in distress, venture into the harbour in the dark, though they see not their land-marks.

2dly, But others have the privilege of an εὐθανασία, easy death, a comfortable and sweet passage into glory, through the broad gate of assurance, 2 Pet. i. 11. even an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. What a difference doth God make, not only betwixt those that have grace, and those that have none, but betwixt gracious souls themselves in this matter: the things which usually make an easy passage to heaven are,

1. A pardon cleared, Isa. xxxiii. 24. The sense of pardon swallows up the sense of pain.

2. A heart weaned from this world, Heb. xi. 9, 13, 16. A heart loosed from the world, is a foot out of the snare. Mortified limbs are cut off from the body with little pain.

3. Fervent love to Christ, and longings to be with him, Phil. i. 23. He that loves Christ fervently, must needs loathe absence from Christ proportionably.

4. Purity and peace of conscience make a death-bed soft and easy. The strains and wounds of conscience, in the time of life, are so many thorns in our bed, or pillow, in the time of death, 1 John iii. 21. But integrity gives boldness.

5. The work of obedience faithfully finished, or a steady course of holiness throughout our life, is that which usually yields much peace and joy in death, Acts xx. 24.

6. But above all, the preference of the Comforter with us in that cloudy and dark day, turns it into one of the days of heaven, 1 Pet. iv. 14. And thus ye see, though all dying Christians be equally safe, and all supported, and carried through by the power of God; yet their farewells to the body are not alike cheerful. There are many external and internal circumstantial differences in the death of good men, as well as a substantial and essential difference betwixt all their deaths, and the death of a wicked man.

Query 3. *Whether any souls have notices and forewarnings given them by signs or predictions, in an extraordinary way of their approaching separation?*

The terms of this question need a little explanation. Let us therefore briefly consider what is meant by signs, what by predictions, and what by extraordinary signs and predictions.

“A sign * is that which represents something else to us than “that which is seen or heard.” And a sign of death is that which gives notice to our minds that our departure is at hand.

* *Signum est quod aliud repræsentat quam quod cernitur.*

“A prediction * is a forewarning of a person more plainly and expressly of any thing which is afterwards to fall out or come to “pass;” and a prediction of death is an express notice or message, informing us of our own, or of another’s death, to the end the mind may be actually disposed to an expectation thereof.

Of signs, some are ordinary and natural, some extraordinary and supernatural, or at least preternatural.

There are natural symptoms and prognostics of death which are common to most dying persons, and by which physicians inform themselves and others of the state of the sick. These are out of this question, we have nothing to do with them here; but I am enquiring after extraordinary signs and predictions by words or things forewarning us immediately, or by others, of our approaching death. The question is, Whether such intimations of death be at any time truly given unto men? or, Whether we are to take them for fabulous reports, and superstitious fancies?

For the negative, the following grounds are laid.

Reason 1. The sufficient ordinary provision God hath made in this case, renders all such extraordinary notices and intimations of our death needless: and be sure the most wise God doth nothing in vain. We have three standing, ordinary, and sufficient means to premonish us of our departure hence, viz. the scriptures, reason, and daily examples of mortality before our eyes. The scriptures tell us, our life is but “a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away, James iv. 14. That our “days are but as an hand-breadth,” and that “every man in his “best estate is vanity,” Psal. xxxix. 5.

Reason tells us, so feeble a tie as our breath is can never secure our lives long. “The living know that they must die,” Eccl. ix. 5. The radical moisture, which is daily consuming by the flame of life, must needs be spent ere long.

And all the graves we see opened so frequently, are sufficient warnings, that we ourselves must shortly follow. Therefore, as there was no need of manna, when bread might be had in an ordinary way, so neither is there need of extraordinary signs, when God hath abundantly furnished us with standing and ordinary means for this purpose.

Reason 2. And as the scriptures render such signs needless, so they seem to be directly against them. Christ commands us to “watch, because we know not in what hour the Lord cometh.” Yea, even Isaac himself, an extraordinary person, and endowed with a spirit of prophecy, whereby he foretold the condition of his

† *Prædicere est aliquem de re aliqua eventura præmonere.*

suns after him, yet it is said, Gen. xxvii. 2. "That he knew not the day of his death." And it is not reasonable to think that common persons should know that, which extraordinary and prophetic persons knew not.

Reason 3. All mankind belong either to God or the devil. To such as belong to God, such extraordinary warnings are needless, for they have a watchful principle within them which continually prompts them to mind their change; and besides death cannot endanger those that are in Christ, how suddenly or unexpectedly soever it should befall them.

And for wicked men, it cannot be thought God should favour and privilege them in this matter above his own children: and as for Satan he knows not the time of their death himself: and if he did, it would thwart his design and interest to discover it to them, Luke xi. 21. So that upon the whole, it should seem such signs and predictions are of no use, and the relations and reports of them fabulous.

But though these reasons make the common and daily use of such signs and predictions needless, yet they destroy not the credibility of them in some cases and at some times. For,

1. There are recorded instances in scripture of premonitions and predictions of the death of persons. Thus the death of Abijah was foretold to his mother by the prophet, and the precise hour thereof which fell out answerably, 1 Kings xiv. 6, 12. And thus the death of the king of Assyria was foretold exactly both as to kind and place, Isa. xxxvii. 7,—37, 38.

2. These predictions serve to other ends and uses sometimes, than the preparation of the persons warned, even to display the fore-knowledge, power, and justice of God, in marking out his enemies for ruin. And, thus, "the Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth," Psalm ix. 16.

Thus Mr. Knox predicted the very place and manner of the death of the laird of Grange*. "You have sometimes seen the courage and constancy of the laird of Grange in the cause of God, and now that unhappy man is casting himself away. I pray you, go to him from me, (said Mr. Knox) and tell him, that unless he forsake that wicked course he is in, the rock wherein he confideth shall not defend him, nor the carnal wisdom of that man, (meaning the young Leshington) whom he counteth half a God, shall help him: but he shall be shamefully pulled out of that nest, and his carcase hung before the sun." And even so it fell out in the following year, when the castle was taken, and his body hanged out

* Clark's Lives, p. 277.

before the sun. Thus God exactly fulfilled the prediction of his death.

The same Mr. Knox, in the year 1566, being in the pulpit at Edinburgh, upon the Lord's day, a paper was given up to him, among many others, wherein these words were scoffingly written concerning the earl of Murray, who was slain the day before,—“Take up the man whom ye accounted another God.” At the end of the sermon, Mr. Knox bewailed the loss that the church and state had by the death of that virtuous man; and then added, “There is one in this company that makes this horrible murder the subject of his mirth, for which all good men should be sorry; but I tell him, he shall die where there shall be none to lament him.” The man that wrote this paper was one Thomas Metellan, a young gentleman, who shortly after, in his travels, died in Italy, having none to assist or lament him.

3. And others have had premonitions and signs of their own deaths, which accordingly fell out. And these premonitions have been given them, sometimes by strong irresistible impressions upon their minds, sometimes in dreams, and sometimes by unusual elevations of their spirits in duties of communion with God.

(1.) Some have had strong and irresistible impressions of their approaching change, made upon their minds. So had Sir Anthony Wingfield, who was slain at Brest, anno 1594*. At his undertaking of that expedition, he was strongly persuaded it would be his death; and therefore so settled and disposed of his estate, as one that never reckoned to return again. And the day before he died, he took order for the payment of his debts, as one that strongly presaged the time was now at hand; which accordingly fell out the next day.

Much of the same nature was that of the late earl of Marlborough, who fell in the Holland war. He not only presaged his own fall in that encounter, (which was exactly answered in the event) but left behind him that memorable and excellent letter, which evidenced to all the world what deep and fixed apprehensions of eternity it had left upon his spirits. Many examples of this nature might be produced, of such as have in their perfect health, foretold their own death; and others who have dropt such passages as were afterwards better understood by their sorrowful friends, than when they first dropt from their lips.

(2.) Others have been premonished of their death by dreams, sometimes their own, and sometimes others. The learned and judicious Amyraldus† gives us this well attested relation of Lewis of

* Sir John Norris's expedition, p. 46.

† Amyraldus, of divine dreams, p. 122, 123.

Bourbon, That a little before his journey from Dreux, he dreamed that he had fought three successful battles, wherein his three great enemies were slain, but that at last he himself was mortally wounded; and that after they were laid one upon another, he also was laid upon the dead bodies. The event was remarkable; for the Mareschal of St. Andree was killed at Dreux, the duke of Guise at Orleans, the constable of Montmorency at St. Denis: and this was the triumvirate, which had sworn the ruin of those of the reformed religion, and the destruction of that prince. At last he himself was slain at Balsac, as if there had been a continuation of deaths and funerals.

Suetonius in the life of Julius Cæsar, tells us, that the night before he was slain, he had divers premonitions thereof, for that night all the doors and windows of his chamber flew open; his wife also dreamed that Cæsar was slain, and that she had him in her arms. The next day he was slain in Pompey's court, having received 23 wounds in his body.

Pamelius * in the life of Cyprian, tells us for a most certain and well attested truth, that upon his first entrance into Garubis (the place of his banishment) it was revealed to him in a dream, or vision, that upon that very day twelve-month he should be consummate: which accordingly fell out; for a little before the time prefixed, there came suddenly two apparitors to bring him before the new proconsul Galeius, by whom he was condemned, as having been a standard-bearer of his sect, and an enemy of the gods. Whereupon he was condemned to be beheaded, a multitude of Christians following him, crying, Let us die together with him.

And as remarkable is that recorded by the learned and ingenious Dr. Sterne † of Mr. Usher of Ireland, a man, saith he, of great integrity, dear to others by his merits, and my kinsman in blood, who upon the 8th day of July, 1657, went from this to a better world. About four of the clock the day before he died, a matron who died a little before, and whilst living was dear to Mr. Usher, appeared to him in his sleep, and invited him to sup with her the next night: he at first denied her, but she more vehemently pressing her request on him, at last he consented, and that very night he died.

I have also the fullest assurance that can be of the truth of this following narrative. A person yet living was greatly concerned about the welfare of his dear father and mother, who were both shut up in London, in the time of the great contagion in 1665. Many let-

* *Pamelius in vita Cypriani.*

† Dr. Sterne's *dissertatio de morte*, p. 165.

ters he sent to them, and many hearty prayers to heaven for them. But about a fortnight before they were infected, he fell about break of day into this dream, That he was in a great inn which was full of company, and being very desirous to find a private room, where he might seek God for his parents life, he went from room to room, but found company in them all; at last, casting his eye into a little chamber which was empty, he went into it, locked the door, kneeled down by the out-side of the bed, fixing his eyes upon the plastered wall, within side the bed: and whilst he was vehemently begging of God the life of his friends, there appeared upon the plaster of the wall before him, the sun and moon shining in their full strength. The sight at first amazed and discomposed him so far, that he could not continue his prayer, but kept his eye fixed upon the body of the sun; at last a small line or ring of black, no bigger than that of a text pen, circled the sun, which increasing sensibly, eclipsed in a little time the whole body of it, and turned it into a blackish colour; which done, the figure of the sun was immediately changed into a perfect death's head, and after a little while vanished quite away. The moon still continued shining as before; but while he intently beheld it, it also darkened in like manner, and turned also into another death's head, and vanished. This made so great an impression upon the beholder's mind, that he immediately awaked in confusion and perplexity of thoughts about his dream; and awaking his wife, related the particulars to her with much emotion and concernment; but how to apply it, he could not presently tell, only he was satisfied that the dream was of an extraordinary nature: at last Joseph's dream came to his thoughts with the like emblems, and their interpretation; which fully satisfied him that God had warned and prepared him thereby for a sudden parting with his dear relations; which answerably fell out in the same order, his father dying that day fortnight following, and his mother just a month afterwards.

I know there is much vanity in dreams; and yet I am fully satisfied, some are weighty, significant and declarative of the purposes of God.

(3.) *Lastly*, An unusual and extraordinary elevation of the soul to God, and enlargement in communion with him, hath been a signifying forerunner of the death of some good men; for as the body hath its *lexamen anteyferale*, lightning before death, and more vegete and brisk a little before its dissolution, so it is sometimes with the soul also. I have known some persons to arrive on a sudden to such heights of love to God, and vehement longings to be dissolved, that they might be with Christ, that I could not but look upon it, as Christ did upon the box of ointment, as

done against their death: and so indeed it hath proved in the event.

Thus it was with that renowned saint, Mr. Brewen of Stapleford; as he excelled others in the holiness of his life, so much he excelled himself towards his death, his motions towards heaven being then most vigorous and quick. The day before his last sickness, he had such extraordinary enlargements of heart in his closet-duty, that he seemed to forget all the concerns of his body, and this lower world; and when his wife told him, Sir, I fear you have done yourself hurt with rising so early; he answered, "If you had seen such glorious things as I saw this morning in private prayer with God, you would not have said so; for they were so wonderful and unspeakable, that whether I was in the body, or out of the body, with Paul, I cannot tell."

And so it was with the learned and holy Mr. Rivet, who seemed as a man in heaven, just before he went thither; and so it hath been with thousands besides these. I confess it is not the lot of every gracious soul (as was shewed you in the last question) nor doth it make any difference as to the safety of the soul, whatever it makes as to comfort. Let all therefore labour to make sure their union with Christ, and live in the daily exercises of grace, in the duties of religion; and then, though God should give them no such extraordinary warning one way or other, they shall never be surprised by death to their loss, let it come never so unexpectedly upon them.

Quest. It may be also queried, whether Satan, by his instruments, may not foretel the death of some men? How else did the witch of Endor foretel the death of Saul? and the soothsayers the death of Cæsar upon the *Ides*, i. e. the fifteenth day of March, which was the fatal day to him?

Sol. Foreknowledge of things to come, which appear not in their next causes, is certainly the Lord's prerogative, Isa. xli. 23. Whatever, therefore, Satan doth in this matter, must be done either by conjecture or commission. As to the case of Saul, it is not to be questioned but that he, knowing the kingdom was made to David by promise, and that the Lord was departed from Saul, and seeing how near the armies were to a battle, might strongly conjecture and conclude, and accordingly tell him, "To-morrow thou shalt be with me," 1 Sam. xxviii. 19.

And so for the death of Cæsar, the devil knew the conspiracy was strong against him, and the plot laid for that day; and so it was both easy for him to reveal it to the soothsayers, and his interest to do it, thereby to bring that cursed art into reputation.

As for other signs and forewarnings of death, by the unusual resort of doleful creatures, as *owls* and *ravens*, vulgarly accounted

ominous; *Wall-watches*, upon this account called *death-watches*; and the eating of wearing apparel by rats; I look upon them generally as superstitious fancies, not worthy to be regarded among Christians. God may, but I know not what ground we have to believe, that he doth commission such creatures to bring us the message of death from him. To conclude, therefore,

Let no man expect or depend upon such extraordinary premonitions and warnings of his change, and neglect his daily work and duty of preparation for it. We have warnings in the word, in the examples of mortality frequently before us, in all the diseases and decays we often feel in our own bodies; and by the signs of the times, which threatens death and desolation. Be ye therefore always ready, for ye know not in what watch of the night your Lord cometh.

Query 4. *Whether separated souls have any knowledge of, or commerce or intercourse with men in this life; and if not, what is to be thought of the apparitions of the dead?*

1. *By separated souls*, understand the departed souls, both of godly and ungodly, indifferently and not as it is restrained to one sort only in the text; for of both it is pretended there are frequent apparitions after death.

2. By the knowledge such souls are supposed to have after death both of persons and things in this lower world, we understand not a general knowledge, which one sort of them have of the state and condition of the church militant on earth; for this, we think, cannot be denied to the spirits of the just made perfect, seeing they are still fellow-members with us of the same mystical body of Christ; do behold our High-priest appearing before God, offering up our prayers for us; and long for the consummation of the body of Christ, as well as cry for vengeance against the persecutors thereof, Rev. vi. 10. Nor do I think these words, Isa. lxiii. 16. repugnant hereunto: "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not;" for I look upon the import of those words only as an humble acknowledgment of their defection, which rendered them unworthy that their forefathers should own, or acknowledge them any more for their children; and not as implying their utter ignorance, or total oblivion of the church's state on earth.

But I here understand such a particular knowledge of our personal states and conditions, as they once had when they dwelt among us in the body; and this seems to be denied them by those scriptures alleged against it in the margin below*.

3. By commerce and intercourse; understand not their intercession with God for us, which the Papists affirm; but their con-

* Job xiv. 21. Eccles. ix. 5, 6. John xix. 25.

cernments about our natural, or civil interest in this world, so as to be useful to our persons, by warning us of death, or dangers; or to our estates, by disquieting such as wrong us, in not fulfilling the wills and testaments they once made; or by giving us notice, by words or signs, of the death of our friends, who died at a distance from us, or come to some violent and untimely end.

The sense of the terms being thus determined, and the question so stated, I will, for the resolution of it, give you,

I. The strength of what I find offered for the affirmative.

II. The general concessions, or what may be granted.

III. My own judgment about it, with the grounds thereof.

I. Some there are, even among the learned and judicious, who are for the affirmative part of the question, and do with much confidence assert, that departed souls both know our particular concerns in this world, and intermeddle with them: confirming their assertion both by reasons to convince us that it may be so, and a variety of instances that it is so. I will produce both the one and the other, and give them a due consideration and censure.

The substance of what is pleaded for the affirmative, I find thus collected and improved by * Dr. Sterne, a learned physician in Ireland, in his book entitled, *A Dissertation concerning Death*; where he offers us these four arguments, to convince that it is possible for departed souls thus to appear, and perform such offices for their friends on earth.

“*Arg.* 1. † Angels by command from God, are useful and helpful to men; they are the saints’ guardians, and it is probable that each Christian hath his peculiar angel: whence it will follow, that separated souls do mingle themselves with human affairs, and that because they are angels, at least equal unto angels, Luke xx. 36. Besides, they being spirits that were once embodied, must needs be more fit for this employment, than those who never had any tie at all to a body;” unless we can imagine them to have lost the remembrance of all that ever they did, and suffered in the body; as also that they put off, and buried all their affections to us with their bodies, which is hard to think. Even as Christ our High-priest is qualified for that office, above all others in heaven, because he once dwelt, and suffered in a body, like ours, here upon earth; so separated souls are

* *Dissertatio de morte*, a p. 208. ad p. 214.

† (1.) *Angeli jussu Dei hominibus opitulantur, haudquaquam ambiguntur; unde animas a corpore solutas sese rebus humanis miscere comprobari videtur. Sequelæ fundamentum duplex est, prius, quod animæ separatæ angeli sunt, saltem angelis æquales: posterius, quod magis idonei sunt quibus officium generi humano succurrendi demandetur, quam spiritus inter quos et corpus nullus unquam intercessit nexus, &c.*

qualified above all other spirits, who are unrelated to bodies of flesh.

“*Arg.* 2. * The church triumphant and militant are but one body; and how much better the triumphant are than the militant, by so much the more propense they are to succour and help the other that stand in need of it.” This being the case, we cannot but imagine but they are inclined to perform all good offices for us; for else they should do less for us now, being in a state of the highest perfection in heaven, than they did, or were willing to do, in their imperfect state on earth.

“*Arg.* 3. † A will, or testament (as Ulpian defines it) is the just sentence, or declaration of our minds, concerning that which we would have done after our decease. These testaments have always, and among all nations, been religiously observed, as the apostle witnesseth, Gal. iii. 15. The reasons of this so religious observance are a presumption, that those who made them when alive, continue in the same mind and will after death; that they take care for the fulfilling of them; and revenge the non-performance upon the unjust executors.” For otherwise there can be no reason why so great a stress should be laid upon the will of the dead, if they care not whether their wills be performed or no. Why should we be solicitous and studious about it, and pay so great a reverence to it, but upon this account?

“*Arg.* 4. † The scriptures forbid consultations with the dead, Deut. xviii. 10, 11. This prohibition supposeth some did consult them, and received answers from them; which must needs imply some commerce betwixt the living, and the souls that are departed.” And, considering he had before forbidden their consultation with the devil, it appears that here we must needs understand the very souls of the dead, and not the devil personating them only.

These are the arguments of this learned author for the affirmative, which he closes with two necessary cautions: *First*, That this

*(2.) *Ecclesia est corpus unum, cujus membra quo meliora, eo magis ad aliis ejusdem corporis membris opitulandum sunt propensa: hujus autem corporis pars altera est triumphans in caelis, altera militans in terris: Illa melior, hæc opis magis indiga, &c.*

† (5.) *Testamentum (Ulpiano definiente) est voluntatis nostræ justa sententia de eo quod post mortem nostram fieri volumus. Testamentum autem tanquam res sacra ab omnibus gentibus religiose observatur, Gal. iii. 15. Ratio autem tam religiose tamque universalis observantæ est, quoniam animas eorum qui Testamenta condiderant, etiam suam post mortem, in eadem voluntate perseverare, ejus complementa curare, ac deinceps ejus vel executrices, vel non præstitæ vindices esse præsumitur.*

‡ (4.) *In sacris scripturis consulere mortuos passim prohibetur, ut Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Sed si homines a mortuis non suscitentur, legibus haud opus est; et si mortui rogati non aliquando responderent, ab hominibus haudquaquam consulerentur. Stern. de Morte, ubi*

lays no foundation for religious worship, or invocation of departed souls: those that are helpful to us, are not therefore to be worshipped. *Secondly*, That we must acknowledge ourselves to be under much darkness, as to the way and manner of the converse of spirits with us.

The most acute and learned * Dr. More, I find of the same opinion. He affirms, that departed souls are capable of a vital union with an airy vehicle (or body) in which they can easily move from place to place, and appear to the living; and act in their affairs, as in detecting murders, rebuking injurious executors, visiting and counselling their wives and children, forewarning them of such and such courses, &c. To which we may add, the profession of the spirit thus appearing, of being the soul of such a one; as also, the similitude of the person: And all this a-do is in things very just and serious, unfit for a devil, with that care and kindness to promote; and as unfit for a good genius; it being below so noble a creature to tell a lie. All these things put together and rightly weighed, the violence of prejudice not pulling down the balance, I dare appeal (saith he) to any, whether it will not be certainly carried for the present cause? And whether any indifferent judge ought not to conclude, if these stories, which are so frequent every where, and in all ages, concerning the ghosts of men appearing, be but true, that it is true also, that they are their ghosts, &c.

These are the strongest arguments I meet with, for the affirmative, that the matter is possible, it may be so; and then adding the credible instances that it is so, the matter seems to be determined.

To this purpose Dr. Sterne alleges several instances out of scripture; as that appearance of Samuel unto Saul, and the conference betwixt them: as also, the letters that were sent to Jehoram by Elijah, and that Elijah was translated to heaven; as appears by comparing 2 Chron. xxi. 12. with 2 Kings iii. 11. in which it appears, that in Jehoshaphat's time, who preceded this Jehoram, Elijah was dead; and yet, in Jehoram's time, who succeeded him, he is said to receive letters from Elijah. The appearance and conference also betwixt Christ, and Moses, and Elias, upon the mount, in the presence of some of the disciples, confirm it, Mat. xvii. 3.

These are the principal scripture-instances; others are almost innumerable. From among that vast heap, I will select some few, that are most material, and of clearest credit.

“It is a thing (saith * my author) both known and frequent,

* Dr. More's Immortality of the Soul, b. 2. c. 16.

† *Jusularum Scoticarum incolæ ad ægros, cum pro deploratis habentur, accedunt, et*

“that the inhabitants of the Scottish isles, when their friends are dying, come to them, and request them, that, upon such or such a day, after their death, and in such a place, they would meet them; which the dead accordingly do, at the time and place agreed upon, and have sometimes discourse with them.”

Infinite examples of murders (saith Dr. More) have been discovered by dreams, the souls of the persons murdered seeming to appear to some or other asleep, and to make their complaints to them; giving us a notable example out of Baronius, of Marcilius Ficinius, who having made a solemn vow with Michael Mercatus, (after they had been pretty warmly disputing of the immortality of the soul, out of the principles of their master Plato) that whether of them two died first, he should appear to his friend, and give him certain information of that truth. It was Ficinius' fate to die first, and that not long after this mutual resolution: He was mindful of his promise, when he had left the body; for Mercatus being very intent at his studies, betimes in a morning, heard a horse riding by with all speed, and observed that he stopt at his window, and therewith heard the voice of his friend Ficinius, crying out, aloud, *O Michael, Michael, vera, vera, sunt illa*; that is, *O Michael, Michael, those things are true, they are true*, Whereupon he suddenly opened his window, and espying Marcilius upon a *white steed*, called after him, but he vanished out of his sight. He sent therefore presently to Florence, to know how Marcilius did, and understood that he died about that hour he called at his window.

Much to the same purpose is that so famous and well attested story of the apparition of major George Sydenham, to captain William Dyke, both of Somersetshire, attested by the worthy and learned Dr. Thomas Dyke, a near kinsman of the captain's; and by Mr. Douch, to whom the major and captain were intimately known*. The sum is this: The major and captain had many disputes about the being of a God, and the immortality of the soul, in which points they could never be resolved, though they much sought for, and desired it: and therefore it was at last fully agreed betwixt them, that he that died first, should, the third night after his funeral, come betwixt the hours of twelve and one, to the little house in the garden adjoining to major Sydenham's house, at Dulverton, in Somersetshire. The major died first, and the captain happened to lie that very night which was appointed, in the same chamber and bed with Dr. Dyke; he acquainted

rogant ut certo a morto die, loquere certo ipsos convenient; quod et mortui tempore et præstiterit præstant. Sterne. *ibid.*

* *Sad. Trium.* part 2. p. 185.

the doctor with the appointment, and his resolution to attend the place, and hour that night, for which purpose he had got the key of that garden. The doctor could by no means divert his purpose, but, when the hour came, he was upon the place, where he waited two hours and a half, neither seeing nor hearing any thing more than usual. About six weeks after, the captain and doctor went to Eaton, and lay both in the same inn, but not both in the same chamber, as they had done before at Dulverton.

The morning before they went thence, the captain stayed longer than was usual in his chamber, and at length came into the doctor's chamber, but in visage and form much different from himself, with his hair and eyes staring, and his whole body shaking and trembling: Whereat the doctor wondering, demanded, What is the matter, cousin captain? the captain replied, I have seen my major. At which the doctor seeming to smile, the captain said, If ever I saw him in my life, I saw him but now; adding as follows: This morning (said he) after it was light, some one came to my bed-side, and suddenly drawing back the curtains, calls *Cap. cap.* (which was the term of familiarity that the major used to call the captain by) to whom I replied, What, my *major*? To which he returns, I could not come at the time appointed, but I am now come to tell you, *That there is a God, and a very just and terrible one; and if you do not turn over a new leaf, you will find it so.* This stuck so close to him, little meat would go down with him at dinner, though a handsome treat was provided. These words were sounding in his ears frequently, during the remainder of his life; he was never shy or scrupulous to relate it to any that asked him concerning it, or ever mentioned it, but with horror and trepidation. They were both men of a brisk humour and jolly conversation, of very quick and keen parts, having been both University and Inns-of-court gentlemen.

The apparition of the ghost of Sir George Villiers, father of the duke of Buckingham, giving three solemn warnings, by three several apparitions to his servant, Mr. Parker, is a known and credible story. But I will wade no farther into particulars, they are almost innumerable: let this suffice for a taste.

II. In the next place, therefore, I will lay down some concessions about this matter: and the

First concession is this: *That the separate souls, or spirits of men, are capable of performing and executing any ministry or service of God, (if he should please to commission them so to do) as well as angels are, whom we know he frequently employs about the persons and affairs of his people on earth.*

Though souls become not angels by their separation, as Maxi-

mus Tyrius calls them, but remain spirits specifically distinct from them; yet are they spiritual substances, as the angels are: This their nature capacitates them either to live, and act out of the body, or to assume (as angels do) an *ærial body*, for the time of their ministry: Nor do I know any thing in scripture or philosophy repugnant hereunto.

Conces. 2. *It cannot be doubted, but upon special and extraordinary reasons and occasions, some departed souls have returned to, and appeared in this world, by order and commission from God.*

This is too manifest to be doubted by any that understand and believe the instances recorded in scripture. Moses and Elias, long after their departure, appeared to, and talked with Christ upon the holy mount in the presence of some of his apostles, Mat. xvii. 3. nor is there any reason to question the reality of their apparition, or to think it to be no more than a *phantasm*, or imaginary resemblance of these persons, but very Moses and Elias themselves: For they came to be witnesses to Christ's prophetic office, "And it was not * fit so great a point should be attested by imaginary witnesses," or that they should be called Moses and Elias, if they were not the very same persons.

"It is therefore most likely they both appeared in their own bodies †;" for Moses' body, we know, was hidden by the Lord, and Elias' body was immediately translated, with his soul to heaven: When therefore the Lord would send them upon this solemn errand, the soul of Moses probably reassumed that body, which was never found by man, and Elias was already embodied, and fit immediately for this expedition.

In like manner we read, Mat. xxvii. 52, 53. that, at the resurrection of our Lord, "many bodies of the saints arose, and appeared unto many:" These were no *phantasms*, but the very souls of the departed saints returned (having reassumed their own bodies) unto this world, not only to confirm the truth of Christ's resurrection, and adorn that great day, but as a specimen, or handsel of the resurrection of all the saints, in the virtue of his resurrection at the great day.

Nor will I deny, but, upon some lesser (though never without weighty and solemn) occasions and reasons, God may sometimes send the souls of the dead back again into this world, as in cases before recited, to evidence against the *atheism* of men, &c. ‡ Augustine relates a memorable example, which fell out at Milan, where a certain citizen being dead, there came a creditor, to whom he

* *Non enim conveniebat ut veritas mendacio, vel imaginariis testibus probaretur.* Mal. don. Carpellus in loc.

† *Credibilis est vere corporibus suis apparuisse.* Pareus in loc.

‡ *Aug. in lib. de cura pro mortuis agenda.*

had been indebted, and unjustly demanded the money of his son: The son knew the debt was satisfied by his father, but having no acquittance to shew, his father appeared to him in his sleep, and shewed him where the acquittance lay. Whether it were the very soul of his *father*, or rather, an *angel*, as Augustine thinks, is not certain, though the one, as well as the other, is possible. But though rarely, and upon some weighty and solemn occasions, some souls have returned and appeared; yet I judge this is not frequently done upon slight and ordinary errands; and therefore to give you my own thoughts, I judge,

Conces. 3. *That those apparitions which seem to be, and are generally reputed and taken for the souls of the dead, are not indeed so, but other spirits, putting on the shapes, and resemblances of the dead, and (for the most part) tricks of the devil, to delude or disquiet men.*

In this I think the learned * Dr. Brown delivered his judgment more solidly and orthodoxly, than in some other points; where he saith, “ I believe that the whole frame of a beast doth perish and “ is left in the same state after death, as before it was materialled “ into life; that the souls of men know neither contrary nor corruption; that they subsist beyond the body, and continue, by “ the privilege of their proper nature, and without a miracle; that “ the souls of the faithful, as they leave earth, take possession of “ heaven; that those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons, “ are not the wandering souls of *men*, but the unquiet walks of “ *devils*, promoting and suggesting us into *mischief*, *blood*, and “ *villany*.” And with this opinion I concur, as to the ordinary and common apparitions of the dead. And my reasons are,

(1.) Because the scriptures every where describe the state of departed souls as a fixed state, either in heaven or in hell; and assign the good or evil done in this world by spirits, not to the departed spirits of men, but to angels or devils: And it is our duty to regulate our conceits by scripture, and not according to the vain philosophy of the heathens, or the superstitious traditions and opinions of men.

As for the souls of the godly, they are at rest with Christ, Rev. xiv. 13. Isa. lvii. 2. and fixed as pillars in the house of God, Rev. iii. 12.

As for the wicked, their spirits are confined, and secured in hell, as in a prison, 1 Pet. iii. 19. there is a fixed gulph betwixt them and the living, Luke xvi. 27, to 32.

What good offices are to be done by spirits for us, the angels are God's commission-officers to do them, Heb. i. 14. “ They are all “ ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be

“heirs of salvation:” These are the spirits sent forth to walk to and fro through the earth, Zech. i. 10. Their ministry was *emblematically* represented in Jacob’s vision, where they were seen ascending and descending as upon a ladder, betwixt heaven and earth, Gen. xxviii. 12. Yea, their very name *angel*, is a name of office, signifying a messenger, or one sent.

And for the mischief done by spirits in this world, the scriptures ascribe that to the devils; those unquiet spirits have their walks in this world, they compass the whole earth, and walk up and down in it, Job i. 7. and 1 Pet. v. 8. they can assume any shape; yea, I doubt not but he can act their bodies when dead, as well as he did their souls and bodies when alive: How great his power is this way, appears in what is so often done by him in the bodies of *witches*. They are not ordinarily, therefore, the spirits of men, but other spirits that appear to us.

(2.) If God should ordinarily permit the spirits of men inhabiting the other world, a liberty so frequently to visit this, what a gap would it open for Satan to beguile and deceive the living! What might he not by this means impose upon weak and credulous mortals? * There hath been a great deal of superstition and idolatry already introduced under this pretence: he hath often personated saints departed, and pretended himself to be the ghost of some venerable person, whose love to the souls of the people, and care for their salvation, drew him from heaven to reveal some special secret to them. Swarms of errors and superstitious and idolatrous opinions and practices, are this way conveyed by the tricks and artifices of Satan, among the Papists, which I will not blot my paper withal; only I desire it may be considered, that if this were a thing so frequently permitted by God, as is pretended, upon what dangerous terms had he left his church in this world, seeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another, or a true messenger from heaven, from a counterfeit and pretended one.

But God hath tied us to the sure and standing rule of his word; forbidding us to give heed to any other voice or spirit leading us another way, Isa. viii. 19. 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. Gal. i. 8. It was therefore a discreet reply which one of the antients made when in a prayer, a vision of Christ appeared to him, and told him, thy prayers are heard, for thou art worthy: the good man immediately clapt his hands upon his eyes, and said, *Nolo hic videre Christum*, &c. i. e. *I will not see Christ here, it is enough for me that I shall behold him in heaven.*

* For what hath more propagated idolatry among Heathens and Christians? Hence did flow many peregrinations, monasteries, temples, festival days, and such like. *Dav. on Job.*

To conclude.—My opinion upon the whole is this, that although it cannot be denied, but in some grand, extraordinary cases, as at the transfiguration and resurrection of Christ, God did, and perhaps sometimes, though rarely, may order or permit departed souls to return into this world; yet, for the most part, I judge those apparitions are not the souls of the dead, but other spirits, and, for the most part, evil ones.

Of this judgment was * St. Augustine, who when he had at full related the story above of the father's ghost directing his son to the acquittance; yet will not allow it to be the very soul of his father, but an angel: where he farther adds, If (saith he) the souls of the dead may be present in our affairs, they would not forsake us in this sort; especially my mother Monica, who, in her life, could never be without me, surely she would not thus leave me being dead.

Obj. 1. *But it was pleaded before, that we allow the apparition of angels; and departed souls, if they be not angels, at least are equal unto angels, and in respect of their late relation to us, are more propense to help us, than spirits of another sort can be supposed to be.*

Sol. It seems too bold and imposing upon sovereign Wisdom to tell him what messengers are fittest for him to send and employ in his service; who hath taught him, or been his counsellor?

Obj. 2. *But these offices seem to pertain properly to them, as they are not only fellow-members, but the most excellent members of the mystical body, to whom it belongs to assist the meaner and weaker.*

Sol. If there be any force of reason in this plea, it carries rather for the angels than for departed souls: for angels are gathered under the same common head with saints; the text tells us, *we are come to an innumerable company of angels*: they and the saints are fellow-citizens, and we know they are a more noble order of spirits; and as for their love to the elect, it is exceeding great, as great to be sure as the departed souls of our dearest relatives can be. For after death they sustain no more civil relation to us: all that they do sustain is as fellow-members of the same body, or fellow-citizens, which the angels also are as well as they.

Obj. 3. *But, saith the doctor, the reason why all nations pay so great honour and religious care to the will of the dead, is a supposition that they still continue in the same mind after death, and will avenge the falsifications of trusts upon injurious executors, else no reason can be given why so great a stress should be laid upon the will of the dead.*

Sol. This is *gratis dictum*, to say no worse, a cheap and unwary expression: Can no reason be given for the religious observance of the testaments of the dead, but this supposition? I deny it: for though they that made them be dead, yet God, who is witness to

all such acts and trusts, liveth: and though they cannot avenge frauds, and injustice of men, he both can and will do it, 1 Thess. iv. 6. which, I think, is a weightier ground and reason to enforce duty upon men than the fear of ghosts. Besides, this is a case wherein all the living are concerned, all that die must commit a trust to them that survive; and if frauds should be committed with impunity, who could safely repose confidence in another; *Quod tanget omnes, tangi debet ab omnibus*: that which is of general concernment, and becomes every man's interest, infers a general obligation upon all.

As for the letters of Elijah, it is a vanity to think they came post from heaven; no, no, they were doubtless left behind him, out of due care to the government, and produced on that fit occasion.

Obj. 4. *But what need of a law to prohibit necromancy or consultation with the dead, if it were not practicable?*

Sol. I do not think the wicked art there prohibited enabled them to recal departed souls; but it was a conversing with the devil who personated the dead, and therein a kind of homage was paid him to the dishonour of God; or he might possibly raise the bodies of wicked men, and appear in them: but I think the spirits of the dead return not, except as was before limited.

Obj. 5. *But the matters they discover are found to be true, and the causes in which they concern themselves are just; real murders are detected by them, and real frauds and injuries corrected and rectified: but the devil being himself a liar, and deceiver, would never do it; it is not his interest to discover or discourage such things.*

Sol. Though it be not his interest merely to discover it, yet it is certainly his interest to precipitate wicked men, and hasten their ruin by the hand of Justice; and he will speak the truth, and seem to own a righteous cause, to bring about his great design of ruining the souls and bodies of men. I will shut up with three cautions.

Caution 1. Strain not conscience to enrich posterity: be true to the trusts committed to you by the dead, or by the living, remembering, that though they be dead, and cannot avenge the wrong, yet the Lord lives, and will surely do it in a severer manner than they could, should they appear in the most terrible and frightful forms to you: Besides, your own consciences will haunt you worse than a ghost. Be just and true therefore in all your promises and trusts, for God is the avenger.

Caution 2. Finish your work for eternity before you die; for as "the cloud is consumed, and vanished away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more; he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more," Job vii. 9, 10. Your souls will be fixed in eternity

soon after they are loosed from your bodies: when death comes, away you must go, willing or unwilling, ready or unready; but no returning hither, how willing soever.

Caution 3. Keep yourselves from that heathenish and accursed practice of consulting the devil about your absent or dead relations; a practice too common in sea-port towns, and of deep and heinous guilt before God: Isa. viii. 19. "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"

You need not call the devil twice; that subtle and officious spirit draws the living into his net by such a bait as this: You meet your mortal enemy under the disguise of your dead friend.

Query 5. *Whether the separated souls of the just in heaven have any converse or communication with each other? and how that can be, seeing all the organs and instruments of speech and hearing are laid aside with their bodies;*

It seems impossible that separated or unbodied spirits should converse together, seeing the instruments by which the thoughts are communicated from one to another, are perished in the grave. Suppose the tongue of a man to be cut out, his eyes and hands perished or made useless, whilst the soul remains in the body; it may enjoy its own thoughts within itself, but it is impossible to signify them to another by words or signs.

Or suppose a man in a deep sleep (wherein the senses are only bound for a little time) he may indeed exercise his own fancy in a pleasant dream, but another cannot understand how it is entertained; but in death the senses are not bound, but extinguished.

Beside, we must not think the felicity of the departed holy souls to consist in mutual converses one with another, but in the ineffable visions of God, and communion with him. To him who is omniscient, and understands their most inward thoughts, they can freely communicate them, and receive his, as well as pour forth their own love; but to do it to their fellow-creatures, who see not as God doth, seems impossible.

Indeed it was never doubted, but after the resurrection they shall both know and talk with one another in a more excellent and perfect manner than now they do; but till that time, the reasons above seem to persuade us, that all the converses above, are only betwixt God and them, which indeed is enough to make them happy; and indeed, if this ability be allowed to separated souls, it seems to render the resurrection of their bodies needless; for they are well enough without them. But certainly the spirits of just men are not mutes; such an angust assembly of holy and excellent spirits, do not live together in their Father's house with-

out mutual converse and fellowship with each other, as well as with God.

That acute and judicious divine, Mr. Joseph Symonds, in his epistle to his book, intituled, *Sight and Faith*, expresseth himself about this matter thus: ‘ I often think (saith he) of the communion of the spirits of men, which is certainly more than many are acquainted with; though we act one upon another in our present state, by the help of sense; yet we are wrought and designed to a more excellent way. Angels, and the spirits of men made perfect, converse and trade in a mutual communication, not without sense, but without such sense as ours. This, as eternal life, begins here, and is found in some degrees in this mortal state, though not in so visible appearances as to lie open to much observation.

‘ Angels, good and bad, do act upon our spirits, and our spirits hold converse with them, and with the Father of spirits, which may be discerned in secret parlies and discourses betwixt them and us; much of this appears in David’s psalms; and there passeth not only an inward speech, but there are invisible approaches, entertainments, and touches, which Paul found when bound in the Spirit, and under the working of God, which wrought in him mightily, Col. i. 29. It is also most certain, that our souls are not mute, and shut out from all mutual traffic with each other, except what they have by the mediation of senses.

‘ Instances are found, that (as they say of two needles touched with the loadstone) the spirit of one at a distance, hath found itself affected with the motion and state of another. And this we are all sensible of, that there is a strong desire in us to communion of spirits; and that, because the way most ready and convenient to our bodily state is by sense, we are carried with much inclination to maintain intercourse of our minds and spirits by sense; but, as being made to a better way, our souls are not satisfied with this present way, as being both painful and short. We cannot give an exact copy of our apprehensions, desires, designs, delights, and other affections, by these two great mediators of communion, the eye and the ear: but, because we are in so great a measure confined to this course, our souls, as it were, stand in these two gates, to send and receive mutual embassies from each other. Which way, as it is short in itself, so it is much shortened by distances, disaffections, impotencies, and disparities.’

I cannot imagine, that men, in a state of imperfection, should have so many ways to communicate their minds, as by speaking, writing, &c. yea, that the very birds and beasts, are, by nature, enabled to signify to each other their inclinations; and that the spi-

rits of just men (which are the best of all human spirits, and that when made perfect too, which is the best and highest state attainable by them) should have none, but live at a greater disadvantage in this respect than they did, or the very birds and beasts in this world do. The sum of my thoughts about this matter, I will lay down in the following sections.

Section 1. The state of heaven, (as was at large opened in our eleventh proposition) being an association of angels and blessed souls, for the glorifying and praising of God in his temple there, and this worship being carried on by joint consent, as appears by their joint ascriptions of glory to God, Rev. vii. 9, 10, 11, 12. they must of necessity, for the orderly carrying on of this heavenly worship understand each other's minds, and communicate their thoughts: for without this it is not imaginable how a joint or common service, in which thousands of thousands are employed, can be decorously and orderly managed, except we conceive of them as so many *machines*, or wind-instruments that are managed by an intelligent agent, though themselves be senseless and merely passive: certainly their consent is a different thing from that of the keys of a *harpsichord*, or strings of a *lute*, they are intelligent beings, who understand their own and each other's mind: and besides, without this ability, that society in heaven would be less comfortable, as to mutual refreshing fellowship, than the society of saints is here. So that it is not to be doubted, but these noble and excellent spirits can, and do communicate their thoughts to each other, and that in a most excellent way.

Sect. 2. But yet we cannot imagine these communications betwixt them to be by words, formed by such instruments and organs of speech as we now use, for they are bodiless beings; words, and articulate sounds, are fitted to the use and service of embodied spirits. It is therefore probable, that they convey and communicate their minds to one another, as the blessed angels do, not with tongues of flesh, (though we read of the *tongues of angels*, 1 Cor. xiii. 1.) but in a way somewhat analogous to this, though much more noble and excellent*. For look, as the scripture stiles the most excellent food, angels food; so the most excellent speech, or most eloquent tongues, angels tongues. The purest rhetoric that ever flowed from the lips of the most charming orator, is but babbling, to the language of angels, or of spirits made perfect.

When Paul was wrapt into the third heaven, where he was admitted to the sight and hearing of this blessed assembly, it is said

* It is certain, angels have not tongues, but something analogous thereunto, by which they communicate their thoughts to one another. *Lightfoot.*

he heard ἀγγεῖα ῥήματα, words unspeakable, spiritual language, such as his tongue neither could, or ought to utter; such as none but heavenly inhabitants can speak. And, Dan. viii. 13. "I heard, (said Daniel) one saint speaking, and another saint said unto "that certain saint that spake," &c. He heard the enquiries of the angels, desiring to know the mystery from the mouth of Christ. A language they have, but not like ours.

Sect. 3. The communications of angels, and souls in heaven, is therefore conceived to be an ability in those blessed spirits, silently and without sound, to instil and insinuate their minds and thoughts to each other, by a mere act of their wills; just as we now speak to God, or ourselves*, in our hearts, when our lips do not move, nor the least outward sign appears.

There are two ways by which the souls of men speak, one outwardly, by the instruments of speech, or sensible signs; the other inwardly, without sound, or sign. This inward, silent speech, is nothing else but an act of the will, calling forth such things into our actual thoughts and meditations, which before lay hid and quiet in the memory, or habit of knowledge. These thoughts, or actual revolvings of things in the mind, are in scripture called דבר עם לבבך a word or speech in the heart, Deut. xv. 9. Take heed to thyself, that there be not a wicked word in thy heart; we translate it, *a wicked thought*: thoughts are the words, and voice of the soul. And so, Mat. ix. 3. they spake within themselves, i. e. their souls spake, though their lips moved not. "All meditation is an "inward speech of the soul, and therefore שׁוּרָה indifferently signifies both to speak, and to meditate†." The objects which we revolve in our thoughts, are so many companions with whom we converse; and thus a man, (like Heinsius) may be in the midst of abundance of excellent company, when he is all alone. And this is silent talk to ourselves, without any sound or noise.

Object. But you will say, *Though the spirit of a man can thus talk to, or with itself; yet this can signify nothing to others*: For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him? 1 Cor. ii. 11. *It is not therefore enough to open this internal door of the will; for except we open also the external ‡ door of the lips, no man can know our minds, or be admitted into the se-*

* We are said to speak to ourselves in our hearts, when we actually think upon, or revolve any thing in our minds; but we think actually, at the command of the will, i. e. when we will. *Zanch.*

† Εἰπὼν ἐν αὐτοῖς, שׁוּרָה, *Cum puncto sinistro, locutus est ore, aut corde cogitavit, meditatus est.*

‡ There are two doors with respect to others, and unless thou open both of these, it is not possible that another man can know what passes in thy mind, or be admitted into the secrets of thy heart. On the part of the soul, the will is the one

crets of your soul ; should we never so earnestly desire that another should know our mind, except we please, to discover it by a word, or sign, he cannot know it ; and therefore an act of the will is not sufficient, without some external signification superadded. And these souls being bodiless, can give no outward signification.

Sol. There is, indeed, a necessity among men in this world, to unlock another door, beside that of the will, to communicate the secrets of their hearts to others ; “but *angels, and the spirits of men, having no bodies, consequently have but one door, to wit, that of the will, to open ; and the opening thereof, (which is done by one act or desire, in a moment) is enough to discover so much of their minds, as they would have discovered to another spirit. If they keep the door of their will shut, no angel, or spirit, can know what is in their thoughts, without a revelation from God ;” and if they but will, or desire others should know, no words can so fully manifest one man’s mind to another, as such an act of the will doth manifest theirs. And this, saith learned Zanchy, is the tongue of angels ; and the same way the spirits of men have to make known their mind in the unembodied state. It is but the turning the key of the will, and their thoughts, or desires are presently seen and known, by others, to whom they will discover them, as a man’s face is seen in a glass, when he pleaseth to turn his face to it. Would one spirit make known his mind to another, it is but to will he should know it, and it is immediately known.

Sect. 4. This internal way of speaking and communication among spirits is much more noble, perfect, and excellent, than that which is in use among us, by words and signs ; and that in two respects, viz.

1. Of clearness.

2. Of dispatch and speed.

1. Spiritual language is more clearly expressive of the mind and thoughts, than words, writings, or any other external signs can be. The greatest masters of language do often cloud their meaning, for want of words fit and full enough to express it : truth suffers by the poverty and ambiguity of words ; many controversies are but mere strifes about words, and scufflings in the dark, by

door, for unless thou incline to reveal to others these things which lie hid in thy heart, who can know them ? the other door is the body of flesh itself, and therefore, although having, as it were, opened the first and inward door, thou incline to make known unto another what is in the mind, yet he can in no way know this, unless thou also open the other door which is external. *Zanchius, on the works of God, book 3. chap. 29.*

* *Quoniam igitur angeli iis carent crassis corporibus, idcirco nihil impedit, quo minus quæ unus angelus in sua versat mente, ea alter videat, voluntas : si enim ea nolit ab altero resciri, numquam, nisi Deo revelante, rescientur.* Zanch. ubi supra.

the mistake of each other's sense and meaning; few have the ability of putting their own meanings into apt, proper, and full expression; and, if they can, yet others to whom they speak, want an answerable ability of understanding and clearness of apprehension to receive it. If we could discern the true and natural sense of things, just as it is in the mind of the speaker, or writer, how many controversies would be thereby quickly ended?

But spirits unbodied so convey their sense and mind to one another, that there can be no mistakes, no darkenings of counsel, by words without knowledge; but one receives it just as it lies in the other's mind.

2. Spiritual language is more easy, and of quicker dispatch; some men have voluble tongues, and are more ready and presential than others; their tongues are as the pen of a ready scribe: and others, no less ready with their hands, which keep pace with, yea, out-run the tongue of the speaker, as Martial notes.

Currant verba licet, manus est velocior illis:

Nondum lingua suum dextra, peregit opus.*

Yet all this is but bungling work, to the ready dispatch of spirits; one act of the will opens the window to discern the mind of another clearly; so that the converse of spirits must needs be more excellent, in both respects, than any we are accustomed to, or acquainted with in this world. I will shut up this question with one.

Corollary. Long to be associated with the spirits of just men made perfect. You that are going to join that blessed assembly, will even in this respect, gain an invaluable advantage. It is true, there is much of comfort in the present converses of embodied and imperfect saints; it is sweet to fast and pray, to sigh and groan together; it is sweeter to rejoice and praise our God together; it is sweet to talk of heaven with our faces thitherward; but alas! what is this to the converses that are among the spirits of just men made perfect! With what melting hearts have we sometimes sat, under the doctrine of the gospel! How have our ears been chained with delight to the preacher's lips, whilst he hath been discoursing of those ravishing subjects, *Christ*, and *heaven*! But alas! how dry and dull a thing is the best of this, to the language of heaven! Three things debase and spoil the communications of the saints on earth, viz. the darkness, dulness, and frothiness thereof.

1. The darkness and ignorance of our understandings. How crude, weak, and indigested are our highest and purest notions of spiritual things! we speak of them but as children, 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

* *Martial, Epigr. lib. 14. ep. 176.*

for alas ! the vail is yet upon our faces. The body of sin, and the body of flesh cast a very dark shadow upon the world to come ; but the apprehensions of separated souls are most bright and clear. This darkness begets mistakes ; mistakes beget so many quarrels and janglings, that our fellowship on earth loseth, at once, both its profit and pleasure.

2. There is much dulness and deadness accompanying the communion of saints on earth, abundance of precious time is wasted among us in unprofitable silence, and when we engage in discourses of heaven, that discourse is often little better than silence ; our words freeze betwixt our lips, and we speak not with that concernedness and warmth of spirit, which suits with such subjects.

It is not so among our brethren above ; their affections are at the highest pitch, giving *glory to God in the highest*.

3. To conclude ; In the discourses of the best of men on earth, there is too much froth and vanity ; many words, like water, run away at the waste spout, but there God is the centre, in which all terminates. O therefore let us long to be among the unbodied people ! this world will never suit us with companions in all things agreeable to the desires of our hearts. The best company are got together in the upper-room ; an hour there is better than an age below. Whatever fellowship saints leave on earth, they shall be sure to find better in heaven.

Query 6. *Whether the separated souls of the just in heaven, do incline to a re-union with their own bodies ? And how that re-union is at last effected ?*

That these blessed souls have no such inclination or desire, these reasons seem to persuade.

1. That their bodies, whilst they lived in them, were no better, than so many prisons ; many were the prejudices, damages, and miseries they have sustained and suffered in them. It kept them at an uncomfortable distance from the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6. their bemoaning cries spake their uneasy state : how often hath every gracious soul thus lamented itself, "Wo is me that I dwell in Me-
"sheek." It inclosed their souls within its mud walls, which intercepted the light and joy of God's face. Death therefore did a most friendly office, when it set it at liberty, and brought it forth into its own pure and pleasant light and liberty *. These blessed spirits now rejoice as prisoners do in their recovered liberty ; and can it

* The body obstructs and obscures the mind in its conceptions, and pollutes it by its union with the flesh ; hence the light of the mind is more defective, as it passes, in a manner, through a glass of flesh : doubtless, when, by the power of death, the soul is as it were, squeezed out of the body, to which it was so closely united, and in this manner purified, than it breaks from its confinement in the body, to a pure and unmixed light suitable to its nature. *Tertullian on the soul.*

be supposed, after all these sufferings, groans, and sighs to be dissolved, they can be willing to be embodied again? Surely there is as little reason for souls at liberty to desire to be again embodied, as there is for a bird got out of the snare or cage, to fly back again to its place of confinement and restraint. Yea, when we consider how loath some holy souls, when under the excruciating pains of sickness, and as yet in the sight of this alluring world, have been to hear of a return to it by the recovery of their health; we cannot think, but being quite out of the sight of this, and in the fruition of the other world, the thoughts of the body must needs be more loathsome to them than ever.

We read, that when a good man in the time of his sickness was told by his friends, that some hopeful signs of his recovery began now to appear, he answered, And must I then return to this body? I was as a sheep driven out of the storm almost to the fold, and then driven back into the storm again: or as a weary traveller near his home, who must go back again to fetch something he had neglected: or as an apprentice whose time was almost out, and then must begin a new term. Of some others it hath been also noted, that the greatest infirmities they discovered upon their death-bed, have been their two passionate desires to be dissolved, and their unsubmitiveness to God's will in their longer stay in the body. Now, the bodies of the saints being so cheerfully forsaken, and that only upon a fore-taste of heaven by faith; how can it be thought they should find any inclination to a re-union, when they are so abundantly satisfied with the joys of his face in heaven? Certainly the body hath been no such pleasant habitation to the soul, that it should cast an eye or thought that way when it is once delivered out of it: if it were burdensome here, a thought of it would be loathsome there.

2. We have shewed before, that the separate soul wants not the helps of the body, but lives and acts at a more free and comfortable rate than ever before. It is true, it is not now delighted with meat and drink, with smells and sounds, as it was wont to be; but then it must be considered, that it is happiness and perfection not to need them. It is now become equal to the angels in the way and manner of its living; and what it enjoyed by the ministry of the body, it eminently and more perfectly enjoys without it. What perfections can the soul receive from matter *? What can a lump of flesh add to a spirit: And if it can add nothing to it, there is no reason why it should hanker after it, and incline to a re-union

* The rational soul receives no perfection from matter, which it could not receive without it; therefore, when it shall be separated from it, it is not said to have a propensity to it. *Conimb.*

with it. It added nothing of happiness to it, but much trouble, and therefore becomes justly undesirable to it.

3. The supposition of such a propension and inclination, seems no way to suit with that state of perfect rest which the souls of the just enjoy in heaven. The scripture tells us, that at death they enter into rest, Isa. lvii. 2. Heb. iv. 9. That they rest from their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. But that which inclines and desires (especially when the desired enjoyment, as in this case, is suspended so long) must be as far from rest, as it is from satisfaction in the enjoyment of the thing desired. We know what Solomon hath observed of such a life, (and his observation is experimentally true,) that "hope deferred makes the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12. Who finds not his own desires a very rack to him in such cases! If we be kept but a few days in earnest expectation and desire of an absent friend, and he comes not, what an uneasy life do we live! But here we must suppose some have such an unsatisfied life for hundreds, and others for thousands of years already; and how much longer they may remain so, who can tell? We use to say, Lovers hours are full of eternity. These reasons seem to carry it for the negative.

But if the matter be weighed once more, with the following reasons in the counter-scale, and prejudice do not pull down the balance; we shall find the contrary conclusion much more strong and rational. For,

Arg. 1. The soul and body are the two constitutive parts of man; either of these being wanting, the man is not complete and perfect. The good of the whole is the good of the parts themselves; and every thing hath a natural desire and appetite to its own good and perfection*. It is confessed, the soul, for as much as concerns itself singly, is made perfect, and enjoys blessedness in the absence of the body; but this is only the perfection and blessedness of one part of man; the other part, *viz.* the body, lies in obscurity and corruption: and till both be blessed, and blessed together, in a state of composition and re-union, the whole man is not made perfect. For this therefore the soul must wait.

Arg. 2. Though death hath dissolved the union, yet it hath not destroyed the relation betwixt the soul and the body; that dust is more to it than all the dust of the whole earth. Hence it is that

* A separate soul has a propensity to union with the body, for it desires the actual constitution of the whole compound being, seeing it is for this, as its end, that it exists, and is found within the compass of real beings. And this is that perfection which the soul obtains by that propensity: for the good of the whole compound being is the good of the parts themselves. It must therefore be affirmed, that the separate soul naturally desires the resurrection. *Alsted. natur. theol. part 1. p. 214, 215.*

the whole person of a believer is sometimes denominated from that part of him, namely, his body, which remains captivated by death in the grave. Hence, 2 Thess. iv. 15. dead believers are called *those that sleep*, which must needs properly respect the body, for the soul sleeps not, and shews what a firm and dear relation still remains betwixt these absent friends. Now we all know the mighty power of a relation, if it be at least among entities. Surely it is one of the greatest things in the world in efficacy.

It is difficult to bear the absence of our dear relatives, especially if we be in prosperity, and they in adversity: As the case here is betwixt the spirit in heaven, and its body in the grave; this associated with angels, that preyed upon by worms. Joseph's case is the liveliest emblem that occurs to my present thoughts to illustrate the point in hand. He was advanced to be lord over all Egypt, living in the greatest pomp and splendor there; but his father, and brethren, were, at the same time, ready to perish, in the land of Canaan, Gen. xliii. 29, 30, 31. He had been many years separated from them, but neither the length of time, nor honours of the court, could alienate his affections from them. O see the mighty power of relation! no sooner doth he see his brethren, and understand their case, and the pining condition of Jacob, his father, but his bowels yearned, and his compassions rolled together for them; yea, he could not forbear, nor stifle his own affections, though he knew how injurious his brethren had been to him, and betrayed him, as the body hath the soul: Yet notwithstanding all this, he breaks forth into tears, and outcries, over them, which made the house ring again with the news that Joseph's brethren were come. Nor could he be at rest in the lap of honour, and plenty, until he had got home his dear, and ancient relations to him. Thus stands the case betwixt soul and body.

Arg. 3. The regret, reluctancy, and sorrows expressed by the soul at parting, do strongly argue its inclination to a re-union with it, when it is actually separated from it: For why should we surmise, that the soul, which mourned, and groaned so deeply at parting, which clasped, and embraced it so dearly, and affectionately, which fought, struggled, and disputed the passage with death, every foot, and inch of ground it got, and would not part with the body, till by plain force it was rent out of its arms; should not, when absent, desire to see, and enjoy its old and endeared friend again? Hath it lost its affection, though it continue its relation? That is very improbable: Or doth its advancement in heaven make it regardless of its body, which lies in contempt and misery? That is an effect which Christ's personal glory never produced in him towards us, nor a good man's preferment would

produce in him to his poor and miserable friends in this world, as we see in the case of Joseph, just now instanced in. It is therefore harsh, and incongruous, to suppose the soul's love to the body was extinguished in the parting hour, and that now, out of sight out of mind.

Object. But was it not urged before, in opposition to this assertion, that the souls of the righteous looked upon their bodies as their prisons, and sighed for deliverance by death, and greatly rejoiced in the hope, and foresight of that liberty death would restore them to? How doth this consist with such reluctancies at parting, and inclinations to re-union?

Sol. The objection doth not suppose any man to be totally free from all reluctancies, and unwillingness to die; the holiest souls that ever lived in bodies of flesh, will give an unwilling shrug, when it comes to the parting point, 2 Cor. v. 2. but this their willingness to be gone, arises from two other grounds, which make it consistent enough with its reluctancies at parting, and inclination to a second meeting.

(1.) This willingness to die, doth not suppose the soul's love to the body to be utterly extinguished, but mastered, and overpowered by another, and stronger love. There is in every Christian a double love, one natural to the body, and the things below, the other supernatural, to Christ, and the things above; the latter doth not extinguish, though it conquer and subdue the other. Love to the body pulls backward, love to Christ pushes forward, and finally prevails. This is so consistent with it, that it supposes natural reluctance, and unwillingness to part.

(2.) The willingness of God's people to be dissolved, must not be understood absolutely, but comparatively; in that sense the apostle will be understood, 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord," i. e. rather than to live always a life of sin, sorrow, and absence from God: death is not desirable in, and for itself, but only as it is the soul's outlet from sin, and its inlet to God.

So that the very best desire is but comparative, and it is but few who find the love of this animal life sub-acted and over-powered by high-raised acts of faith and love. The generality, even of good souls, feel strong renitencies, and suffer sharp conflicts at their dissolution; all which discovers with what lothness and unwillingness the soul unclasps its arms to let go its body. Now, as divines argue the frame of Christ's heart in heaven towards his people on earth, from all those endearing passages and demonstrations of love he gave them at parting; so we here argue the continued love and inclination of the soul to its body after it is in heaven, from the

manifold demonstrations it gave of its affection to it in this world, especially in the parting hour. No considerations in all the world, less than the more full fruition of God, and freedom from sin, could possibly have prevailed with it to quit the body, though but for a time, and leave it in the dust. Which is our third argument.

Arg. 4. And as the dolorous parting hour evidenceth it, so doth the joy with which it receives it again at the resurrection. If it part from it so heavily, and meet it again with joy unspeakable; sure, then, it still retaineth much love for it, and desires to be re-espoused to it in the interval. Now, that its meeting in the resurrection is a day of joy to the soul, is evident, because it is called *the time of refreshment*, Acts iii. 19. and they *awake with singing out of the dust*, Isa. xxvi. 19. If the direct and immediate scope of the prophet points not (as some think it doth) at the resurrection, yet it is allowed by all to be a very lively allusion to it, which is sufficient for my purpose: And, indeed, none that understand and believe the design, and business of that day, can possibly doubt but there was reason enough to call it a time of refreshment, a singing morning; for the souls of the righteous come from heaven with Christ, and the whole host of shouting angels, not to be spectators only, but the subjects of that day's triumph: They come to re-assume, and be re-espoused to their own bodies, this being the appointed time for God to vindicate and rescue them from the tyrannical power of the grave, to endow them with spiritual qualities, at the second marriage to their souls, that in both parts they may be completely happy. O the joyful claspings, and dear embraces, betwixt them! who but themselves, can understand! And, by the way, this removes the objection before-mentioned, of the miseries and prejudices the soul suffered in this world, in, and from the body; for now it receives it a spiritual body, (i. e.) so subdued to, and fitted for the use of the spirit, as never to impede, clog, or obstruct its motions and inclinations any more, 1 Cor. xv. 44. In this hope it parted from it, and with this consolation it now receives it again.

Arg. 5. There are many scriptures which very much favour, if they do not positively conclude for the soul's inclination to, and desire to be re-united with its own body, even whilst it is in the state of its single glorification in heaven: Certainly our souls leave not their bodies at death, as the *ostrich* doth her egg in the sand, without any further regard to it, or concernment for it; but they are represented as crying to God to remember, avenge, and vindicate them, Rev. vi. 10, 11. "How long, Lord, how long wilt thou not avenge our blood?" *Our blood*, speaks both the continued relation, and the suitable affection they have to their absent bodies.

And to the same sense * a judicious and learned pen expounds that place, Job xiv. 14. (which is commonly, but I know not how fitly accommodated to another purpose) "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." Which words, by a diligent comparing of the context, appears to have this for their proper scope and sense.

'Job in the former verse had expressed his confidence by way of petition, that at a set and appointed time God would remember him so as to recal him out of the grave; and now, minded to speak out more fully, puts the question to himself, If a man die, shall he live again?' and thus answers it, 'All the days of my appointed time, (that is, of the appointed time which he mentioned before, when God should revive him out of the dust) 'will I wait till my change come;' that is, that glorious change, when the corruption of a loathsome grave should be exchanged for immortal glory: Which he amplifies, and utters more expressly, ver. 15. 'Thou shalt call, and I will answer; thou shalt have a desire to the work of thy hands:' Thou wilt not always forget to restore and perfect thine own creature. And surely this waiting is not the act of his inanimate sleeping dust, but of that part which should be capable of such an action: q. d. I, in that part which shall be still alive, shall patiently wait the appointed time of reviving me in that part also, which death and the grave shall insult over in a temporary triumph in the mean time.'

Upon these grounds I think the inclination of the separated spirits of the just to their own bodies to be a justifiable opinion. As for the damned, we have no reason to think such a re-union to be desirable to them; for alas, it will be but the increase and aggravation of their torments; which consideration is sufficient to overpower and stifle the inclination of nature, and make the very thoughts of it horrid and dreadful. To what end (as the prophet speaks in another case) is it for them to desire that day? It will be a day of darkness and gloominess to them; re-union being designed to complete the happiness of the one, and the misery of the other.

But before I take off my hand, and dismiss this question, I must remember that I am a debtor to two objections.

Object. 1. *The soul can both live and act separate from the body, it needs it not; and if it do not want, why should it desire it?*

Sol. The life and actings of the glorified are considerable two ways, (1.) Singly and abstractedly for the life and action of one part: And so we confess the soul lives happily, and acts forth its own powers freely in the state of separation. (2.) Personally, or

* Mr. Howe's blessedness of the righteous, p. 170, 171.

consecrately, as it is the life and action of the whole man, and so it doth both need and desire the conjunction or re-union of the body; for the body is not only a part or Christ's purchase, as well as the soul, and to have its own glory, as well as it, but it is also a constitutive part of a complete glorified person; and so considered, the saints are not perfectly happy till this re-union be effected, which is the true ground and reason of this its desire.

Object. 2. But this hypothesis seems to thwart the account given in scripture of the rest, and placid state of separate souls: for look, as bodies which gravitate and propend do not rest, so neither do souls which incline and desire.

Sol. There is a vast difference betwixt the tendencies, and propensions of souls in the way to glory, and in glory: We that are absent from the Lord, can find no rest in the way; but those that are with the Lord can rest in Jesus, and yet wait without anxiety, of self-torturing impatience for the accomplishment of the promises to their absent bodies, Rev. vi. 10, 11.

Corollary. Let this provoke all to get sanctified souls, to rule and use these their bodies now for God. This will abundantly sweeten their parting at death, and their meeting again at the resurrection of the just; else their parting will be doleful, and their next meeting dreadful. And so much for the doctrine of separation.

The Uses of the Point.

Our way is now open to the improvement and use of this excellent subject and doctrine of separation; and certainly it affords as rich an entertainment for our affections, as for our minds, in the following uses; of which the first will be for our information in six practical *inferences*.

Inf. 1. If this be the life and state of gracious souls after their separation from the body, *Then holy persons ought not to entertain dismal and terrifying thoughts of their own dissolution.*

The apprehensions and thoughts of death should have a peculiar pleasantness in the minds of believers. You have heard into what a blessed presence and communion death introduceth your souls; how it leads you out of a body of sin, a world of sorrows, the society of imperfect saints, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to that lovely mount Sion, to the heavenly sanctuary, to the blessed visions of the face of God. Oh! methinks there hath been enough said, to make all the souls, in whom the well-grounded hopes of the life of glory are found, to cry out with the apostle, "We are confident, I say, yea, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8.

When good Musculus drew near his end, how sweet and pleasant was this meditation to his soul! Here his swan-like song;

* *Nil superest, vitæ frigus præcordia captat ;
 Sed, tu Christe, mihi vita perennis ades :
 Quid trepidas anima, ad sedes abitura quietis ?
 En tibi ductor adest angelus ille tuus.
 Linque domum hanc miseram, nunc in sua fata ruentem
 Quam tibi fida Dei dextera restituet.
 Peccasti ? Scio, sed Christus credentibus in se
 Peccata expurgat sanguine cuncta suo.
 Horribilis mors est ? Falcor, sed proxima vita est,
 Ad quam te Christi gratia certa vocat.
 Praesto est de Satana, peccato et morte triumphans
 Christus ; ad hunc igitur laeta alacrisque migra.*

Which may be thus translated.

Cold death my heart invade, my life doth fly :
 O, Christ, my everlasting life draw nigh.
 Why quiverest thou, my soul, within my breast ?
 Thine angel's come, to lead thee to thy rest.
 Quit cheerfully this drooping house of clay ;
 God will restore it in the appointed day.
 Hast sinn'd ? I know it, let not that be urg'd ;
 For Christ, thy sins, with his own blood hath purg'd.
 Is death affrighting ? True, but yet withal,
 Consider, Christ through death to life doth call.
 He triumphs over Satan, sin, and death ;
 Therefore with joy resign thy dying breath.

Much in the same cheerful frame was the heart of dying Bulfinger*, when his mournful friends expressed their sense of the loss they should sustain by his removal. “ Why, said he, if God will “ make any farther use of my labours in the ministry, he will re- “ new my strength, and I will gladly serve him : But if he please “ (as I desire he would) to call me hence, I am ready to obey his “ will ; and nothing more pleasant can befall me, than to leave this “ sinful and miserable world to go to my Saviour Christ.” O that all, who are out of the danger of death, were thus got out of the dread of death too.

Let them only tremble and be convulsed at the thoughts and sight of death, whose souls must fall into the hands of a sin-revenging God by the stroke of death ; who are to breathe out their last hope with their last breath. Death is *yours*, saith the apostle,

* Melchior Adams, in *vita Masculi*, p. 535.

† *Si Deo visum fuerit, mea opera ulterius in ecclesiæ ministerio uti ; ipso vires sufficere, et libens illi parebo ; sin me voluerit (quod opto) ex hac vita evocare, paratus sum illius voluntati obsequi ; ac nihil est quod mihi jucundius possit contingere, quam ex hoc misero et corruptissimo seculo ad Christum servatorem meum migrandum sit.* Idem. p. 505.

1 Cor. iii. 22. your friend, your privilege, your passage to heaven ; it is your ignorance of it, which breeds your fears about it.

Inf. 2. Gather from hence, the absolute, indispensable necessity of your union with Christ, before your dissolution by death.

Woe to that soul which shall be separated from its body before it be united with Christ. None but the spirits of just men are made perfect at death. Righteous souls are the only qualified subjects of blessedness.

It is true, every soul hath a natural capacity of happiness, but gracious souls only have an actual meetness for glory. The scriptures tell us in the plainest words, that " without holiness no man " shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14. that " except we be regenerate, " and born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. You make the greatest adventure that ever was made by man ; indeed, an adventure infinitely too great for any man to make, when you shoot the gulph of vast eternity upon terms of hazard and uncertainty.

What thinkest thou, reader? Darest thou adventure thy soul and eternal happiness upon it, that the work of regeneration and sanctification, that very same work of grace, on which the Spirit of God has placed all thy hopes of heaven in these scriptures, is truly wrought by him in thy soul ? Consider it well, pause upon it again and again before thou go forth. Should a mistake be committed here, (and nothing is more easy or common, all the world over, than such mistakes) thou art irrecoverably gone. This venture can be made but once, and the miscarriage is never to be retrieved afterwards ; thou hast not another soul to adventure, nor a second adventure to make of this. Well might the apostle Peter call for all diligence to make our calling and our election sure : That can never be made too sure, which is so invaluable in its worth, and to be but once adventured.

Inf. 3. How prejudicial is it to dying men to be then incumbered, diverted, and distracted about earthly concerns, when the time of their departure is at hand.

The business and employment of dying persons is of so vast importance and weight, that every moment of their time needs to be carefully saved and applied to this their present and most important concern. How well soever you have improved the time of life, believe it, you will find work enough upon your hand at death : dying hours will be found to be busy and laborious hours, even to the most painful, serious, and industrious souls, whose life hath been mostly spent in preparations for death. Leave not the proper business of other days to that day ; for that day will have business enough of its own. Sufficient for that day are the labours thereof.

Let a few considerations be pondered, to clear and confirm this inference.

Consid. 1. The business and employment of dying persons, is of the most serious, awful, and solemn nature and importance; it is their last preparatory work on earth, to their immediate appearance before God their judge, Heb. ix. 27. it is their shooting the gulph into eternity, and leaving this world, and all their acquaintance and interests therein for ever, Isa. xxviii. 11. It is therefore a work by itself to die, a work requiring the most intense, deep, and undisturbed exercises of all the abilities and graces of the inner man; and all little enough.

Consid. 2. Time is exceeding precious with dying men; the last sand is ready to fall, and therefore not to be wasted, as it was wont to be. When we had a fair prospect of many years before us, we made little account of an hour or a day; but now one of those hours, which we so carelessly lavished away, is of more value than all this world to us, especially if the whole weight of eternity should hang upon it, (as oftentimes it doth) then the loss of that portion of time, is the loss of soul, body, and hope for evermore.

Consid. 3. Much of that little precious time of departing souls will be unavoidably taken up, and employed about the inexcusable, pressing calls and necessities of distressed nature; all that you can do for your souls must then be done only by fits and snatches, in the midst of many disturbances, and frequent interruptions: So that it is rarely found, that a dying man can pursue a serious meditation with calm and fixed thoughts: for besides the pains and faintings of the body, the abilities of the mind usually fail. Here also they fall into a sad *dilemma*; if they do not with the utmost intention of mind fix their hearts and thoughts on Christ, they lose their comfort, if godly, and their souls, if ungodly; and if they do, *friends* and *physicians* assure them they will destroy their bodies. These are the straits of men bordering close upon eternity; they must hastily catch a few moments in the intervals of pain, and then are put by all again.

Consid. 4. There is no man living but hath something to do for his own soul in a dying hour, and something for others also.

Suppose the best that can be supposed, that the soul be in real union with Christ, and that union be also clear: yet it is seldom found but there are some assaults of Satan: Or if not, yet how many relations and friends need our experiences and counsels at such a time? How many things shall we have to do after our great and main work is done? And others have a great deal more to do, though as safe as the former. O the knots and objections that are then to be dissolved and answered! The usual onsets and assaults

of Satan that are then to be resisted ! And yet most dying persons have much more upon their hands than either of the former. The whole work of repentance and faith is to do, when time is even done.

Consid. 5. Few, yea, very few, are found furnished with wisdom, experience, and faithfulness, to give dying persons any considerable assistance in soul-affairs. It may be there may be found among the visitants of the sick, now and then, a person who hath a word of wisdom in his heart ; but then either he wants opportunity or courage and faithfulness to do the part of a true spiritual friend. Elihu describes the person so qualified as he ought for this work, Job xxx. 23, 24. and calls him, *One among a thousand*, Some are too close and reserved, others too trifling and impertinent ; some are willing, but want ability ; others are able, but want faithfulness ; some cut too deep by uncharitable censoriousness ; others skin over the wound too slightly, speaking peace where God and conscience speak none : So that little help is to be expected.

Consid. 6. How much therefore doth it deserve to be lamented, that where there is so much to do, so little time to do it, and so few to help in the best improvement of it, all should be lost as to their souls by earthly incumbrances and worldly affairs, which might have been done sooner and better in a more proper season ! O, therefore, let me persuade all men to take heed of bringing the proper business of healthful days to their sick-bed.

Inf. 4. *What an excellent creature is the soul of man, which is capable, not only of such preparations for God, whilst it is in the body, but of such sights and enjoyments of God, when it lives without a body.*

Here the Spirit of God works upon it, in the way of grace and sanctification, Eph. ii. 10. The scope and design of this his workmanship, is to qualify and make us meet for the life of heaven, 2 Cor. vi. 5. For this self-same thing, or purpose, our souls are wrought, or moulded by grace, into quite another frame and temper, than that which nature gave them ; and when he hath wrought out and finished all that he intends to be wrought in the way of sanctification, then shall it be called up to the highest enjoyments and employments for ever, that a creature is susceptible of.

Herein the dignity of the soul appears, that no other creature in this world, beside it, hath a natural capacity, either to be sanctified inherently in this world, or glorified everlastingly in the world to come ; to be transformed into the image, and filled with the joy of the Lord. There are *myriads* of other souls in this world, beside ours, but to none of them is the Spirit of sanctification sent,

but only to ours: The souls of *animals* serve only to move the dull and sluggish matter, and take in for a few days the sensitive pleasures of the creation, and so expire, having no natural capacity of, or designation for any higher employment or enjoyment.

And it deserves a most serious animadversion, that this vast capacity of the soul for eternal blessedness, must of necessity make it capable of so much the more misery and self-torment, if at last it fail of that blessedness: For it is apparent they do not perish because they are *unable*, but because they are *unwilling*; not because their souls wanted any natural faculty that others have, but because they would not open those they have, to receive Christ in the way of faith and obedience, as others did.

Think upon this you that live only to eat, and drink, and sleep, and play, as the birds and beasts in the field do; What need was there of a reasonable soul for such sensual employments? Do not your noble faculties speak your designation for higher uses? And will not you wish to exchange souls with the most vile and despicable *animal* in this world, if it were possible to be done? Certainly it were better for you to have no capacity of eternal blessedness (as they have not) if you do not enjoy it; and no capacity of torment beyond this life) as they have not) if you must certainly endure it.

Inf. 5. If our souls and bodies must be separate shortly, how patiently should we bear all lesser separations, that may and will be made, betwixt us and any other enjoyments in this world?

No union is so intimate, strict and dear, as that betwixt our souls and bodies. All your relations and enjoyments in this world, hang looser from your souls than your bodies do: and if it be your duty, patiently and submissively, to suffer a painful parting pull from your bodies; it is doubtless your duty to suffer meekly and patiently a separation from other things, which are but a prelude to it, and a mere shadow of it. It is good to put such cases to ourselves in the midst of our pleasant enjoyments.

I have now many comfortable relatives in the world; wife, children, kindred, and friends; God hath made them pleasant to me, but he may bereave me of all these. Doth not providence ring such changes all the world over? Are not all kingdoms, cities, and towns, full of the sighs and lamentations of widows, orphans, and friends bereaved of their pleasant and useful relations? But if God will have it so, it is our duty to bound our sorrows, remembering the time *is short*, 1 Cor. vii. 29. In a few days we must be stript much nearer, even out of our own bodies by death.

God may also separate betwixt me and my health by sickness, so that the pleasure of this world shall be cut off from me; but sickness is not death, though it be a prelude and step towards it; I

may well bear this with patience, who must submissively bear sharper pains than these ere long. Yea, and well may I bear this submissively, considering that by such imbittering and weaning providences, God is preparing me for a much easier dissolution, than if I should live at ease in the body all my days till death comes to make so great and sudden a change upon me.

God may also separate betwixt me and my liberty by restraint. It hath been the lot of the best men that ever were in the world; and if it should be ours also, we should not be much startled at it, considering these bodies of ours must be shortly pent up in a straiter, darker, and more loathsome place of confinement, than any prison in this world can be. The grave is a darker, place, Job xvii. 13. and your abode there will be longer, Eccl. xi. 8.

These, and all our other outward enjoyments, are separable things, and it is good thus to alleviate our loss of them.

Inf. 6. How heavenly should the tempers and frames of those souls be who are candidates for heaven, and must be so shortly numbered with the spirits of just men made perfect.

It is reasonable that we all begin to be that which we expect to be for ever; to learn that way of living and conversing, which we believe must be our everlasting life and business in the world to come. Let them that hope to live with angels in heaven, learn to live like angels on earth, in holiness, activity, and ready obedience.

There is the greatest reason that our minds be there, where our souls are to be for ever. A spiritual mind will be found possible, congruous, sweet, and evidential of an interest in that glory, to all those holy souls, who are preparing and designed for it.

1. It is possible, notwithstanding the clogs and entanglements of the body to be heavenly-minded. Others have attained it, Phil. iii. 20. Two things make a heavenly conversation possible to men, viz.

(1.) The natural abilities of the mind.

(2.) The gracious principles of the mind.

(1.) The natural abilities of the mind, which can, in a minute's time, dispatch a nimble messenger to heaven, and mount its thoughts from this to that world in a moment. The power of cogitation is a rich endowment of the soul, such as no other creature on earth is participant of. Though spiritual thoughts be not the natural growth of the soul, yet thoughts capable of being spiritualized are. And without this ability of projecting thoughts, all intercourse must have been cut off.

(2.) The gracious principles implanted in the soul, do actually incline the mind, and mount its thoughts heaven-ward. Yea, this will prove more than a possibility of a conversation in heaven;

whilst saints tabernacle on earth, in bodies of flesh, it will almost prove an impossibility that it should be otherwise, for these spiritual principles setting the bent and tendency of the heart heavenward, we must act against the very law of our new nature, when we place our affections elsewhere.

2. A mind in heaven is most congruous, decorous, and comely for those that are the enrolled inhabitants of that heavenly city. Where should a Christian's love be, but where his Lord is! Our hearts and our homes do not use to be long asunder. It becomes you so to think, and so to speak now, as those who make account to be shortly singing *hallelujahs* before the throne.

3. It is most sweet and delightful: no pleasure in this world is comparable to this pleasure; Rom. viii. 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." It is a young heaven born in the soul in its way thither.

4. To conclude: It is evidential of your interest in it: an agreeable frame is the surest title, Col. iii. 1, 2. Mat. vi. 21. If heaven attract your minds now, it will centre them for ever.

Use 2. This doctrine of the separation of the spirits of the just from their bodies, as it lies before you in this discourse affords a singular help to all the people of God, to entertain lovely and pleasant thoughts of that day; to make death not only an unregretted, but a most pleasant and desirable thing to their souls.

I know there is a pure, simple, natural fear of death, from which you must not expect to be perfectly freed, by all the arguments in the world. And there is a reverential, awful fear of death, which it would be your prejudice and loss to have destroyed. You will have a natural, and ought to have a reverential fear of death: the one flows from your sensitive, the other from your sanctified nature.

But it is a third sort of fear which doth you all the mischief: a fear springing in gracious souls out of the weakness of the graces, and the strength of their unmortified affections: a fear arising partly out of the darkness of our minds, and partly out of the sensuality and earthliness of our hearts; this fear is that which so convulseth our souls when death is near, and imbittereth our lives, even whilst it is at a distance. He that hath been over-heated in his affections to this world, and over-cooled by diversions and temptations, neglects and intermissions, to that world, cannot chuse but give an unwilling shrug, if not a frightful screech at the appearance of death.

And this being the sad case of too many, good and upright souls for the main; and there being so few, even among serious Christians, that have attained to that courage and complacence in the thoughts of death, which the apostle speaks of, 2 Cor. v. 8. to be

both confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; I will, from this discourse, furnish them with some special assistance therein. But withal, I must tell you upon what great disadvantages I am here to dispute with your fears; so strong is the current of natural and vicious fear, that except a special hand of God enforce, and set home the arguments that shall be urged, they will be as easily swept away before it, as so many straws by a rapid torrent; nor will it be to any more purpose to oppose my breath to them, than to the tides and waves of the sea.

Moreover, I am fully convinced, by long and often experience, how unsteady and inconstant the frames and tempers of the best hearts are; and that if it be not altogether, yet it is next to an impossibility to fix them in such a temper as this I aim at is. Where is that man to be found, who after the revolutions of many years, and in those years various dispensations of providence without him, altering his condition, and greater variety of temptations within, can yet say, notwithstanding all these various aspects and positions, his heart hath still held one steady and invariable tenour and course?

Alas, there be very few (if any) of such a sound and settled temper of mind, whose pulse beats with an even stroke, through all inequalities of condition, alike free and willing at one time as another, to be unclothed of the body, and to be with Christ. This height of faith, and depth of mortification; this strength of love to Christ, and ardour of holy desire, are degrees of grace to which very few attain.

The case standing thus, it is no more than needs, to urge all sorts of arguments upon our timorous and unsteady hearts; and it is like to prove a hard and difficult task to bring the heart but to a quiet and unregretting submission to the appointment of God herein, though submission be one of the lowest steps of duty in this case.

If it be hard to fix our thoughts but an hour, on such an unpleasant subject as death, how hard must it be to bring over the consent of the will? If we cannot endure it at a distance, in our thoughts, how shall we embrace and hug it in our bosoms? if our thoughts fly back with distaste and impatience, no wonder if our will be obstinate and refractory: we must first prevail with our thoughts to fix themselves, and think close to such a subject, before it can be expected we cheerfully resign ourselves into the hands of death. We cannot be willing to go along with death, till we have some acquaintance with it; and acquainted with it we cannot be till we accustom ourselves to think assiduously and calmly of it. They that have dwelt many years at death's door, both in

respect of the condition of their bodies, and the disposition of their minds, yet find reluctancy enough when it comes to the point.

Object. But if separation from the body be (as it is) an enemy to nature, and there be no possibility to extinguish natural aversion; to what purpose is it to argue and persuade where there is no expectation of success?

Sol. Death is to be considered two ways by the people of God:

1. As an enemy to nature.

2. As a *medium* to glory.

If we consider it simply in itself as an enemy to nature, there is nothing in it for which we should desire it: but if we consider it as a *medium*, or passage into glory, yea, the only ordinary way through which all the saints must pass out of this into a better state; so it will appear not only tolerable, but desirable to prepared souls. Were there not a shore of glory on the other side of these black waters of death, for my own part, I should rather chuse to live meanly than to die easily. If both parts were to perish at death, there were no reason to persuade one to be willing to deliver up the other; it were a madness for the soul to desire to be dissolved, if it were so far from being better out of the body than in it, that it should have no being at all. But Christians, let me tell you, death is so far from being a bar, that it is a bridge in your way to glory, and you are never like to come thither, but by passing over it: except, therefore, you will look beyond it, you will never see any desirableness in it. “I desire to be dissolved (saith Paul) and to be with Christ, which is far better.” To be with death is sad, but to be with Christ is sweet; to endure the pains of death is doleful, but to see the face of Christ is joyful; to part with your pleasant habitations is irksome, but to be lodged in the heavenly mansions is most delightful; a parting hour with dear relations is cutting, but a meeting hour with Jesus Christ is transporting; to be rid of your own bodies is not pleasing, but to be rid of sin, and that for ever, what can be more pleasing to a gracious soul?

You see, then, in what sense I present death as a desirable thing to the people of God: and therefore seeing nature teacheth us (as the apostle speaks) to put the more abundant comeliness upon the uncomely parts; suffer me to dress up death in its best ornaments, and present it to you in the following arguments, as a beautiful and comely object of your conditional and well-regulated desires. And,

Arg. 1. If upon a fair and just account, there shall appear to be more gain to believers in death, than there is in life; reason must needs vote death to be better to them that are in Christ, than life can be; and consequently, it should be desirable in their eyes.

It is a clear dictate of reason, in case of choice, to chuse that

which is best for us. Who is there that freely exercises reason and choice together, that will not do so?

What merchant will not part with an hundred pound's worth of glass beads and pendants for a tun of gold? A few tinsel toys for as many rich diamonds? *Mercatura est amittere, ut luceris*; that is true merchandise, to part with things of lesser, for things of greater value.

Now, if you will be tried and determined by God's book of rates, then the case is determined quickly, and the advantage appears exceedingly upon death's side. Phil. i. 21. "To me to live, is Christ; and to die, is gain."

Object. *True, it might be so to Paul, who was eminent in grace, and ripe for glory; but it may be loss to others, who have not attained the height of his holiness or assurance.*

Sol. The true and plain sense of the objection is this, whether heaven and Christ, be as much gain to him that enjoys them, though behind others both in grace and obedience, as it is to them who are more eminent in grace, and have done and suffered more for their sake? And let it be determined by yourselves. But if your meaning be, that Paul was ready for death, and so are not you; his work and course was almost comfortably finished, and so is not yours; his death, therefore, must needs be gain to him, but it may be loss to you, even the loss of all that you are worth for ever.

To this I say, the wisdom of God orders the time of his people's death, as well as all other circumstances about it: And in this, your hearts may be at perfect rest, that being in Christ you can never die to your loss, die when you will. I know you will reply, That if your union with Christ were clear, the controversy were ended; but then you must also consider, they are as safe who die by an act of recumbency upon Christ, as those that die in the fullest assurance of their interest in him.

And beside, your reluctancies and aversations to death, are none of your way to assurance; that such a strong aversation to sin, and such a vehement desire after, and love to Christ, as can make you willing to quit all that is dear and desirable to you in this world for his sake, is the very next door or step to assurance; and if the Lord bring your hearts to this frame, and fix them there, it is not likely you will be long without it.

But to return: Paul had here valued life, with a full allowance of all the benefits and advantages of it; "To me to live, is Christ;" that is, if I live, I shall live in communion with Christ, and service for Christ, and in the midst of all those comforts which usually result from both. Here is life, with the most weighty and desirable benefits of it, laid in one scale, and he lays death, and proba-

bly, a violent death too, (for of that he speaks to them afterwards chap. ii. 17.) in the other scale. Thus he fills the scale, and the balance breaks on death's side; yea, it comes down with a πολλῶ μαλ' ὄν κρείσσον, a far, far better.

But here falls in (as an excellent person * observes) a rub in the way: there are in this case two judges, the flesh and the spirit, and they cannot agree upon the values, but contradict each other. Nature saith, It is far better to live than to die, and will not be beaten off from it. What then? I hope you will not put blind and partial nature in competition with God also, as you do life with death. But seeing nature can plead so powerfully, as well as grace, let us hear what those strong reasons are that are urged by the flesh on life's side, and what the soul hath to reply and plead on death's side, (for the soul can plead, and that charmingly too, though not by words and sounds) and then determine the matter, as we shall see cause: but be sure prejudice pull not down the balance.

And here the doleful voice of nature laments, pleads, and bemoans itself to the willing soul.

' O my soul, what dost thou mean by these desires to be dissolved? Art thou in earnest, when thou sayest thou art willing to leave thine own body, and be gone? Consider, and think again, ere thou bid me farewell, what thou art to me, and what I have been, and am to thee; thou art my soul, that is, my prop, my beauty, my honour, my life, and indeed all that is comfortable to me. If thou depart, what am I but a spectacle of pity, an abhorred case in a few moments? a prey to the worms, a captive to death? If thou depart, my candle is put out, and I am left in the horrors of darkness.

' I am thy house, thy delightful habitation, the house in which thou hast dwelt from the first moment of thy creation, and never lodgest one night in any other: every room in me hath one way or other, been a banqueting-room for thy entertainment, a room of pleasure; all my senses have been purveyors for thy delight, my members have all of them been thine instruments and servants to execute thy commands and pleasure. If thou and I part, it must be in a shower: thou shalt feel such pains, such travailing throes, such deep, emphatical groans, such sweets, such agonies as thou never felt before: for death hath somewhat of anguish peculiar to itself, and which is unknown, though guessed at by the living. Besides, whenever thou leavest me, thou leavest all that is, and hath been comfortable to thee in this world: thy house shall know thee no more, Job vii. 10. thy lands, thy money,

* Mr. How, in Mrs. Margaret Baxter's funeral sermon,

‘thy trade, which have cost thee so many careful thoughts, and
 ‘yielded thee so many refreshments, shall be thine no longer; death
 ‘will strip thee of all these, and leave thee naked.

‘Thou hast also, since thou becamest mine, contracted manifold
 ‘relations in the world, which I know are dear unto thee: I
 ‘know it by costly experience: How hast thou made me to wear
 ‘and waste myself, in labours, cares, and watchings for them?
 ‘But if thou wilt be gone, all these must be left exposed, God
 ‘knows to what wants, abuses, and miseries! for I can do nothing
 ‘for them, or myself, if once thou leave me.’ Thus it charms
 and pleads; thus it layeth, as it were, violent hands upon the
 soul, and saith, ‘O my soul, thou shalt not depart.’ It hangs
 about it much, as the wife and children of good Galeacius
 Caracciolus did about him, when he was leaving Italy, to go to
 Geneva, (a lively emblem of the case before us). It saith to the
 soul, as Joab did to David, “Thou hast shamed thy face this day,
 “in that thou lovest thine enemy, death, and hatest me thy
 “friend.” ‘O my soul! my life! my darling! my dear and
 ‘only one! let nothing but unavoidable necessity part thee and
 ‘me.’ All this the flesh can plead, and a great deal more than
 this, and that a thousand times more powerfully and feelingly, than
 any words can plead the case. And all its arguments are backed
 by sense; sight and feeling attest what nature speaks.

Let us, in the next place, weigh the pleas and reasons, which
 notwithstanding all this, do over-power, and prevail with the be-
 lieving soul to be gone, and quit its own body, and return no more
 to the elementary world.

And thus the power of faith and love enables it to reply:

‘My dear body, the companion and partner of my comforts
 ‘and troubles, in the days of my pilgrimage on earth, great is my
 ‘love, and strong are the bonds of my affections to thee. Thou
 ‘hast been tenderly, yea, excessively beloved by me; my cares
 ‘and fears for thee have been inexpressible, and nothing but the
 ‘love of Jesus Christ is strong enough to gain my consent to part
 ‘with thee; thy interest in my affection is great, but as great as
 ‘it is, and as much as I prize thee, I can shake thee off, and thrust
 ‘thee aside, to go to Christ.

‘Nor may this seem absurd, or unreasonable, considering that
 ‘God never designed thee for a mansion, but only a temporary
 ‘tabernacle to me: it is true, I have had some comfort during my
 ‘abode in thee; but I enjoyed these comforts only in thee, not from
 ‘thee; and many more I might have enjoyed, hadst thou not been
 ‘a snare and a clog to me.

‘It is thou that hast eaten up my time, and distracted my thoughts,
 ‘ensnared my affections, and drawn me under much sin and sor-

row : however, though we may weep over each other, as accessories to the sins and miseries we have drawn upon ourselves ; yet in this is our joint relief, that the blood of Christ hath cleansed us both from all sin.

‘ And therefore I can part the more easily and comfortably from thee, because I part in hope to receive and enjoy thee in a far better condition than I leave thee. It is for both our interests to part for a time ; for mine, because I shall thereby be freed and delivered from sin and sorrow, and immediately obtain rest with God, and the satisfaction of all my desires in his presence and enjoyment, which there is no other way to obtain, but by separation from thee : and why should I live a groaning, burdened, restless life always, to gratify thy fond and irrational desires ? If thou lovest me, thou wouldst rejoice, not repine at my happiness. Parents willingly part with their children at the greatest distance, for their preferment, how dearly soever they love them ; and dost thou envy, or repine at mine ? I have lived many months a suffocating, obscure life, with thee in the womb, and neither you nor I had ever tasted or experienced the comforts of this world, and the various delights of sense, if we had not struggled hard for an entrance into this world. And now we are here alas ! though thou art contented to abide ; I live in thee, but as we both lived in the womb, an obscure, uneasy, and unsuitable life ; thou canst feed upon material bread, and delight thyself amidst the variety of sensitive objects thou findest here ; but what are all these things to me ? I cannot subsist by them ; that which is food to thee, is but chaff, wind, vanity to me : if I stay with thee, I shall be still sinning, and still groaning ; when I leave thee, I shall be immediately freed from both, and arrive at the sum and perfection of all the hopes, desires, and whatsoever I have aimed at, and laboured for, in all the duties of my life. Let us therefore be content to part.

‘ Shrink not at the horror of a grave ; it is indeed a dark and solitary house, and the days of darkness may be many ; but to thee, my dear companion, it shall be a bed of rest, yea, a perfumed bed, where thy Lord Jesus lay before thee : and let the time of thy abode there be never so long, thou shalt not measure it, nor find the least tediousness in it ; a thousand years there shall seem no more in the morning of the resurrection, than the sweetest nap of an hour seemed to be when I was wont to lay thee upon the bed to rest.

‘ The worms in the grave shall be nothing to thee, nor give thee the thousandth part of that trouble that a flea was wont to do ; and though I leave thee, Jesus Christ shall watch, in the

‘ mean time over my dust, and not suffer a grain of it to be lost :
 ‘ and I will return assuredly to thee again, at the time appointed ;
 ‘ I take not an everlasting farewell of thee, but depart for a time,
 ‘ that I may receive thee for ever. To conclude, there is an una-
 ‘ voidable necessity of our parting ; whether willing or unwilling,
 ‘ we must be separated : but the consent of my will to part with
 ‘ thee, for the enjoyment of Jesus Christ will be highly accepta-
 ‘ ble to God, and greatly sweeten the bitter cup of death to us
 ‘ both.’

This, and much more the gracious soul hath to say for its separation from the body ; by which it is easy to discern where the gain and advantage of death lies to all believers, and consequently, how much must it be every way their interest to be unbodied.

Arg. 2. To be weary of the body upon the pure account and reason of our hatred to sin, and longing desires after Jesus Christ, argues strongly grace in truth, and grace in strength ; it is both the test of our sincerity, and measure of our attainment and maturity of grace, and upon both accounts highly desirable by all the people of God.

It is so great an evidence of the truth of grace, that the scriptures have made it the descriptive periphrasis of a Christian : so we find it in 2 Tim. iv. 8. the crown of life is there promised to all them that love the appearance of Christ, i. e. those that love to drink of it, that delight to steep their thoughts in subjects belonging to the other world, and cast many a yearning look that way : and 2 Pet. iii. 12. they are described to be such as are “ looking for, “ and hastening to the coming of the day of God.” Their earnest expectations and longings do not only put them upon making all the haste they can to be with Christ, but it makes the interposing time seem so tedious and slow, that with their most vehement wishes and desires, they do what they can to accelerate and hasten it. As Rev. xxii. “ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Lovers hours, saith the proverb, are full of eternity. ‘ O, said Mr. Rutherford, that Christ would make long strides ! O that he would ‘ fold up the heavens as a cloak, and shovel time and days out of the ‘ way !’ Such desires as these can spring from none but gracious and renewed souls ; for nature is wholly disaffected to a removal hence, upon such motives and considerations as these : if others wish at any time for death, it is but in a pet, a present passion, provoked by some intolerable anguish, or great distress of nature : but to look and long, and hasten to the other world, out of a weariness of sin, and a hearty willingness to be with Christ, supposes necessarily a deep-rooted hatred of sin, abhorring it more than death itself, the greatest of natural evils, and a real sight of things

invisible by the eye of faith, without which it is impossible any man's heart should be thus framed and tempered.

And as it evidenceth the truth, so also the strength and maturity of grace; for alas, how many thousands of gracious souls that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, are to be found quite below this temper of mind! O it is but here and there one among the Lord's own people, that have reached this height and eminence of faith and love. It is with the fruits of the Spirit, just as it is with the fruits of the earth; some are green and raw, others are ripe and mellow: the first stick fast on the branches, you may shake and shake again, and not one will drop; or as those fruits that grow in hedges, with their coats and integuments enwrapping them, as nuts, &c. you may try your strength upon them, and sooner break your nails, than disclose and separate them: so fast and close do their husks stick to them: but when time and the influences of heaven hath ripened and brought them to perfection, the apples drop into your hands without the least touch, and the nut falls out of its case of its own accord. So much more doth the soul part from its body, when maturated, and come to its strength and vigour.

Arg. 3. It may greatly prevail upon the will and resolution of a believer, to adventure boldly and cheerfully upon death, that our bodies, of which we are bereaved and deprived by death, shall be most certainly and advantageously restored to us by the resurrection. The resurrection of the dead is the encouragement and consolation of the dying; the more our faith is established in the doctrine of the resurrection, the more we shall surmount the fears of dissolution. If Paul urged it as an argument to reconcile Philemon to his servant Onesimus, ver. 15. "That he therefore departed for a season, that Philemon might receive him for ever;" the same argument may reconcile every believer to death, and take off the prejudice of the soul against it. You shall surely receive your bodies again, and enjoy them for ever.

Now the doctrine of the resurrection is as sure in itself as it is comfortable to us; the depth and strength of its foundation fully answers to the height and sweetness of its consolation. Be pleased to try the two pillars thereof, and see which of them may be doubted or shaken. Mat. xxii. 29. "You err (saith Christ to the Sadducees, who denied this doctrine) not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God." This is the ground and root of their error, not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God: q. d. did you know and believe the scriptures of God, and the power of God, you would never question this doctrine of the resurrection, which is built upon them both. The power of God convinceth all men that know and believe it, that it *may be so*, and the scriptures of

God convince all that know and believe them, that it *must be so*. As for his power, who can doubt it? At the command and fiat of God, the earth brought forth every living creature after his kind, Gen. i. 24, 25. at his command Lazarus came forth, John xi. 43. And was there not as much difficulty in either of these, as in our resurrection? By this power our souls were quickened, and raised from the death of sin and guilt to the spiritual life of Christ, Eph. i. 19. And is it not as easy to raise a dead body as a dead soul? But what stand I arguing in so plain a case, when we are assured this mighty power is able to subdue all things to itself, Phil. iii. 21.

And then, for his promise that it shall be so, what can be plainer? See 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16. "This we say unto you by the word of 'the Lord,' &c. i. e. in the name or authority of the Lord, and by commission and warrant from him. He first opens his commission, shews his credentials, and then publishes the comfortable doctrine of his resurrection, and the saints pre-eminence to all others therein.

Well then, what remains in death to fright and scar a believer? Is it our parting with these bodies? Why, is it not for ever that we part with them; as sure as the power and promises of God are true, firm, and sufficient to accomplish it, we shall see and enjoy them again. This comforted Job, chap. xix. 25, 26. over all his diseases, when of all his enjoyments that once he had, he could not say, my friends, my children, my estate; yet then he could say, my Redeemer. When he looked upon a poor wasted, withered, loathsome body of his own, and saw nothing but a skeleton, an image of death, yet then could he see it a glorious body, by viewing it believably in this glass of the resurrection. So then all the damage we can receive by death, is but the absence of our bodies for a time; during which time, the covenant-relation betwixt God and them, holds good and firm, Mat. xxii. 32. He therefore will take care of them, and in due time restore them with marvellous improvements and endowments, to us again, divested of all their infirmities, and clothed with heavenly qualities and perfections, 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. And in the mean time, the soul attains its rest, and happiness, and satisfaction in the blessed God.

Arg. 4. The consideration of what we part from, and what we go to, should make the medium, by which we pass from so much evil to so great good, lovely and desirable in our eyes, how unpleasant or bitter soever it be in itself.

No man desires physic for itself. There is no pleasure in bitter pills and loathsome potions, except what rises from the end, viz. the disburdening of nature, and recovery of health; and this gives it a

value with the sick and pained. Under a like consideration is death desired by sick and pained souls, who find it better to die once, than groan under burdens continually.

Death certainly is the best physician, next, and under Jesus Christ, that ever was employed about them; for it cures radically and perfectly, so that the soul never relapses more into any distemper. Other medicines are but anodynes, or at best they relieve us but in part, and for a time; but this goes through the work, and perfects the cure at once. Methinks that call of Christ which he gives his spouse in Cant. iv. 8. “(Come with me from Lebanon, “(my spouse) with me from Lebanon: and look from the top of “Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions “dens, from the mountains of the leopards)” scarce suits any time so well as the time of death. Then it is that we depart from the lions dens, and the mountains of leopards, places uncomfortable and unsafe. More particularly at death the saints depart.

1. From defiling corruptions	into	1. Perfect purity.
2. From heart-sinking sorrows		2. Fulness of joy.
3. From entangling temptations		3. Everlasting freedom.
4. From distressing persecutions		4. Full rest.
5. From pinching wants		5. Universal supplies.
6. From distracting fears		6. Highest security.
7. From deluding shadows		7. Substantial good.

1. From defiling corruptions into perfect purity. No sin hangs about the separated, though it do about the sanctified soul. They come out of the body suitable to that character and encomium, Cant. iv. 7. “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in “thee.” It doth that for the saints, which all their graces and duties, all their mercies and afflictions, could never do. Faith is a great purifier, communion with God a great cleanser, sanctified afflictions a refiner’s fire and fuller’s soap; these have all done their parts, and been useful in their places: But none of them, nor all together, perfect this cure till death come, and then the work is done, and the cure perfected.

All weeping, all praying, all believing, all hearing, all sacraments, all the means and instruments in the world, cannot do what death will do for thee. One dying hour will do what ten thousand praying hours never did, nor could do. In this hour the design of all those hours is accomplished; as he that is dead by mortification, is at present freed from sin, in respect of imputation and dominion, Rom. vi. 7. so he that is justified and mortified, when dead naturally, is immediately freed from the very indwelling and existence of sin in him. We read of the washing of the robes of the saints, in Rev. vii. 14. The blood of the Lamb cleanseth

them from every spot; but it doth it gradually. The last spot of guilt indeed was fetched out by one act of justification; but the last spot of filth is not fetched out till the time of their dissolution; when they are come out of the agonies of death (which the scripture calls great tribulation) then, and not till then, are they perfectly cleansed. Sin brought in death, and death carries out sin.

Oh! what a pure, lovely, shining creature, is the separated spirit of a just man? how clear is its judgment, how ordinate its will, how holy, and altogether heavenly are all its affections now! and never till now it feels itself perfectly well, and as it would be.

2. From heart sinking sorrows, into fulness of joy. The life we now live is a groaning life, 2 Cor. v. 2. where is the Christian, that if his inside could be seen, and his heart laid naked, would not be found wounded from many hands? from the hand of God, of enemies, of friends, of Satan; but especially by the hands of its own corruptions? Christ our head was stiled *a man of sorrows*, from the multitude of his sorrows; and it is the lot of all his to be in a state of sorrow in the body. "In the world (saith he) you shall have trouble." When I consider how oft the candle of sorrow is held to the thread of life, I justly wonder how it is protracted to such a length. What friend, what enjoyment had we ever in this world, from which no sorrow, nay, many sorrows have not sprung up to us? And if the best comforts bring forth sorrows, what do the worst things we meet with here bring forth? I suppose there are many thousands of God's people this day in the world, that have as much reason to assume the same new name that Naomi did, and say, Call me *Marah*. Look, as day and night divide all time betwixt them; so do our comforts and our sorrows, only with this difference, that our nights of sorrow, like winter nights, are long, cold and dark; and our days of comfort short, and frequently overcast.

But when we put off these bodies, we put off our mourning garments with them, and shall never sorrow any more: Thenceforth God wipes away all tears from his people's eyes, Rev. xxi. 4. And that is not all, but they enter into their Master's joy, even fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Groans are turned into triumphs, and sighs and tears into joyful acclamations and songs of praise. Oh that we were once made thoroughly sensible of the advantages that come by this exchange!

3. From entangling temptations into everlasting freedom. It is this body, and the interests and concerns of it, upon which Satan raises most of his batteries against our souls: It is our flesh that causeth our souls to sin; and whilst the soul dwells in the body, it is within Satan's reach to tempt, and defile, and trouble it. Oh

what grievous things do the best souls endure, and suffer on this account!

Temptations are of two sorts; ordinary and mediate, by Satan's exciting and managing our corruptions, by presenting objects to them; or extraordinary and immediate, like fiery darts shot immediately out of hell into the soul, which puts it all into a flame and combustion: Of the former you read in James i. 14. the latter, Eph. vi. 16. and upon the account of the one and the other, the people of God are weary of their lives. Think what a grief it must be to a soul that loves God, to feel in itself such things as militate against, and wound the name and honour of God, which is, and ought to be dearer to it than its life.

But by the door of death every gracious soul makes its escape from the tempting power of Satan: He can no more touch or affect the soul with any temptation, than we can better the body of the sun with snow-balls: For as Satan can have no access to that place of blessedness, where the souls of the saints are; so if he could, he can find nothing in them to fasten a temptation upon. The schoolmen give this as the reason why the saints in heaven are impeccable, because all their thoughts and affections are everlastingly fixed in, and employed about the blessed God, whose face they continually behold in glory.

4. From distressing persecutions, into full and perfect rest. As death sets us free from the power of Satan, so from the reach of all persecutors. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest," as it is in Job iii. 17. The price of one Ahab, who had sold himself to work wickedness, was a stock sufficient to purchase many years trouble to all Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 17. "Wicked men are as the unquiet, troubled sea which cannot rest," Isa. lvii. 20. They cannot rest from troubling the saints, till they cease to be wicked or to live: When God puts out the candle of their lives, they are silent in darkness, 1 Sam. ii. 9. And when God puts out the candle of our life, we are at rest, though they rage never so much in this world. Death is the saints *quietus est*, their full and final discharge from persecuting enemies. When we are dying, we may say, as Psal. ix. 6. "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end."

God may put an end to those persecutions before death; and such a time, according to promise, is to be expected, "when our officers shall be peace, and our exactors righteousness, Isa. lx. 17. but if the accomplishment of the promise be reserved for ages to come, and we must spend our days under the oppression of the wicked; yet this is our comfort, we know when we shall be far enough out of their reach.

5. From pinching wants, to universal supplies. This is the day

in which the Lord abundantly satisfies the desires, and supplies the needs of all his people. There are two sorts of wants upon the people of God: *spiritual* and *temporal*.

Spiritual wants are the just complaints of all gracious souls. You read, 1 Thess. iii. 10. of that which is lacking in the faith of the saints: There are none but find many things lacking to the perfection of every grace: our knowledge of God wants clearness and efficacy; our love to God fervour and constancy; our faith wants strength and stability: Darkness mixes itself with our knowledge, deadness with our love, unbelief with the purest acts of faith. Go where you will, you shall find God's people every where complaining of their spiritual wants: one of a dark head, another of a dead heart, another of a treacherous memory. Thus they are loading one another with their complaints.

Temporal outward wants pinch hard also upon many of God's people: The greatest number of them consist of the poor of this world, James ii. 5. Those whose souls are discharged and acquitted by God, whose debts are paid by Jesus Christ, may yet be entangled in a brake of cares and troubles in the world, and not know which way to turn themselves in their straits and difficulties. But by death the saints pass from all their wants, inward and outward, to a state of complete satisfaction, where nothing is lacking. From that day all their spiritual wants are supplied; for they are now arrived "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, "to a perfect man," Eph. iv. 13. Now "that which is perfect is "come, and all that was in part is done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

And for outward wants, they shall feel them no more: For putting off the body, we must needs put off all cares and concerns about it. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, God shall destroy both it and them," 1 Cor. vi. 13.

6. From distracting fears, into the highest security and rest of thoughts for evermore. The fears of God's people are either about their souls, or about their bodies; the fears they have about their souls are inexpressible. Two things especially exercise their fears about their soul. (1.) Whether they be really united to Christ. (2.) Whether they shall be able to continue and persevere in the ways of Christ to the end? they are afraid of their sincerity and of their stability: And these fears accompany many of God's people from their regeneration to their dissolution. O, what would they not give, what would they not do, yea, what would they not endure to get a full satisfaction in those things! Every working of corruption, every discovery made by temptation, puts them into a fright, and makes them question all that ever was wrought in them.

And, as their fears are great about the inward man, so also about the outward man; especially when such bloody preparations

seem to be making by the enemies that have acted such, and so many bloody tragedies already in the world.

But at death they enter into a perfect peace and security, Isa. lvii. 2. No wind of fear shall ever ruffle or disturb their souls, and put them into a storm any more.

7. From deluding shadows, into substantial good. This world is the world of shadows and delusive appearances. Here we are imposed upon, and baffled by empty and deceitful vanities: All we have here is little else but a dream; at death the soul awakes out of its dream, and finds itself in the world of realities, where it feeds upon substantial good to satisfaction, Psal. xvii. 15.

Now the advantages accruing to the soul by death, being so great and many, though the medium be harsh and ungrateful in itself, yet there is all the reason in the world we should covet it, for the benefits that come by it.

Arg. 5. The foretastes we have had of heaven already in the body, should make all the saints long to be unembodied for the full and perfect fruition of that joy, seeing it cannot be fully and perfectly enjoyed by the soul, till it hath put off the body by death.

That there are prelibations, first-fruits, and earnest of future glory given at certain seasons to believers in this life, is put beyond all doubting, not only by scripture testimonies, but frequent experiences of God's people. I speak not only with the scriptures, but with the clearest experience of many saints, when I say, here are to be felt and tasted, even here in the body, the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. i. 14. "The first-fruits of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 23. The sealing of the Spirit, Eph. i. 13. "The very joy of the Lord," 1 Pet. i. 8. of the same kind, though in a less degree, with that of the glorified.

That the fulness of this joy cannot be in us whilst we tabernacle in bodies of flesh, is as plain. When Moses desired a sight of that face which the spirits of just men made perfect do continually behold and adore, the answer was, "No man can see my face and live," Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, 20, q. d. Moses, thou askest a great thing, and understandest not how unable thou art to support that which thou desirest: should I shew thee my glory in this compounded state thou now art in, it would confound thee and swallow thee up. Nature, as now constituted, cannot support such a weight of glory: A ray, a glimpse of this light overpowers man, and breaks such a clay vessel to pieces; which is the reason why the resurrection must intervene betwixt this state and that of the body's glorification.

And it is not to be doubted, but one main end and reason why these foretastes of heaven are given us in the body, is to embolden

the soul to venture through death itself for the full enjoyment of those delights and pleasures. They are like the grapes of Eshcol to the faint-hearted Israelites, or the sweet wines of Italy to the Gauls, which, once tasted, made them restless till they had conquered that good country where they grew. Rom. viii. 23. "We
 " which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves do
 " groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of our bodies."

Well then, reflect seriously upon these sweet tastes that you have had of God and his love, in your sincere and secret addresses to him, and converses with him. What a holy forgetfulness of all things in this world hath it wrought! How insipid and tasteless hath it rendered the sweetest creature enjoyments! What willingness to be dissolved for a more full fruition of it! God this way brings heaven nigh to your souls, out of design to overcome your reluctancies at death, through which we must pass to the enjoyment of it. And after all those sights and tastes, both of the truth and goodness of that state, shall we still reluctate and hang back, as if we had never tasted how good the Lord is! O, you may justly question, whether you ever had a real taste of Jesus Christ, if that taste do not kindle coals of fire in your bosoms; I mean, ardent longings to be with him, and to be satiated with his love.

If you have been privileged with a taste of that hidden manna, with the sight of things invisible, with joys unspeakable, and full of glory, and yet are loth to be gone to the fountain whence all this flows: certainly you herein both cross the design of the Spirit in giving them, and cast a vile disgrace and reproach upon the blessed God, as thinking there is more bitterness in death, than there is sweetness in his presence. Yea, it argues the strength of that unbelief which still remains in your hearts, that after so many tastes and trials as you have had, you still remain doubtful and hesitating about the certainty and reality of things invisible.

O, what ado hath God with his froward and peevish children! If he had only revealed the future state to us in his word, as the pure object of faith, and required us to die upon the mere credit of his promise, without such pawns, pledges, and earnest as these are; were there not reason enough for it? But after such, and so many wonderful and amazing condescensions, wherein he doth, as it were, say, Soul, if yet thou doubtest, I will bring heaven to thee, thou shalt have it in thy hand, thy eyes shall see it, thy hands shall handle it, thy mouth shall taste it: How inexcusable is our reluctancy?

Arg. 6. It should greatly fortify the people of God against the fears of dissolution, to consider that death can neither destroy the

being of their souls by annihilation, nor the hopes and expectations they have of blessedness, by disappointment and frustration, Prov. xiv. 32. "The righteous hath hope in his death."

Though all earthly things fail at death (upon which account dying is expressed by failing, Luke xvi. 19.) yet neither the soul, nor its well-grounded hopes can fail. The anchor of a believer's hope is firm and sure, Heb. vi. 18. It will not come home in the greatest storm that can beat upon the soul. For (1.) God hath foreknown and chosen them to salvation before the world was, 1. Pet. i. 2. "And this foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. His decrees are as firm as mountains of brass, Zech. vi. 1. (2.) God hath justified their persons, and therein destroyed the power of death over them, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law." If all the hurtful power of death lies in sin, and all the destructive power of sin rises from the law; then neither death nor sin, hath any power to destroy the believer, in whom the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, Rom. viii. 4. namely, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them, in respect of which they are as righteous, as if in their own persons they had perfectly obeyed all its commands, or suffered all its penalties. Thus death loseth its sting, its curse and killing power over the souls of all that are in Christ. (3.) God hath sanctified their natures, which sanctification is not only a sure evidence of their election and justification, 2 Thess. i. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 1. but a sure pledge of their glorification also, 2 Cor. v. 4, 5. Yea, (4.) He hath made a sure, and an everlasting covenant with believers; and among other gracious privileges thereby conferred upon them, death is found in the inventory, 1 Cor. xiii. 21. *Death is yours*; to die is gain to them: It destroys their enemies, and the distance that is betwixt Christ and them. (5.) He hath sealed them to his glory by the Holy Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. So that their hopes are too firmly built to be destroyed by death; and if it cannot destroy their souls, nor overthrow their hopes, they need not fear all that it can do besides.

Arg. 7. It may greatly encourage and embolden the people of God to die, considering that though at death they take the last sight and view of all that is dear to them on earth; yet then they are admitted to the first immediate sight and blessed vision of God, which will be their happiness to all eternity.

When Hezekiah was upon his supposed death-bed, he complained, Isa. xxxviii. 11. "I shall see man no more, with the inhabitants of the world." We shall see thenceforth these corporeal people no more. We shall see our habitations and dwelling-places

no more, Job vii. 9, 10, 11. We shall see our children and dear relations no more, Job xiv. 21. His sons come "to honour, and he knoweth it not." These things make death terrible to men; but that which cures all this trouble is, that we shall neither need, nor desire them, being thenceforth admitted to the beatifical vision of the blessed God himself.

It is the expectation and hope of this which comforteth the souls of the righteous here, Psal. xvii. 15. "When I awake, I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Those weak and dim representations made by faith, at a distance, are the very joy and rejoicing of a believer's soul now, 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. but how sweet and transporting soever these visions of faith be, they are not worthy to be named in comparison with the immediate and beatifical vision, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. This is the very sum of a believer's blessedness: And what it is we cannot comprehend in this imperfect state; only in general we may gather these conclusions about it, from the account given of it in the scriptures.

1. That it will not be such a sight of God as we now have by the mediation of faith, but a direct, immediate, and intuitive vision of God; (* 1 John iii. 2. "We shall see him as he is." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Then face to face,") which far transcends the vision of faith in clearness and in comfort. This seems to import no less than the very sight of the Divine essence, that which Moses desired on earth to see, but could not, Exod. xxxiii. 20. nor can be seen by any man dwelling in a body, 1 Tim. vi. 16. nor by unbodied souls comprehensively; so God only sees himself. Our eyes see the sun which they cannot comprehend, yet truly apprehend. God will then be known in his essence, and in the glory of all his attributes. The sight of the attributes of God gives the occasion and matter of those ascriptions of praise and glory to him, which is the proper employment of glorified souls, Rev. iv. 11, 12, 13. which is the proper employment of angels, Isa. vi. 3. Oh how different is this from what we now have through faith, duties, and ordinances! See the difference betwixt knowledge by report and immediate sight, in that example of the *queen of the south*, 1 Kings x. 10. the former only excited her desires, the latter transported and overcame her very soul.

Some may think such a vision of God to exceed the abilities of nature, and capacities of any creature. But as a learned † man rightly observes, if the *Divine Nature* be capable of union with a

* The light of glory is an actual illumination, i. e. a supernatural influx of God, elevating the understanding to a sight of the Divine Essence. *Smissing Tract. 2. Dis. 6. N. 55.*

† Norton's *Orthodox Evang.* p. 527.

creature, as it is evident in the person of Christ, it is also capable of being the object of vision to the creature. Beside, we must know the light of glory hath the same respect to this blessed vision, that assisting grace hath to the acts of faith and obedience performed here on earth. It is a comforting, soul-strengthening light, not to dazzle and over-power, but to comfort, strengthen, and clear the eye of the creature's understanding. Rev. ii. 28. "I will give him the morning-star," *lumen confortans*; and Isa. xxxvi. 9. "In thy light we shall see light."

2. It will be a satisfying sight, Psal. xvii. 15. so perfectly quieting, and giving rest to the soul in all its powers, that they neither can proceed, nor desire to proceed any farther. The understanding can know no more, the will can will no more; the affections of joy, delight, and love are at full rest and quiet in their proper centre. For all good is in the chiefest good eminently; as all the light of the candles in the world is in the sun, and all the rivers in the world in the sea. That which makes the understanding, will, and affections move farther, as being restless and unsatisfied in all discoveries and enjoyments here, is the limited and imperfect nature of things we now converse with; as if you bring a great ship that draws much water into a narrow, and shallow river, she can neither sail nor swim, but is presently aground. But let that ship have sea-room enough, then she can turn and sail before the wind, because there is a depth of water, and room enough. So it is here; all that delighted, but could never satisfy you in the creature, is eminently in God; and what was imperfectly in them, is perfectly to be enjoyed in him, 1 Cor. xv. 28. "God shall be all in all;" the comforts you had here were but drop by drop, inflaming, not satisfying the appetite of the soul: But then "the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them unto fountains of living water," Rev. vii. 17. The object fills the faculties.

3. It will be an appropriating vision of God; you shall see him as your own God, and proper portion; else it could never be a satisfying vision, Job xix. 27. "Whom I shall see for myself!" Not look on him as another's God, but as my God and portion for ever. Balaam saw Christ by a spirit of prophecy; but he had no comfort, because no interest in him, Numb. xxiv. 17. The wicked shall see him, but without joy, yea, with weeping eyes and gnashing of death, because they cannot see him as their Lord, Luke xiii. 28. It is but a poor comfort to starving beggars to stand quivering and famishing in the streets in a cold dark night, and see the lights in the bridegroom's house, the noble dishes served in, and to hear the music and mirth of the guests that feast within. Here it will be as clear that he is *our God*, as that he is *God*.

Assurance is that which many souls have desired, prayed, and panted for, but cannot attain. There may be many rubs and stumbling-blocks in the way to that sweet enjoyment; but here we find what we have been so long seeking: There be no doubt, scruples, objections, puzzling cases to exercise your own or others thoughts: but as these did arise from one of these grounds, viz. the working of corruption, the efficacy of temptations, or Divine withdrawments, and the hidings of God's face; so all these being removed perfectly and for ever in that state, the heavens must needs be clear, and not a cloud of doubt or fear to be seen for ever.

4. It will be a deeply affecting sight: your eyes will now so affect your hearts as they were never affected before. The first view of God will snatch away your hearts to him, as a greater flame doth the less. Love will not now distil from the heart, as waters from a cold still, but gush out as from a sluice or floodgate pulled up. The soul will not move after God so deadily and slowly as it doth now, but be as the chariots of Ammi-nadib, Cant. vi. 12. We may say of the frames of our hearts there, compared with what they are here, as it is said, Deut. xii. 8, 9. "You shall not love, or *delight in God*, as you do this day." If the perfection of that state would admit shame or sorrow, how should we blush and mourn in heaven, to think how cold our love, and how low our delights in God were on earth! 1 John iv. 16. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." Look, as iron put into the fire becomes all fiery, so the soul dwelling in the God of love, becomes all love, all delight, all joy. O what transports must that soul feel, that abides under the line of love! feels the perpendicular beams of electing, creating, redeeming, preserving love, beating powerfully upon it, and melting it into love! See some of their transports, Rev. v. 13, 14.

5. It will be an *everlasting vision of God*, 1 Thess. v. 17. "So shall we be ever with the Lord," [ever with the Lord.] Who can find words to open the due sense of these few words! *Vacabimus et vidibimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus in fine sine fine*, saith blessed Austin. This is the everlasting sabbath, which hath no night, Rev. xxii. 4, 5. The eternal happiness purchased for the saints by the invaluable blood of Christ. If one hour's enjoyment of God, in the way of faith, be so sweet, and no price can be put upon it, nothing on earth taken in exchange for it; what must a whole eternity, in the immediate and full visions of that blessed face in heaven be!

Well then, if such sights as these immediately succeed the sight you have on earth, either by sense of things natural, or by reason of things intellectual, or by faith of things spiritual, who that believes

the truth, and expects the fulfilling of such promises as these, would not be willing to have his eyes closed by death as soon as God shall please? I have read of a holy man that had sweet communion with God in prayer, who in the close of his duty cried out *claudimini, oculi mei, claudimini, &c. Be shut, O mine eyes, be shut; you shall never see any thing on earth like that I have now seen.* Ah! little do the friends of dead believers think what visions of God, what ravishing sights of Christ the souls of their friends have, when they are closing their eyes with tears.

Arg. 8. The consideration of the evil days that are to come should make the people of God willing to accept of an hiding place in the grave, as a special favour from God.

It is accounted an act of favour by God, Isa. lvii. 1, 2. to be taken away from the *evil to come*. There are two kinds of evils to come, the evil of *sin*, and the evil of *sufferings*. Sins to come are terrible to gracious hearts, when temptations shall be at their height and strength. Oh what warping and shrinking, what dissembling, yea, down-right denying the known truths and ways of God, may you see every where! Many consciences will then be wounded and wasted: Many scandals and rocks of offence will be rolled into the way of godliness: Christ will be exposed and put to open shame. Should we only be spectators of such tragedies as these, it were enough to overwhelm a gracious and tender heart. But what upright heart is there without fears and jealousies of being brought under the guilt of these evils in itself, as well as the shame and grief for them in others? Oh! it were a thousand times better for you to die in the purity and integrity of your consciences, than to protract a miserable life without them. Oh! think what a world it is you are like to leave behind you, in respect of that to come!

And as there are many evils of sin to come, so there are many evils of sufferings coming on: "The days of visitation are coming on, the days of recompence are come, and Israel shall know it," Hos. ix. 7. All the sufferings you have yet met with, have been in books and histories: You never saw the martyrdom of the saints, but in the pictures and stories; but you will find it quite another thing to be the *subjects* of these cruelties, than to be the mere *readers* or *relaters* of them. It is one thing to see the painted lion on a sign-post, and another to meet the living lion roaring upon you. Ah! little do we imagine how the hearts of men are convulsed, what fears, what faintings invade their spirits, when they are to meet the King of terrors, in the frightful formalities of a violent death.

The consideration of these things will discover to you the reason of that strange wish of Job, chap. xiv. 13. "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave; that thou wouldst keep me in

“secret till thy wrath be past ! And it deserves a serious thought, that when the Holy Ghost had, in Rev. xiv. 9, 10, 11, 12. described the miserable plight of those poor souls, who being overcome by their own fears and the love of this world, should plunge themselves first into deep guilt, by compliance with Antichrist, and receiving his mark ; then into hell upon earth, the remorse and horror of their own consciences, which gives them no rest, day nor night ; he immediately subjoins, ver. 13. “Blessed are the dead “that die in the Lord ; yea, from henceforth, saith the Spirit,” &c. Oh ! it is a special blessing and favour to be hid out of the way of those temptations and torments, in a seasonable and quiet grave.

Arg. 9. Your fixed aversation and unwillingness to die, will provoke God to imbitter your lives with much more afflictions than you have yet felt, or would feel, if your hearts were more mortified and weaned in this point.

You cannot think of your own deaths with pleasure, no, nor yet with patience. Well, take heed, lest this draw down such trouble upon you, as shall make you at last to say with Job, chap. x. 1. “My soul is weary of my life ;” an expression much like that, 2 Sam. i. 9. “Anguish is come upon me, because my life is whole in me.” My soul is hardened, or become cruel against my life, as the Chaldee renders it.

There is a twofold weariness of life ; one from an excellency of spirit, a noble principle, the ardent love of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 23. “I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.” Another from the mere pressures of affliction and anguish of spirit, under heavy and successive strokes from the hand of God and men. Is it not more excellent and desirable to groan for death under a pressure of love to Christ, than of affliction from Christ ?

I am convinced that very many of our afflictions come upon this score and account, to make us willing to die.

Is it not sad that God is forced to bring death upon all our comfortable and desirable things in this world, before he can gain our consent to be gone ? Why will you put God upon such work as this ? Why cannot he have your hearts at a cheaper rate ? If you could die, many of your comforts, for ought I know, might live. Had Joab come to Absalom when he sent for him the first or second time, Absalom had never set his field of barley on fire, 2 Sam. xiv. 30. And were you more obedient to the will of God in this manner, it is likely he would not consume your health, and estates, and relations with such heavy strokes as he hath done, and will yet farther do, except your wills be more compliant.

Alas ! to cut off your comforts one after another, and make you live a groaning life, the Lord hath no pleasure in it ; but

he had rather you should lose these things, than that he should lose your hearts on earth, or company in heaven: *Impatiens ægrotus crudelem facit medicum.*

Arg. 10. The decree of death cannot be reversed, nor is there any other ordinary passage for the soul into glory, but through the gates of death. Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed for all men once to die, "but after that the judgment."

There is but one way to pass out of the obscure, suffocating life in the womb, into the more free and nobler life in the world, viz. through the agonies of birth: and there is ordinarily but one way to pass from this sinning, groaning life we live in this world, to the enjoyment of God and the glory above, viz. through the agonies of death. You must cast off this mean, this vile body, before you can be happy. Heaven cannot come down to you, you cannot see God and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. It would certainly confound and break you to pieces, like an earthen pitcher, should God but ray forth his glory upon you in the state you now are in; and it is sure you cannot expect the extraordinary favour of such a translation as Enoch had, Heb. xi. 4. nor as those believers shall have that shall be found alive at Christ's coming, 1 Thess. iv. 17. You must go the common road that all the saints go; but though you cannot avoid, you must sweeten it. God will not reverse his decree, but you may, and ought to arm yourselves against the fears of it. Ahasuerus would not recal the proclamation he had emitted against the Jews, but he gave them full liberty to take up arms to defend themselves against their enemies. It is much so here, the sentence cannot be revoked; but yet God gives you leave, yea, he commands you to arm yourselves against death, and defy it, and trample it under the feet of faith.

Arg. 11. When you find your hearts reluctant at the thoughts of leaving the body, and the comforts of this world, then consider how willingly and cheerfully Jesus Christ left heaven, and the bosom of his Father, to come down to this world for your sakes, Prov. viii. 30, 31. Psal. xl. 7. *Lo, I come, &c.*

O compare the frames of your hearts with his, in this point, and shame yourselves out of so unbecoming a temper of spirit.

(1.) He left heaven and all the delights and glory of it, to come down to this world to be abased and humbled to the lowest; you leave this world of sin and misery to ascend to heaven, to be exalted to the highest. He came hither to be impoverished, you go thither to be enriched, 2 Cor. viii. 9. yet he came willingly, and we go grudgingly.

(2.) He came from heaven to earth, to be made sin for us, 2 Cor.

v. 21. we go from earth to heaven, to be fully and everlastingly delivered from sin; yet he came more willingly to bear our sins, than we go to be delivered from them.

(3.) He came to take a body of flesh, to suffer and die in it, Heb. ii. 24. you leave your bodies that you may never suffer in, or by them any more.

(4.) As his incarnation was a deep abasement, so his death was the most bitter death that ever was tasted by any from the beginning, or ever shall be to the end of the world; and yet how obediently doth he submit to both at the Father's call, Luke xii. 50. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Ah Christian, your death cannot have the ten thousandth part of that bitterness in it that Christ's had. I remember one of the martyrs being asked, why his heart was so light at death? returned this answer, because Christ's heart was so heavy at his death. O there is a vast difference betwixt the one and the other; the wrath of God, and the curse of the law were in his death, Gal. iii. 13. but there is neither wrath nor curse in their death who die in the Lord, Rom. viii. 1.

God forsook him when he hanged upon the tree in the agonies of death, Mat. xxviii. 46. "My God, my God, why hasst thou forsaken me?" But you shall not be forsaken; He will make all your bed in sickness, Phil. xli. 3. He will never leave you, nor forsake you, Heb. xiii. 5.

Yet he regretted not, but went as a sheep or lamb, Isa. liii. 7. O reason yourselves out of this reluctancy at death, by this great example and pattern of obedience.

Arg. 12. Lastly, Let no Christian be affrighted at death, considering that the death of Christ is the death of death, and hath utterly disarmed it of all its destructive power.

If you tremble when you look upon death, yet you cannot but triumph when you look believably upon Christ.

For, (1.) Christ died (O believer) for thy sins, Rom. iv. 25. his death was an expiatory sacrifice for all thy guilt, Gal. iii. 13. so that thou shall not die in thy sins: The pangs of death may, and must be on thy outward man, but the guilt of sin and the condemnation of God shall not be upon thy inner man.

(2.) The death of Christ, in thy room, hath utterly destroyed the power of death, which once was in the hand of Satan, Heb. ii. 24. Col. ii. 14, 15. his power was not authoritative, but executive; not as the power of a king; but of a sheriff; which is none at all when a pardon is produced.

(3.) Christ hath assured us, that his victory over death shall be complete in our persons. It is already a complete personal victory in respect of himself, Rom. vi. 9. he dieth no more, death hath

no more dominion over him. It is an incomplete victory already as to our persons. It can dissolve the union of our souls and bodies, but the union betwixt Christ and our souls it can never dissolve, Rom. viii. 38, 39. and as for the power it still retains over our dust, that also shall be destroyed at the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. compared with ver. 54, 55, 56, 57. so that there is no cause for any soul in Christ to tremble at the thought of a separation from the body, but rather to embrace it as a privilege: *Death is ours.*

O that these arguments might prevail! O that they might at last win the consent of our hearts to go along with death; which is the messenger sent by God to bring us home to our Father's house.

But I doubt, when all is said, we are where we were: all this suffices not to overcome the regrets and reluctancies of nature; still the matter sticks in our minds, and we cannot conquer our disinclined wills in this matter. What is the matter? Where lies the rubs and hinderances? O that God would remove them at last!

Objection 1. *This is a common plea with many, I am not ready and fit to die; were I ready, I should be willing to be gone.*

Solution (1.) How long soever you live in the body, there will be somewhat still out of order, something still to do; for you must be in a state of imperfection while you remain here, and according to this plea, you will never be willing to die. (2.) Your willingness to be dissolved and to be with Christ, is one special part of your fitness for death: and till you attain it in some good measure, you are not so fit to die as you should be. (3.) If you be in Christ, you have a fundamental fitness for death, though you may want some circumstantial preparatives. And as to all that is wanting in your sanctification or obedience now, it will be completed in a moment upon your dissolution.

Object. 2. *Others plead that the desire they have to live, is in order to God's farther service by them in this world. O, say they, it was David's happiness to die, when he had served his generation according to the will of God: Acts xiii. 36. If we had done so too, we should say with Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."*

Sol. (1.) God needs not your hands to carry on his service in the world; he can do it by other hands when you are gone. Many of greater gifts and graces than you, are daily laid in the grave, to teach you, God needs no man's help to carry on his work.

(2.) If the service of God be so dear to you, there is higher and more excellent service for you in heaven, than any you ever were, or can be employed in here on earth. Oh! why do not you long to be amidst the company of angels and spirits made perfect in the temple-service in heaven?

Object. 3. *O, but my relations in the world lie near my heart, what will become of them when I am gone?*

Sol. (1.) It is pity they should lie nearer your heart than Jesus Christ: If they do, you have little reason to desire death indeed.

(2.) Who took care of you, when death snatched your dear relations from you, who possibly felt the same workings of heart that you now do? Did you not experience the truth of that word, Psal. xxvii. 10. "When father and mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up." And if you be in the covenant, God hath prevented this plea with his promise, Jer. xlix. 11. "Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive; and let their widows trust in me."

Object. 4. *But I desire to live to see the felicity of Zion before I go hence, and the answer of the many prayers I have sown for it; I am loth to leave the people of God in so sad a condition.*

Sol. The publicness of thy spirit, and love to Zion, is doubtless pleasing to God; but it is better for you to be in heaven one day, than to live ever again all the days you have lived on earth in the best time that ever the church of God enjoyed in this world; the promises shall be accomplished, though you may not live to see their accomplishment; die you in the faith of it, as Joseph did, Gen. l. 24.

But, alas! the matter doth not stick here: this is not the main hinderance. I will tell you where I think it lies: (1.) In the hesitancy and staggering of our faith about the certainty and reality of things invisible. (2.) In some special guilt upon the conscience, which discourages us. (3.) In a negligent and careless course of life, which is not ordinarily blessed with much evidence or comfort. (4.) In the deep engagements of our hearts to earthly things: they could not be so cold to Christ, if they were not over-heated with other things. Till these distempers be cured, no arguments can prosper that are spent to this end. The Lord dissolve all those ties betwixt us and this world, which hinder our consent and willingness to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better.

And now we have had a glance and glimmering light, a faint umbrage of the state of the separated souls of the just in heaven: it remains that I shew you somewhat of the state and case of the damned souls in hell. A dreadful representation it is; but it is necessary we hear of hell, that we may not feel it.

1 PET. iii. 19.

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.

IN the former discourse we have had a just view of heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect, the inhabitants of that blessed region of light and glory.

In this scripture we have the contrary glass, representing the unspeakable misery of those souls or spirits which are separated by death from their bodies for a time, and by sin from God for ever; arrested by the law, and secured in the prison of hell, unto the judgment of the great day.

A sermon of hell may keep some souls out of hell, and a sermon of heaven may be the means to help others to heaven: the desire of my heart is, that the conversations of all those who shall read these discourses of heaven and hell, might look more like a diligent flight from the one, and pursuit of the other.

The scope of the context is a persuasive to patience, upon a prospect of manifold tribulations coming upon the Christian churches, strongly enforced by Christ's example, who both in his own person, ver. 18. and by his spirit in his servants, ver. 19. exercised wonderful patience and long-suffering as a pattern to his people.

This 19th verse gives us an account of his long-suffering towards that disobedient and immorigerous generation of sinners, on whom he waited an hundred and twenty years in the ministry of Noah.

There are difficulties in the text. * Estius reckons no less than ten expositions of it, and saith, "It is a very difficult scripture in the judgment of almost all interpreters;" but yet I must say, those difficulties are rather brought to it, than found in it. It is a text which hath been racked and tortured by popish expositors, to make it speak Christ's local descent into hell, and to confess their doctrine of *purgatory*; things which it knew not.

But if we will take its genuine sense, it only relates the sin and misery of those contumacious persons, on whom the Spirit of God waited so long in the ministry of Noah; giving an account of,

1. Their sin on earth.

2. Their punishment in hell.

1. Their sin on earth, which is both specified and aggravated. (1.) Specified; namely their disobedience. They were sometimes disobedient and unpersuadable; neither precepts nor examples could bring them to repentance. (2.) This their disobedience is

* *Locus hic omnium pœne interpretum judicio difficillimus.* Estius.

aggravated by the expence of God's patience upon them for the space of an hundred and twenty years, not only forbearing them so long, but striving with them, as Moses expresseth it; or waiting on them, as the apostle here; but all to no purpose; they were obstinate, stubborn, and impersuadable to the very last.

2. Behold, therefore, in the next place, the dreadful, but most just and equal punishment of these sinners in hell; they are called *spirits in prison*, i. e. the souls now in hell *.

At that time when Peter wrote of them, they were not entire men, but *spirits*, in the proper sense, i. e. separated souls, bodiless, and lonely souls: whilst in the body, it is properly a soul; but when separated, a spirit, according to scripture-language, and the strict notion of such a being.

These spirits, or souls in the state of separation, are said to be in a *prison*, that is, in hell, as the word elsewhere notes, Rev. xx. 7. and Jude, ver. 6. Heaven and hell are the only receptacles of departed, or separated souls.

Thus you have, in a few words, the natural and genuine sense of the place, and it is but a wasting time to repeat and refel the many false and forced interpretations of this text, which corrupt minds, and mercenary pens have perplexed and darkened it withal: That which I level at, is comprised in this plain proposition.

Doct. That the souls or spirits of all men who die in a state of unbelief and disobedience, are immediately committed to the prison of hell, there to suffer the wrath of God due to their sins.

Hell is shadowed forth to us in scripture by divers metaphors; "for we cannot conceive spiritual things, unless they are so clothed and shadowed out unto us *." Augustine gives this reason for the frequent use of metaphors and allegories in scripture, because they are so much proportioned to our senses, with which our senses have contracted an intimacy and familiarity; and therefore God, to accommodate his truth to our capacities, doth as it were, this way embody it in earthly expressions, according to that celebrated observation of the Cabbalists,—*Lumen supremum nunquam descendit sine indumento*;—the pure and supreme light never descends to us without a garment or covering. In the Old Testament, the place and state of damned souls are set forth by metaphors taken from the most remarkable places and exemplary acts of vengeance upon sinners in this world; as the overthrow of the giants by the flood, those prodigious sinners that fought against heaven, and

* Psal. xxxi. 6. Eccl. xii. 7. Acts vii. 50.

† *Spiritualia capere non possumus, nisi adumbrata.*

were swept by the flood into the place of torment. To this Solomon is conceived to allude, in Prov. xxxi. 16. "The man that wanders out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead;" in the Hebrew it is, he shall remain with the *Rephaims*, or giants. These giants were the men that more especially provoked God to bring the flood upon the world; they are also noted as the first inhabitants of hell, therefore from them the place of torment takes its name, and the damned are said to remain in the place of giants.

Sometimes hell is called Tophet, Isa. xxx. 33. This Tophet was in the valley of Hinnom, and was famous for divers things. There the children of Israel caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch, or sacrificed to the devil, drowning their horrible shrieks and ejaculations with the noise of drums.

In this valley also was the memorable slaughter of eighteen hundred thousand of the Assyrian camp, by an angel, in one night.

There, also, the Babylonians murdered the people of Jerusalem at the taking of the city, Jer. vii. 31, 32. So that Tophet was a mere shambles, the public chopping-block, on which the limbs of both young and old were quartered out, by thousands. It was filled with dead bodies, till there was no place for burial. By all which it appears, that no spot of ground in the world was so famous for the fires kindled in it to destroy men, for the doleful cries that echoed from it, or the innumerable multitudes that perished in it; for which reason it is made the emblem of hell. Sometimes it is called a "lake of fire burning with brimstone," Rev. xix. 20. denoting the most exquisite torment, by an intense and durable flame.

And in the text, it is called a *prison*, where the spirits of ungodly men are both detained and punished. This notion of a prison gives us a lively representation of the miserable state of damned souls, and that especially in the following particulars.

First, Prisoners are arrested and seized by authority of law; it is the law which sends them thither, and keeps them there; the mittimus of a justice is but the instrument of the law, whereby they are deprived of liberty, and taken into custody. The law of God which sinners have both violated and despised, at death takes hold of them, and arrests them. It is the law which claps up their spirits in prison, and in the name and authority of the great and terrible God, commits them to hell. All that are out of Christ, are under the curse and damning sentence of the law, which now comes to be executed on them, Gal. iii. 10.

Secondly, Prisoners are carried, or haled to prison by force and constraint; natural force backs legal authority: the law is executed by rough and resolute bailiffs, who compel them to go, though

never so much against their will; this also is the case of the wicked at death: Satan is God's bailiff, to hurry away the law-condemned souls to the infernal prison. The devil hath the power of death, Heb. ii. 14. as the executioner hath of the body of a condemned man.

Thirdly, Prisoners are chained and bolted in prison, to prevent their escape; so are damned spirits secured by the power of God, and chained by their own guilty and trembling consciences in hell, unto the time of judgment, and the fulness of misery; not that they have no torment in the mean time: alas! were there no more but that fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, spoken of by the apostle, Heb. x. 27. it were an inexpressible torment; but there is a farther degree of torment to be awarded them at the judgment of the great day, to which they are therefore kept as in chains and prisons.

Fourthly, Prisons are dark and noisome places, not built for pleasure, as other houses are, but for punishments; so is hell, Jude, ver. 6. "Reserved in everlasting chains under darkness," as he there describes the place of torments, yea, *outer darkness*, Matth. viii. 12. extreme or perfect darkness. Philosophers tell us of the darkness of this world, *Non dantur puræ tenebræ*, that there is no pure or perfect darkness here, without some mixture of light; but there is not a glade of light, not a spark of hope or comfort shining into that prison.

Fifthly, Mournful sighs and groans are heard in prisons, Psal. xcvii. 11. Let the "sighing of the prisoners come before thee," saith the psalmist. But deeper sighs and more emphatical groans are heard in hell, "There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," Matth. viii. 12. Those that would not groan under the sense of sin on earth, shall howl under anguish and desperation in hell.

Sixthly, There is a time when prisoners are brought out of the prison to be judged, and then return in a worse condition than before, to the place from whence they came. God also hath appointed a day for the solemn condemnation of those spirits in prison. The scriptures call it "the judgment of the great day," Jude, ver. 6. from the great business that is to be done therein, and the great and solemn assembly that shall then appear before God.

But I will insist no longer upon the display of the metaphor; my business is to give you a representation of the state and condition of damned souls in hell, and to assist your conceptions of them, and of their state.

It is a dreadful sight I am to give you this day; but how much better is it to see, than to feel that wrath? The treasures thereof

shall shortly be broken up, and poured forth upon the spirits of men.

You had in the former discourse, a faint umbrage of the spirits of just men in glory; in this you will have an imperfect representation of the spirits of wicked men in hell: and look, as the former cannot be adequate and perfect, because that happiness surpasseth our knowledge; so neither can this be so, because the misery of the damned passeth our fear.

The case and state of a damned spirit will be best opened in these following propositions.

Proposition 1. That the guilt of all sin gathers to, and settles in the conscience of every christless sinner, and makes up a vast treasure of guilt in the course of his life in this world.

The high and awful power of conscience belonging to the understanding faculty in the soul of man, was spoken to before, as to its general nature, and that conscience certainly accompanies it, and is inseparable from it, was there shewed; I am here to consider it as the seat or centre of guilt, in all unregenerate and lost souls. For, look, as the tides wash up, and leave the slime and filth upon the shore, even so all the corruption and sin that is in the other faculties of the soul settle upon the conscience; "Their mind and conscience (saith the apostle) is defiled," Tit. i. 15. it is as it were, the sink of a sinner's soul, into which all filth runs and guilt settles.

The conscience of every believer is purged from its filthiness by the blood of Christ, Heb. ix. 14. his blood and his spirit purify it, and pacify it, whereby it becomes the region of light and peace: but all the guilt which hath been long contracting, through the life of an unbeliever, fixes itself deep and fast in his conscience; "It is written upon the tables of their hearts, as with a pen of iron," Jer. xvii. 1. i. e. guilt is as a mark or character fashioned or engraven in the very substance of the soul, as letters are cut into glass with a diamond.

Conscience is not only the principal *engagee*, obliged unto God as a judge, but the principal director and guide of the soul, in its courses and actions, and consequently, the guilt of sin falls upon it, and rests in it. The soul is both the spring and fountain of all actions that go outward from man, and the term or receptacle of all actions inward; but in both sorts of actions, going outward, and coming inward, conscience is the chief counsellor, guide, and director in all, and so the guilt which is contracted either way, must be upon its head. It is the bridle of the soul to restrain it from sin; the eye of the soul to direct its course; and therefore is principally chargeable with all the evils of life. Bodily members are but instruments, and the will itself, as high and noble a faculty or power

as it is, moveth not until the judgment cometh to a conclusion, and the debate be ended in the mind.

Now, in the whole course and compass of a sinner's life in this world, what treasures of guilt must needs be lodged in his conscience? What a magazine of sin and filth must be laid up there? It is said of a wicked man, Job xx. 11. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth;" meaning his spirit, mind, or conscience, is as full of sin, as bones are of marrow: yea, the very sins of his youth are enough to fill them: and Rom. ii. 5. they are said "to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," which is only done by treasuring up guilt; for wrath and guilt are treasured up together in proportion to each other. Every day of his life vast sums have been cast into this treasury, and the patience of God waiteth till it be full, before he calls the sinner to an account and reckoning, Gen. xv. 16.

Prop. 2. *All the sin and guilt, contracted upon the souls and consciences of impenitent men in this world, accompany and follow their departed souls to judgment, and there bring them under the dreadful condemnation of the great and terrible God, which cuts off all their hopes and comforts for ever.*

"If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins." John viii. 24. And Job xx. 11. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." No proposition lies clearer in scripture, or should lie with greater weight on the hearts of sinners: nothing but pardon can remove guilt; but without faith and repentance there never was, nor shall be a pardon, Acts x. 43. Rom. iii. 24, 25. Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Look, as the graces of believers, so the sins of unbelievers follow the soul whithersoever it goes. All their sins who die out of Christ, cry to them when they go hence, *We are thy works, and we will follow thee.* The acts of sin are transient, but the guilt and effects of it are permanent; and it is evident by this, that in the great day, their consciences, which are the books of records, wherein all their sins are registered, will be opened, and they shall be judged by them, and out of them, Rev. xx. 12.

Now, before that general judgment, every soul comes to its particular judgment, and that immediately after death: of this I apprehend the apostle to speak in Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed for all men once to die, but after that the judgment." The soul is presently stated by this judgment in its everlasting and fixed condition. The soul of a wicked man appearing before God, in all its sin and guilt, and by him sentenced, immediately gives up all its hope, Prov. xi. 7. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of the unjust man

“perisheth.” His strong hope * perisheth, as some read it, i. e. his strong delusion : for, alas, he took his own shadow for a bridge over the great waters, and is unexpectedly plunged into the gulph of eternal misery, as Mat. vii. 22.

This perishing, or cutting off of hope, is that which is called in scripture *the death of the soul*, for so long the soul will live, as it hath any hope. The deferring of hope makes it sick, but the final cutting off of hope strikes it quite dead, i. e. dead as to all joy, comfort, or expectation of any for ever, which is that death which an immortal soul is capable to suffer : *The righteous hath hope in his death* ; but every unregenerate man in the world breathes out his last hope in a few moments after his last breath, which strikes terror into the very centre of the soul, and is a death-wound to it.

Prop. 3. *The souls of the damned are exceedingly large and capacious subjects of wrath and torment ; and in their separate state their capacity is greatly enlarged, both by laying asleep all those affections whose exercise is relieving, and thoroughly awakening all those passions which are tormenting.*

The soul of man being by nature a spirit, an intelligent spirit, and, in its substantial faculties, assimilated to God, whose image it bears ; it must, for that reason, be exquisitely sensible of all the impressions and touches of the wrath of God upon it. The spirit of man is a most tender, sensible, and apprehensive creature : the eye of the body is not so sensible of a touch, a nerve of the body is not so sensible when pricked, as the spirit of man is of the least touch of God's indignation upon it. “A wounded spirit who can bear ?” Prov. xviii. 14. Other external wounds upon the body inflicted either by man or God, are tolerable ; but that which immediately touches the spirit of man, is insufferable : who can bear or endure it ?

And as the spirit of man hath the most delicate and exquisite sense of misery ; so it hath a vast capacity to receive, and let in the fulness of anguish and misery into it : it is a large vessel, called, Rom. ix. 22. “A vessel of wrath fitted to destruction.” The large capacity of the soul is seen in this, that it is not in the power of all the creatures in the world to satisfy and fill it : it can drink up, as one speaks, all the rivers of created good, and its thirst not quenched by such a draught ; but after all, it cries, Give, give. Nothing but an infinite God can quiet and satisfy its appetite and raging thirst.

And as it is capable and receptive of more good than is found in all the creatures, so it is capable of more misery and anguish than

* *Etiam spes valentissima*, i. e. Even the strongest hope.

all the creatures can inflict upon it. Let all the elements, all men on earth, yea, all the devils and damned in hell, conspire and unite in a design to torment man; yet when they have done all, his spirit is capable of a farther degree of torment; a torment as much beyond it, as a rack is beyond a hard bed, or the sword in his bowels is beyond the scratch of a pin. The devils indeed are the executioners and tormentors of the damned; but if that were all they were capable to suffer, the torment of the damned would be, comparatively, mild and gentle to what they are. Oh, the largeness of the understanding of man, what will it not take into its vast capacity!

But add to this, that the damned souls have all those affections laid in a deep and everlasting sleep, the exercises whereof would be relieving, by emptying their souls of any part of their misery; and all those passions thoroughly and everlastingly awakened, which increase their torments.

The affections of joy, delight, and hope, are benumbed in them, and laid fast asleep, never to be awakened into act any more. Their hope, in scripture, is said to *perish*, i. e. it so perisheth, that, after death, it shall never exert another act to all eternity. The activity of any of those affections would be like a cooling gale, or refreshing spring, amidst their torments; but as Adrian lamented himself, *Numquam jocos dabis*, Thou shalt never be merry more.

And as these affections are laid asleep, so their passions are roused, and thoroughly awakened to torment them; so awakened, as never to sleep any more. The souls of men are sometimes jogged and startled in this world, by the works or rods of God, but presently they sleep again, and forget all: but hereafter the eyes of their souls will be continually held waking to behold and consider their misery; their understandings will be clear and most apprehensive; their thoughts fixed and determined; their consciences active and efficacious; and, by all this, their capacity to take in the fullest of their misery, enlarged to the uttermost.

Prop. 4. *The wrath, indignation, and revenge of God poured out as the just reward of sin, upon the so capacious souls of the damned, are the principal part of their misery in hell.*

In the third proposition I shewed you, that the souls of the damned can hold more misery than all the creatures can inflict upon them. When the soul suffers from the hand of man, its sufferings are but either by way of sympathy with the body; or if immediately, yet it is but a light stroke the hand of a creature can give: But when it hath to do with a sin-revenging God, and that immediately, this stroke cuts off the spirit of man, as it is expressed, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. The body is the clothing of the soul. Most of the arrows shot at the soul in this world, do but stick in

the clothes, i. e. reach the outward man: But in hell, the spirit of man is *the white* at which God himself shoots. All his envenomed arrows strike the soul, which is, after death, laid bare and naked to be wounded by his hand. At death, the soul of every wicked man immediately falls into the hands of the living God; and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," as the apostle speaks, Heb. x. 31. Their punishment is "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thes. i. 9. They are not put over to their fellow-creatures to be punished, but God will do it himself, and glorify his power, as well as his justice in their punishment. The wrath of God lies immediately upon their spirits, and this is the "fiery indignation which devoureth their adversaries," Heb. x. 27. A fire that licks up the very spirit of man. Who knoweth the power of his anger! Psal. xc. 11. How insupportable it is, you may a little guess by that expression of the prophet Nahum, chap. i. 5, 6. "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

And, as if anger and wrath were not words of a sufficient edge and sharpness, it is called fiery indignation and vengeance, words denoting the most intense degree of divine wrath. For indeed his power is to be glorified in the destruction of his enemies, and therefore now he will do it to purpose. He takes them now into his own hands. No creature can come at the soul immediately, that is God's prerogative, and now he hath to do with it himself in fury, and revenge is poured out. "Can thy hands be strong, or thy heart endure when I shall deal with thee?" Ezek. xxii. 14. Alas! the spirit quails and dies under it. This is the hell of hells.

What doleful cries and lamentings have we heard from God's dearest children, when but some few drops of his anger have been sprinkled upon their souls, here in this world! But alas! there is no comparison betwixt the anger or fatherly discipline of God over the spirits of his children, and the indignation poured out from the beginning of revenges upon his enemies.

Prop. 5. *The separate spirit of a damned man becomes a tormentor to itself by the various and efficacious actings of its own conscience, which are a special part of its torment in the other world.*

Conscience, which should have been the sinner's curb on earth, becomes the whip that must lash his soul in hell. Neither is there any faculty or power belonging to the soul of man, so fit and able to do it as his own conscience. That which was the seat and centre

of all guilt, now becomes the seat and centre of all torments. The suspension of its tormenting power in this world is a mystery and wonder to all that duly consider it. For certainly should the Lord let a sinner's conscience fly upon him with rage, in the midst of his sins and pleasures, it would put him into a hell upon earth, as we see in the doleful instances of Judas, Spira, &c. But he keeps a hand of restraint upon them, generally, in this life, and suffers them to sleep quietly by a grumbling or seared conscience, which couches by them as a sleepy lion, and lets them alone.

But no sooner is the Christless soul turned out of the body, and cast for eternity at the bar of God, but conscience is roused, and put into a rage never to be appeased any more. It now racks and tortures the miserable soul with its utmost efficacy and activity. The mere presages and forebodings of wrath by the consciences of sinners in this world have made them lie with a ghastly paleness in their faces, universal trembling in all their members, a cold sweating horror upon their panting bosoms like men already in hell: But this, all this, is but as the sweating of the stones before the great rain falls. The activities of conscience (especially in hell) are various, vigorous, and dreadful to consider, such are its *recognitions, accusations, condemnations, upbraidings, shamings, and fearful expectations*.

1. The consciences of the damned will recognize, and bring back the sins committed in this world fresh to their mind: For what is conscience, but a register, or book of records, wherein every sin is ranked in its proper place and order! This act of conscience is fundamental to all its other acts: for it cannot accuse, condemn, upbraid, or shame us for that it hath lost out of its memory, and hath no sense of. *Son, remember*, said Abraham to Dives, in the midst of his torments. This remembrance of sins past, mercies past, opportunities past, but especially of hope past and gone with them, never to be recovered any more, is like that fire not blown, (of which Zophar speaks) which consumes him, or the glittering sword coming out of his gall, Job xx. 24, &c.

2. It chargeth and accuseth the damned soul; and its charges are home, positive, and self-evident charges: A thousand legal and unexceptionable witnesses cannot confirm any point more than one witness in a man's bosom can do, Rom. ii. 15. It convicts, and stops their mouths, leaving them without any excuse or apology. Just and righteous are the judgments of God upon thee, saith conscience: In all this ocean of misery, there is not one drop of injury or wrong. The judgment of God is according to truth.

3. It condemns as well as chargeth and witnesseth, and that with a dreadful sentence; backing and approving the sentence and judgment of God, 1 John iii. 21. every self-destroyer will be a self-condemner: This is a prime part of their misery.

———*Prima est haec ultio, quod se
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur, improba quamvis
Gratio fallacis prætoris vicerit urnam.*

Juv. Sat. 13.

4. The upbraidings of conscience in hell are terrible and insufferable things: To be continually hit in the teeth and twitted with our madness, wilfulness, and obstinacy, as the cause of all that eternal misery which we have pulled down upon our own heads, what is it but the rubbing of the wound with salt and vinegar? Of this torment holy Job was afraid, and therefore resolved what in him lay to prevent it, when he saith, Job xxvii. 6. "My heart (i. e. "conscience) shall not reproach me so long as I live." O the twits and taunts of conscience are cruel cuts and lashes to the soul!

5. The shamings of conscience are insufferable torments. Shame ariseth from the turpitude of discovered actions. If some men's secret filthiunesses were but published in this world, it would confound them: what then will it be, when all shall lie open, as it will, after this life, and their own consciences shall cast the shame of all upon them? They shall not only be derided by God, Prov. i. 26. but by their own consciences.

Lastly, the fearful expectations of conscience, still looking forward into more and more wrath to come, this is the very sum and complement of their misery. What makes a prison so dreadful to a malefactor but the trembling expectation he there lives under of the approaching assizes? Much after the same rate, or rather after the rate of condemned persons preparing for execution, do these spirits in prison live in the other world. But alas! no instance or similitude can reach home to their case.

Prop. 6. *That which makes the torments and terrors of the damned spirits so extreme and terrible, is, that they are unrelievable miseries, and torments for ever.*

They are not capable either of,

1. A partial relief, by any mitigation, or
2. A complete relief by a final cessation.

1. Not of a partial relief by any mitigation; could they but divert their thoughts from their misery, as they were wont to do in this world, drink and forget their sorrows; or had they but any hope of the abatement of their misery, it would be a relief to them: But both these are impossible. Their thoughts are fixed and determined: to remove them (though but for a moment) from their misery, is as impossible as to remove a mountain: Their sin and misery is ever before them. As the blessed in heaven are

bono confirmati, so fixed and settled in blessedness, that they are not diverted one moment from beholding the blessed face of God, for they are ever with the Lord: So the damned in hell are *malo obfirmati*, so settled and fixed in the midst of all evil, that their thoughts and miseries are inseparable for ever.

2. Much less can their undone state admit the least hope of relief by a final cessation of their misery. All hope perisheth from them, and the perishing of their hope is the plainest proof that can be given of the eternity of their misery. For were there but the remotest possibility of deliverance at last, hope would hang upon that possibility: And whilst hope lives, the soul is not quite dead; the death of hope is the death of a man's spirit: The cutting off of the soul from God, and the last act of hope to see or enjoy him for ever, is that death which an immortal soul is capable of suffering. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," is that sentence which strikes hope and soul dead for ever. In these six propositions you have the true and terrible representation of the spirits in prison, or the state of damned souls. I have not mentioned their association with devils, or the dismal place of their confinement, which, though they complete their misery, yet are not the principal parts of it, but rather accessories to it, or rivers running into the ocean of their misery. The sum of their misery lies in what was opened before, and the improvement of it is in that which followeth.

Infer. 1. Is this the state of ungodly souls after death? Then it follows, that *neither death nor annihilation are the worst of evils incident to man*. Aristotle calls death *the most terrible of all terribles*, and the schoolmen affirm annihilation to be a greater evil than the most miserable being: But it is neither so, nor so; the wrath of God, the worm of conscience, are much more bitter than death. The pains of death are natural and bodily pains: The wrath of God and anguish of conscience are spiritual and inward: Those are but the pains of a few hours or days, these are the unrelieved torments of eternity.

And as for annihilation, what a favour would the damned account it! Indeed, if we respect the glory of God's justice, which is exemplified and illustrated in the ruin of these miserable souls, it is better they should abide as the eternal monuments thereof, than not to be at all: but with respect to themselves we may say as Christ doth of the son of perdition, Mat. xxvi. 24. "Good had it been for them if they had never been born." For a man's soul to be of no other use than a vessel of wrath, to receive the indignation, and be filled with the fury of God; surely an untimely birth, that never was animated with a reasonable soul, is better than they: For alas! they seek for death, but it flies from them. The im-

mortality of their souls, which was their dignity and privilege above other creatures, is now their misery, and that which continually feeds and perpetuates their flame. Here is a being without the comfort of it, a being only to howl and tremble under Divine wrath, a being therefore which they would gladly exchange with the contemptible fly, or most loathsome toad, but it cannot be exchanged or annihilated.

Inf. 2. Hence it follows, *that the pleasures of sin are dear bought, and costly pleasures.* There is a greater disproportion betwixt that pleasure and this wrath, than betwixt a drop of honey and a sea of gall. Could a man distil all the imaginary pleasure of sin, and drink nothing else but the highest and most refined delights of it all his life, though his life should be protracted to the term of Methuselah's; yet one day or night under the wrath of God would make it a dear bargain. But,

1. It is certain sin hath no such pleasures to give you: They are embittered either by adverse strokes of providence from without, or painful and dreadful gripes and twinges of conscience within; Job xx. 14. "His meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him."

2. It is certain the time of a sinner is near its period when he is at the height of his pleasure in sin: For look, as high delights in God speak the maturity of a soul for heaven, and it will not be long before such be in heaven; so the heights of delight in sin, answerably speak the maturity of such a soul for hell, and it will not be long ere it be there. Sin is now a big embryo, and speedily the soul travails with death.

3. According to the measure of delights men have had in sin, will be the degrees and measures of their torments in hell, Rev. xviii. 7. so much torment and sorrow, as there was delight and pleasure in sin.

4. To conclude, "the pleasures of sin are but for a season, as you read, Heb. xi. 25. but the wrath of God in hell is for ever and ever. There is a time when the pleasures of sin cannot be called pleasures to come, but the wrath of God that will still be wrath to come. Oh! consider for what a trifle you sell your souls. When Lysimachus parted with his kingdom for a draught of water, he said when he had drank it, *For how short a pleasure have I sold a kingdom!* And Jonathan lamented, 1 Sam. xiv. 43. "I tasted but a little honey, and I must die." Satan would not charm so powerfully as he doth with the pleasures of sin, if this point were well believed, and heartily applied.

Inf. 3. *What a matchless madness is it to cast the soul into God's prison, to save the body out of man's prison!*

Men have their prisons, and God hath his: But because the one

is an object of sense, and the other an object of faith, that only is feared, and this slighted all over this unbelieving world, except by a very small number of men, who tremble at the word of God. Now this I say is the height of madness, and will appear to be so in a just collation of both in a few particulars. (1.) Man's prison restrains the body only, God's prison soul and body, Mat. x. 28. The spirits of men (as my text speaks) are the prisoners there. Oh ! what a vast odds doth this single difference make ! A thousand times more than the captivating and binding of the greatest king or emperor differs from the imprisonment of a poor mechanic or vagrant beggar. (2.) In man's prison there are many comforts and unspeakable refreshments from heaven, but in God's prison none, but the direct contrary. You read of the apostles, Acts xvi. 25. how they sang in the prison : The Spirit of God made them a banquet of heavenly joys, and they could not but sing at it : Though their feet were in the stocks, their spirits were never more at liberty. Algerius dated his letters *from the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison ; where, saith he, flows the sweetest nectar*. Another tells us, Christ was always kind to him : but since he became a prisoner for him, he even overcame himself in kindness. *I verily think (saith he) the chains of my Lord are all overlaid with pure gold, and his cross perfumed*. But the worst terrors of the prisoners in hell come from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thes. i. 9. "God is a terror to them." (3.) The cause for which a man is cast into prison by men, may be his duty, and so his conscience must be at last quiet, if not joyful in such sufferings. So was it with Paul, Acts xxviii. 20. "For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain : " This diffuses joy and peace through the conscience into the whole man. But the cause for which men are cast into God's prison, is their sin and guilt, which arm their own consciences against them, and make them, as you heard before, self-tormentors, terrors to themselves. What odds is here ! (4.) In man's prison the most excellent company and sweet society may be found. Paul and Silas were fellow-prisoners. In queen Mary's days the most excellent company to be found in England was in the prisons : Prisons were turned into churches. But in God's prison no better society is to be found than that of devils and damned reprobates, Mat. xxv. 41. (5.) In man's prison there is hope of a comfortable deliverance, but in God's prison none : Mat. v. 26. "Thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the last mite." It is an everlasting prison.

Compare these few obvious particulars, and judge then what is to be thought of that man, who stands readier to cast himself into any guilt, than into the least suffering. What is it but as if a man should offer his neck to the sword, to save his hand ? The Lord

convince us what trifles our estates, liberties, and lives are to our souls, or to the peace and purity of our consciences.

Inf. 4. What an invaluable mercy is the pardon of sin, which sets the soul out of all danger of going into this prison! When the debt is satisfied, a man may walk as boldly before the prison door as he doth before his own: They that owe nothing fear no bailiffs. It is the law (as I said before) that commits men to prison, a mittimus is but an instrument of law; but the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them that believe, Rom. viii. 4. Yea, they are made *the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. There can be no process of law against them. For who shall condemn when it is God that justifieth? Rom. viii. 33, 34. And that Divine Justice might be no bar to our faith and comfort, he adds, *It is Christ that died*; and yet farther, to assure us that his death had made plenary satisfaction to God for all our sins and debts, it is added, *yea, rather, that is risen again*: q. d. If the debts of believers to God were not fully paid and satisfied for by the blood of Christ, how comes it to pass that our Surety is discharged, as by his resurrection he appears to be! Oh believer! thy bonds are cancelled, the handwriting that was against thee is nailed to the cross, the blood of Christ hath done that for thee that all the gold and silver in the world could not do, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "It is a * counterprice fully answering to thy debts," Mat. xx. 28. And hence, to the eternal joy of thy heart, result three properties of thy pardon, which are able to make thine eyes gush out with tears of joy whilst thou art reading of it.

1. It is a free pardon to thy soul; though it cost Christ dear, it costs thee nothing. We have redemption, even "the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7. The project of it was God's, not thine; the price for it was Christ's blood, not thine; the glory and riches of free grace are illustriously displayed in thy forgiveness.

2. It is as full as it is free; a complete and perfect cause produceth a complete and perfect effect, Acts xiii. 39. "Justified from all things." Whatever thy sins be for nature, number, or circumstances of aggravations, they cannot exceed the value of the meritorious cause of remission. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

3. It must be as firm as it is free and full, even an irrevocable pardon for evermore. Christ did not shed his blood at a hazard; the way of justification by faith, makes the promise sure, Rom. iv. 16. The justified shall never come again under condemnation.

* *Αντίτιμον* est pretium ex adverso respondens.

Oh the unspeakable joy that flows from this spring! Oh the triumphs of faith upon this foundation!

Is it not ravishing, melting, overwhelming, and amazing, to think thus with thyself! Here sit I with a joyful plenary free pardon of sin in my hand, whilst many, who never sinned to that height and degree I have, lie groaning, howling, sweating, and trembling under the indignation of God, poured out like fire upon their souls in hell. A greater sinner saved, and lesser damned. Oh how unspeakably sweet is that rest into which my terrified and disquieted soul is come by faith! Rom. v. 1. Heb. iv. 3. "We which have believed, do enter into rest." Oh blessed calm after a dreadful tempest! This poor breast of mine was lately panting, sweating, trembling under the horrors of wrath to come, terrified with the visions of hell. No other sound was in mine ears, but that of fiery indignation to devour the adversaries. Oh what price can be put upon my *quictus est*! What value upon a pardon, delivered as it were at the ladder's foot! Oh precious hand of faith that receives it! But oh the most precious blood of Christ which purchased it! If Satan now come with his accusations, the law with its comminations, death with its dreadful summons, I have in a readiness to answer them all.

Here is the law, the wrath of God, and everlasting burnings, the just demerit of sin upon one side, and a poor sinful creature on the other: But the covenant of grace hath solved all. An act of *oblivion* is past in heaven, "I will forgive their iniquities, and their sins and transgressions will I remember no more." In this act of grace my soul is included; I am in Christ, and there is no condemnation. Die I must, but damned I shall not be: My debts are paid, my bonds are cancelled, my conscience is quieted: let death do its worst, it shall do me no harm; that blood which satisfied God, may well satisfy me.

Infer. 5. *How amazingly sad and deplorable is the security and stillness of the consciences of sinners, under all their own guilt, and the immediate danger of God's everlasting wrath!*

Philosophers observe that before an earth-quake the wind lies, and the weather is exceeding calm and still, not a breath of wind going. So it is in the consciences of many, just before the tempest and storm of God's wrath pours down upon them. What a golden morning opened upon Sodom, and began that fatal day! Little did they imagine showers of fire had been ready to fall from so pleasant and serene a sky as they saw over their heads. How secure, still, and unconcerned are those to-day, who it may be shall rage, roar, and tremble in hell to-morrow! Cæsar hearing of a citizen of Rome who was deep in debt, and yet slept soundly,

would needs have his pillow, as supposing there was some strange, charming virtue in it.

It is wonderful to consider what shifts men make to keep their consciences in that stillness and quiet they do, under such loads of guilt, and threatenings of wrath, ready to be executed upon them. It must be strong *opium* that so stupifies and benumbs their consciences; and upon inquiry into the matter we shall find it to be the effect of,

1. A strong delusion of Satan.

2. A spiritual judicial stroke of God.

1. This stillness of conscience, upon the brink of damnation, proceeds from the strong delusions of Satan, blinding their eyes, and feeding their false hopes: He removes the evil day at many years imaginary distance from them, and interposeth many a fair day betwixt them and it, and in that interposed season, time enough to prepare for it; without such an artifice as this, his house would be in an uproar, but this keeps all in peace, Luke xi. 21. "By presuming he feeds their hopes, and by their hopes destroys their souls *." Some he diverts from all serious thoughts of this day, by the pleasures, and others by the cares of this life; and so that day cometh upon them unawares, Luke xxi. 34.

2. This stillness of conscience, in so miserable and dangerous a state, is the effect of a spiritual, judicial stroke of God upon the children of wrath. That is a dreadful word, Isa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes:" The eye and ear are the two principal doors or inlets to the heart; when these are shut, the heart must needs be insensible, as the † fat of the body is. There is a spirit of a deep sleep poured out judicially upon some men, Isa. xxix. 10. such as that upon Adam when God took a rib from his side, and he felt it not: But this is upon the soul, and is the same as to give up a man to a reprobate sense.

Infer. 6. *The case of distressed consciences upon earth is exceeding sad, and calls upon all for the tenderest pity, and utmost help from men.*

You see the labourings of conscience, under the sense of guilt and wrath, is a special part of the torments of hell, of which there is not a livelier emblem or picture, than the distresses of conscience in this world.

It must be thankfully confessed there are two great differences betwixt the terrors of conscience here, and there: One, in the

* *Presumendo sperant, et sperando percutunt.*

† Naturalists agree that fat not only makes animals unruly, but also, is void of sensation. *Glass.*

degrees of anguish, the other, in the reliefs of that anguish. The ordinary distresses of conscience here, compared with those of the damned, are as the flame of a candle to a fiery oven, a mild and gentle fire; or as the sparks that fly out of the top of a chimney, to the dreadful eruption of Vesuvius, or mount Etna. Besides, these are capable of relief, but those are unrelievable: Their hearts die, because their hope is perished from the Lord.

But yet of all the miseries and distresses incident to men in this world, none like those of distressed consciences; the terrors of God set themselves in array, or are drawn up in battalia against the soul, Job vi. 4. "Whilst I suffer thy terrors (saith Heman) I am "distracted," Psal. lxxxviii. 15. Yea, they not only distract, but cut off the spirit, as he adds, ver. 16. They lick up the very spirit of a man, and none can bear them, Prov. xviii. 14. for now a man hath to do immediately with God; yea, with the wrath of the great and dreadful God: And this wrath, which is the most acute and sharp of all torments, falls upon the most tender and sensible part, the spirit and mind which now lies open and naked before him to be wounded by it. No creature can administer the least relief, by the application of any temporal comfort or refreshment to it. Gold and silver, wife and children, meat and melody, signify no more than the drawing on of a silk stocking to cure the *paroxysms* of the *gout*.

All that can be done for their relief, is by seasonable, judicious, and tender applications of spiritual remedies: And what can be done, ought to be done for them. What heart can hear a voice like that of Job, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye "my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me;" and not melt into compassion over them? Is there a word of wisdom in thy heart, let thy tongue apply it to the relief of thy distressed brother. Whilst his heart meditates *terror*, let thine meditate his *succour*. It is not impossible but thou, who lendest a friendly hand to another, mayest, ere long, need one thyself; and he that hath ever felt the terrors of the Almighty upon his soul, hath motive enough to draw forth the bowels of his pity to another in the like case.

Alas for poor distressed souls, who have either none about them that understand, and are able and willing to speak a word in season to their weary souls, or too many about them to exasperate their sorrows, and persecute them whom God hath smitten. You that have both ability and opportunity for it, are under the strongest engagements in the world to endeavour their relief with all faithfulness, seriousness, compassion, and constancy. Did Christ shed his blood for the saving of souls, and wilt not thou spend thy breath for them? Shall any man that has found mercy from God, shew none to his brother? God forbid. A soul in hell is out of

your reach; but these that are in the suburbs of hell are not: The candle of intense sorrow is put to the thread of their miserable life; and should they be suffered to drop into hell, whilst you stand by as unconcerned spectators of such a tragedy, you will have little peace. Your unmercifulness to their souls will be a wound to your own.

Inf. 7. Be hence informed of the evil that is in sin; be convinced of the evil that is in it, by the eternal misery that followeth it.

If hell be out of measure dreadful, then sin must be out of measure sinful: the torments of hell do not exceed the demerit of sin, though they exceed the understandings of men to conceive them. God will lay upon no man more than is right. Sin is the founder of hell; all the miseries and torments there, are but the treasures of wrath which sinners, in all ages, have been treasuring up; and how dreadful soever it be, it is but the *οψωνία*, the recompense which is meet, Rom. vi. 23. * “The wages of sin is “death.”

We have slight thoughts of sin; *Fools make a mock of sin*: But if the Lord by the convictions of men’s consciences did but lead them through the chambers of death, and give them a sight of the wrath to come; could we but see the piles that are made in hell (as the prophet calls them, Isa. xxx. 53.) to maintain the flames of vengeance to eternity; could we but understand in what dialect the damned speak of sin, who see the treasures of wrath broken up to avenge it, surely it would alter our apprehensions of sin, and strike cold to the very hearts of sinners.

Cannot the extremity and eternity of hell-torments exceed the evil that is in sin? What words then can express the evil of it? Hell-flames have the nature of a punishment, but not of an atonement.

O think on this, you that look upon sin as the veriest trifle, that will sin for the value of a penny, that look upon all the humiliations, broken-hearted confessions, and bitter moans of the saints under sin, as frenzy, or melancholy, slighting them as a company of half-witted hypochondriac persons! Thou that never hadst one sick night, or sad day in all thy life upon the account of sin, let me tell thee that breast of thine must be the seat of sorrow; that frothy, airy spirit of thine must be acquainted with emphatical sobs and groans. God grant it may be on this side hell, by effectual repentance; else it must be there, in the extremity and eternity of sorrows.

Inf. 8. What enemies are they to the souls of men, who are Satan’s instruments, to draw them into sin, or who suffer sin to lie upon them!

When there were but two persons in the world, one drew the other into sin; and among the millions of men and women now in

the world, where are there two to be found that have in no case been snares to draw some into sin? Some tempt designedly, taking the devil's work out of his hands; others virtually and consequentially, by examples, which have a compelling power to draw others with them into sin. The first sort are among the worst of sinners, Prov. i. 10. the latter are among the best of saints; see Gal. ii. 14. whose conversation is so much in heaven, that nothing falls out in the course thereof, which may not further some or other in their way to hell.

Among wicked men, there are five sorts eminently accessory to the guilt and ruin of other men's souls. (1.) Loose professors, whose lives give their lips the lie; whose conversations make their professions blush. (2.) Scandalous apostates, whose fall is more prejudicial than their profession was ever beneficial to others. (3.) Cruel persecutors, who make the lives, liberties, and estates of men the occasion of the ruin of their consciences. (4.) Ignorant and unfaithful ministers, who strengthen the hands of the wicked, that they should not return from their wickedness. (5.) Wicked relations, who quench and damp every hopeful beginning of conviction and affection in their friends. Of all which I shall distinctly speak in the next discourse, to which, therefore, I remit it at present.

And many there are who suffer sin to lie upon others, without a wise and seasonable reproof to recover them.

O what cruelty to souls is here! The day is coming when they will curse the time that ever they knew you: It is possible you may repent, but then, it may be, those, whose souls you have helped to ruin, are gone, and quite out of your reach. The Lord make you sensible what you have done in season, lest your repentance come too late for yourselves and them also.

Inf. 2. How poor a comfort is it to him that carries all his sins out of this world with him, to leave much earthly treasure (especially if gotten by sin) behind him?

It is a poor consolation to be praised where thou art not, and tormented where thou art*; to purchase a life of pleasure to others on earth, at the price of thy own everlasting misery in hell. All the consolation, sensual, voluptuous, and oppressing worldlings have, is but this, that they were *coached to hell* in pomp and state, and have left the same *chariot* to bring their graceless children after them, in the same equipage, to the place of torments. There be five considerations provoking pity to them that are thus cast into a miserable eternity, and caution to all that are following after, in the same path

* *Quid prodest esse, quod esse non prodest.* Tertul.

First, That fatal mistake in the practical understanding and judgment of men deserves a compassionate lamentation, as the cause and reason of their eternal miscarriage and ruin. They looked upon trifles as things of greatest necessity, and the most necessary things as mere trifles; putting the greatest weight and value upon that which little concerned them, and none at all upon their greatest concernment in the whole world, Luke xii. 21.

Secondly, The perpetual diversions that the trifles of this world gave them from the main use and end of their time. O what a hurry and thick succession of earthly business and encumbrances filled up their days! So that they could find no time to go alone, and think of the awful and weighty concernments of the world to come, James v. 5.

Thirdly, The total waste and expence of the only season of salvation, about these vanishing, impertinent trifles, which is never more to be recovered, Eccles. ix. 10.

Fourthly, That these deluding shadows, the pleasures of a moment are all they had in exchange for their souls, a goodly price it was valued at, Mat. xvi. 26.

Fifthly, That by such a life they have not only ruined their own souls, but put their posterity, by their education of them in the same course of life, into the same path of destruction, in which they went to hell before them. Psal. xlix. 13. "Their posterity approve their saying."

Inf. 10. *How rational and commendable is the courage and resolution of those Christians who chuse to bear all the sufferings in this world from the hands of men, rather than to defile and wound their consciences with sin, and thereby expose their souls to the wrath of God for ever!*

That which men now call pride, humour, fancy, and stubbornness, will, one day, appear to be their great wisdom, and the excellency of their spirits. It is the tenderness of their consciences, not the pride and stoutness of their stomachs, which makes them inflexible to sin; they know the terrors of a wounded conscience, and had rather endure any other trouble from the hands of men, than fall by known sin into the hands of an angry God. Try them in other matters wherein the glory of God, and the peace or purity of their consciences are not concerned, and see if you can charge them with stubbornness and singularity, it was the excellency of the spirits of the primitive Christians, that they durst tell the emperor to his face, when he threatened them with torments; "Pardon us, O emperor, thou threatenest us with a prison, but

“God with hell*.” Do we call that ingenuity and good nature which makes the mind soft and tractable to temptations, and will rather venture upon guilt than be esteemed singular?

† Salvian tells us of some in his time, who were compelled to “be evil, lest they should be accounted vile.” And was that their excellency? May I not fitly apply the words of Salvian here: “O in what honour and repute is Christ among Christians, when religion shall make them base and ignoble!” He that understands what the punishment of sin will be in hell, should endure all things rather than yield to sin on earth. Indeed, if you that threaten and tempt others to violate their consciences, could bear the wrath of God for them in hell, it were somewhat; but we know there is no suffering by a *proxy* there; they tremble at the word of God, and have felt the burden of guilt, and dare not yield to sin, though they yield their estates and bodies to prevent it.

Inf. 11. How patiently should we endure the afflictions of this life, by which sin is prevented and purged?

The discipline of our spirits belongs to God the Father of spirits; he corrects us here that we may not be punished hereafter, 1 Cor. xi. 32. “We are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” It is better for us to groan under afflictions on earth, than to roar under revenging wrath in hell. Parents who are wise, as well as tender, had rather hear their children sob and cry under the rod, than stand with halters upon their necks on the ladder, bewailing the destructive indulgence of their parents.

Your chastisements, when sanctified, are preventive of all the misery opened before. It is therefore as unreasonable to murmur against God, because you smart under his rod, as it would be to accuse your dearest friend of cruelty, because he strained your arm to snatch you from the fall of a house or wall, which he saw ready to crush and overwhelm you in its ruins.

If we had less affliction, we should have more guilt. We see how apt we are to break over the hedge, and to go astray from God, with all the clogs of affliction designed for our restraint; what should we do if we had no clog at all? It is better for you to be whipped to heaven with all the rods of affliction, than coached to hell with all the pleasures of the world.

Christian, thy God sees, if thou do not, that all these troubles are few enough to save thee from sin and hell. Thy corruptions require all these, and all little enough. “If need be, ye are in heaviness,” 1 Pet. i. 6. If there be need for it, thy dearest

* *Ignosce imperator, tu carcerem minaris, Deus gehennam.*

† *Mali esse coguntur, ne viles habeantur.*

comforts on earth shall die, that thy soul may live; but if thy mortification to them render thy removal needless, thou and they shall live together. It is better to be preserved in brine, than to rot in honey. Sanctified afflictions working under the efficacy of the blood of Christ, are the safest way to our souls.

Inf. 12. How doleful a change doth the death of wicked men make upon them! from palaces on earth to the prison of hell.

No sooner has the soul of a wicked man stepped out of his own door at death, but the serjeants of hell are immediately upon it, serving the dreadful summons on the law-condemned wretch. This arrest terrifies it more than the hand-writing upon the plaster of the wall did him, Dan. v. 5. How are all a man's apprehensions changed in a moment! Out of what a deep sleep are most, and out of what a pleasant dream of heaven are some awaked and startled at death, by the dreadful arrest and summons of God to condemnation.

How quickly would all a sinner's mirth be damped, and turned into howlings in this world, if conscience were but thoroughly awakened! It is but for God to change our apprehensions now, and it would be done in a moment: but the eyes of most men's souls are not opened till death hath shut their bodily eyes; and then how sudden, and how sad a change is made in one day!

O think what it is to pass from all the pleasures and delights of this world into the torments and miseries of that world; from a pleasant habitation into an infernal prison; from the depth of security to the extremity of desperation; from the arms and bosoms of dearest friends and relations, to the society of damned spirits! Lord, what a change is here; had a gracious change been made upon their hearts by grace, no such doleful change could have been made upon their state by death: little do their surviving friends think what they feel, or what is their estate in the other world whilst they are honouring their bodies with splendid and pompous funerals. None on earth have so much reason to fear death, to make much of life, and use all means to continue it, as those who will, and must be so great losers by the exchange.

Inf. 13. See here the certainty, and inevitableness of the judgment of the great day.

This prison which is continually filling with the spirits of wicked men is an undeniable evidence of it: for why is hell called a prison, and why are the spirits of men confined and chained there but with respect to the judgment of the great day? As there is a necessary connexion betwixt sin and punishment, so betwixt punishing and trying the offender; there are millions of souls in custody, a world of spirits in prison; these must be brought forth to their trial, for God will lay upon no man more than is right;

the legality of their *mittimus* to hell will be evidenced in their solemn day of trial. God hath therefore "appointed a day in " which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man " whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31.

Here sinners run in arrears, and contract vast debts; in hell they are seized and committed, at judgment tried and cast for the same. This will be a dreadful day, those that have spent so prodigally upon the patience of God, must now come to a severe account for all; they have past their particular judgment immediately after death, Eccl. xii. 7. Heb. ix. 27. By this they know how they shall speed in the general judgment, and how it shall be with them for ever, but though this private judgment secures their damnation sufficiently, yet it clears not the justice of God before angels and men sufficiently, and therefore they must appear once more before his bar, 2 Cor. v. 10. In the fearful expectation of this day, those trembling spirits now lie in prison, and that fearful expectation is a principal part of their present misery and torment. You that refuse to come to the throne of grace, see if you can refuse to make your appearance at the bar of justice; you that braved and brow-beat your ministers that warned you of it, see if you can out-brave your Judge too as you did them. Nothing more sure or awful than such a day as this.

Inf. 14. How much are ministers, parents, and all to whom the charge of souls is committed, bound to do all that in them lies to prevent their everlasting misery in the world to come!

The great apostle of the Gentiles found the consideration of the terror of the Lord as a spur urging and enforcing him to a ministerial faithfulness and diligence; 2 Cor. v. 11. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." And the same he presseth upon Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. "I charge thee " therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall " judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom; " preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; re- " prove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." O that those to whom so great a trust as the souls of men is committed, would labour to acquit themselves with all faithfulness therein, as Paul did, warning every one night and day with tears, that if we cannot prevent their ruin, which is most desirable; yet at least we may be able to take God to witness, as he did, that we are pure from the blood of all men.

Oh! consider, my brethren, if your faithful plainness and unwearyed diligence to save men's souls produce no other fruit but the hatred of you now; yet it is much easier for you to bear that, than that they and you too should bear the wrath of God for ever.

We have all of us personal guilt enough upon us, let us not add other men's guilt to our account: to be guilty of the blood of the meanest man upon earth, is a sin which will cry in your consciences; but to be guilty of the blood of souls, Lord, who can bear it! Christ thought them worthy his heart-blood, and are they not worth the expence of our breath? Did he sweat blood to save them, and will not we move our lips to save them? It is certainly a sore judgment to the souls of men, when such ministers are set over them as never understood the value of their people's souls, or were never heartily concerned about the salvation of their own souls.



MATTH. xvi. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

DIFFICULT duties need to be enforced with powerful arguments. In the 24th verse of this chapter, our Lord presseth upon his disciples the deepest and hardest duties of self-denial, acquaints them upon what terms they must be admitted into his service: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

This hard and difficult duty he enforceth upon them by a double argument, viz. From,

1. The vanity of all sinful shifts from it, ver. 25.

2. The value of their souls, which is imported in it, ver. 26.

They may shift off their duty to the loss of their souls, or save their souls by the loss of such trifles. If they esteem their souls above the world, and can be content to put all other things to the hazard for their salvation, making account to save nothing but them by Christianity; then they come up to Christ's terms, and may warrantably and boldly call him their Lord and Master; and to sweeten this choice to them, he doth, in my text, balance the soul and all the world, weighing them one against the other, and shews them the infinite odds and disproportion betwixt them: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

What is a man profited?] There is a plain meiosis in the phrase; and the meaning is, how inestimably and irreparably is a man damnified! what a soul-ruining bargain would a man make!

If he should gain the whole world.] There is a plain hyperbole

in this phrase; for it never was, nor ever will be the lot of any man to be the sole owner and possessor of the whole world *. But suppose all the power, pleasure, wealth, and honour of the whole world were bid and offered in exchange for a man's soul; what a dear purchase would it be at such a rate! "What were this, says "one †, but to win Venice, and then be hanged at the gate of "it?" As that man acts like a mad man, that goes about to purchase a treasure of gold with the loss of his life; for life being lost, what is all the gold in the world to him? he can have no enjoyment of it, or comfort in it: so here, what is all the world, or as many worlds as there are creatures in it, when the soul is lost, if he gain this?

And lose his own soul.] The comparison lies here betwixt one single soul and the whole world. The whole world is no price for the poorest, meanest, and most despised soul that lives in it.

By losing the soul, we are not to understand the destruction of its being, but of its happiness and comfort, the cutting it off from God, and all the hopes of his favour and enjoyment for ever. This is the loss here intended, a loss never to be repaired. The whole world can be no recompence for the loss to the soul, if it be but the loss of its purity or peace for a time; much less can it recompence the loss of the soul, in the loss of all its happiness for ever. When a man's chief happiness is finally lost, then is his soul lost: for what benefit can it be, nay, how great a misery must it be, to have a being perpetuated in torments for ever? ‡ This is the *fine* or *mulct* which is set upon sin, as some render the word. What shall a man gain by such pleasures, for which God will *mulct*, or *fine* him at the rate or price of his own soul? That is, of all the happiness, joy and comfort of it to all eternity.

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? || The question aggravates the sense, and amplifies the loss and damage of the man that sells his soul for the whole world. There is no recompence in all the world for the hazard or danger of the soul one hour; nor would a man that understands what a soul and eternity are, put them into danger for ten thousand worlds, much less for one penny, yea, for nothing, as many do: but to barter or exchange it for the world, to take any thing in lieu of it; this is the height of madness. "The way of buying in former times was not by

* By this hypothetical hyperbole is denoted the great atrociousness of losing eternal salvation. *Glassius.*

† *Non magis juvabitur, quam qui acquirat Venetias, ipse vero suspendatur ad portam.* Paræus in loc.

‡ *Anima vero sua mulctetur*, i. e. If one is punished with the loss of his own soul. *Bez. Maldon.*

|| *Interrogatio exaggerans.*

“money, but by the exchange of one commodity for another;” and to this custom * Brugensis thinks this phrase is allusive. Now, what commodity is found in all the world; or who, that is not blinded by the god of this world, can think that the whole world itself, if all the rocks in it were rocks of diamonds, and the seas and rivers were liquid gold, is a commodity of equivalent worth to his own soul? Hence two notes arise naturally.

Doct. 1. *That one soul is of more value than the whole world.*

Doct. 2. *How precious and invaluable soever the soul of man is, it may be lost and cast away for ever.*

I begin with the first.

Doct. 1. *That one soul is of more value than the whole world.*

I need not spend much time in the proof of it, when you have considered, that he who bought them, hath here weighed and valued them; and that the point before us is the result and conclusion of one that hath the best reason to know the true worth of them. That which I have to do is to gather out of the scriptures the particulars; which, put together, make up the full demonstration of the point, And,

1. The invaluable worth of souls appears from the manner of their creation. They were created immediately by God, as hath been proved, and that not without the deliberation of the whole Trinity; Gen. i. 26. “Let us make man.” For the production of other creatures, it was enough to give out the word of his command. “Let there be light, let the earth and the waters bring forth;” but when he comes to man, then you have no *FIAT*, *let there be*, but he puts his own hand immediately to it, as to the master-piece of the whole creation: yea, a council is called about it; *Let us*, implying the just consultation and deliberation of all the persons in the Godhead about it, that our hearts might be raised to the expectation of some extraordinary work to follow; great counsels and wise debates being both the forerunners and foundations of great actions and events to ensue thereupon. Thus Elihu in Job xxxv. 10. “None saith, Where is God my Makers?” And David, in Psal. cxlix. 2. “Let Israel rejoice in his Makers:” in both places the word is plural. The consultation here is only amongst the divine Persons, no angels are called to this council-table, the whole matter was to be conducted by the wisdom, and

* *Ανταλλάγμα* vocat id quo dato, redimitur aliquid; juxta priscorum commercia, quæ non moneta, sed rerum permutatione constabant. Brugens.

effected by the power of God; and therefore there was no need to consult with any but himself, the wisdom of angels being from him: but this great council shews what an excellent creature was now to be produced, and the excellency of that creature man was principally in his soul; for the bodies of other creatures, which were made by the word of his command, are as beautiful, elegant, and neat as the body of man; yea, and in some respects more excellent. The soul then was that rare piece which God in so condescending an expression tells us was created with the deliberation of the God-head; those great and excellent Persons laid their heads, as it were, together to project its being.

And by the way, this may smartly check the pride and arrogance of souls, who dare take it upon them to teach God, as murmurs at his disposals of us. Shall that soul which is the product of his wisdom and counsel, dare to instruct or counsel its maker? But that by the by. You see there is a transcendent dignity and worth in the soul of man above all other beings in the world, by the peculiar way of its production into the number of created beings: no wise man deliberates long, or calls a council about ordinary matters, much less the All-wise God.

2. The soul hath in itself an intrinsic worth and excellency, worthy of that divine Original whence it sprang: view it in its noble faculties, and admirable powers, and it will appear to be a creature upon which God hath laid out the riches of his wisdom and power.

There you shall find a mind susceptible of all light, both natural and spiritual, shining as the candle of God in the inner man, closing with truth, as the iron doth with the attractive loadstone; a shop in which all arts and sciences are laboured and formed: what are all the famous libraries and monuments of learning, but so many systems of thoughts, laboured and perfected in the active inquisitive minds of men? Truth is its natural and delectable object; it pursues eagerly after it, and even spends itself and the body too in the chase and prosecution of truth; when it lies deep, as a subterranean treasure*, the mind sends out innumerable thoughts, reinforcing each other in thick successions, to dig for, and compass that invaluable treasure; if it be disguised by misrepresentations and vulgar prejudice, and trampled in the dirt under that disguise, there is an ability in the mind to discern it by some lines and features, which are all well known to it, and both own, honour, and vindicate it under all that dirt and obloquy, with more respect than a man will take up a piece of gold, or a sparkling diamond out of the mire: it searches after it by many painful deductions of reason,

* *Veritas in puteo.* i. e. Truth must be drawn from first principles.

and * triumphs more in the discovery of it, than in all earthly treasures; no gratification of sense like that of the mind, when it grasps its prey for which it hunted.

The mind passes through all the works of creation, it views the several creatures on earth, considers the fabric, use, and beauty of animals, the signatures of plants, penetrating thereby into their nature and virtues: it views the vast ocean, and the large train of causes laid together in all these things for the good of man, by God, whose name it reads in the most diminutive creature it beholds on earth.

It can, in a moment, mount itself from earth to heaven, view the face thereof, describe the motions of the sun in the ecliptic, calculate tables for the motions of the planets and fixed stars, invent convenient cycles for the computation of time, foretel, at a great distance, the dismal eclipses of the sun and moon to the very digit, and the portentous conjunctions of the planets, to the very minute of their ingress. These are the pleasant employments of the understanding.

But there is a higher game at which this eagle plays; it reckons itself all this while employed as much beneath its capacity, as Domitian in catching flies; though these be lawful and pleasant exercises, when it hath leisure for them, yet it is fitted for a much nobler exercise, even to penetrate the glorious mysteries of redemption, to trace redeeming love through all the astonishing methods, and manifold discoveries of it; and yet higher than all this, it is capable of an immediate sight, or facial vision of the blessed God; short of which it receives no pleasure that is fully agreeable to its noble power and infinite appetite.

View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as † one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. God accepts its offering, though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent soever be the matter of it.

View the conscience and thoughts with their self-reflective abilities, wherein the soul retires into itself, and sits concealed from all

* Archimedes, when he made a valuable discovery of a new truth, leapt out of the bath for joy, crying, I have found it, I have found it.

† Culverwell.

eyes but his that made it, judging its own actions, and censuring its estate; viewing its face in its own glass, and correcting the indecencies it discovers there: things of greatest moment and importance are silently transacted in its council-chamber betwixt the soul and God; so remote from the knowledge of all creatures, that neither angels, devils, nor men, can know what is doing there, but by uncertain guess, or revelation from God*: here it impleads, condemns†, and acquits itself as at a privy session, with respect to the judgment of the great day: here it meets with the best of comforts, and with the worst of terrors.

Take a survey of its passions and affections, and you will find them admirable: see how they are placed by divine Wisdom in the soul, some for defence and safety, others for delight and pleasure. Anger actuates the spirits, and rouseth its courage, enabling it to break through difficulties: Fear keeps centinel, watching upon all dangers that approach us: Hope forestalls the good, and anticipates the joys of the next life, and thereby supports and strengthens the soul under all the discouragements and pressures of the present life: Love unites us to the chiefest good: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him:" Zeal is the dagger which love draws in God's cause and quarrel, to secure itself from sin, and testify its resentments of God's dishonour.

O what a divine spark is the soul of man! well might Christ prefer it in dignity to the whole world.

3. The worth of a soul may be gathered and discerned from its subjective capacity and hability both of grace and glory. It is capable of all the graces of the Spirit, of being filled with the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19. to live to God here, and with God for ever. What excellent graces do adorn some souls? How are all the rooms richly hanged with divine and costly hangings, that God may dwell in them! This makes it like the carved works of the temple, overlaid with pure gold; here is glory upon glory, a new creation upon the old; in the innermost parts of some souls is a spiritual altar erected with this inscription. *Holiness to the Lord*: here the soul offers up itself to God in the sacred flames of love; and here it sacrifices its vile affections, devoting them to destruction, to the glory of its God: here God walks with delight, even a delight beyond what he takes in all the stately structures and magnificently adorned temples in the whole world, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

No other soul besides man's is marriageable to Christ, or capable of espousals to the King of glory: they were not designed, and therefore not endued with a capacity for such an honour as this: but

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

† Rom. ii. 15. 2 Cor. i. 12.

such a capacity hath every soul, even the meanest on earth, and such honour have all his saints: others may be, but they are betrothed to Christ in this world, 2 Cor. xi. 2. and shall be presented without spot before him in the world to come, Eph. v. 27.

It is now a lovely and excellent creature in its naked, natural state; much more beautiful and excellent in its sanctified and gracious state: but what shall we say, or how shall we conceive of it, when all spots of sin are perfectly washed off its beautiful face in heaven, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon it! when its filthy garments are taken away, and the pure robes of perfect holiness, as well as righteousness, superinduced upon this excellent creature! If the imperfect beauty of it, begun in sanctification, enamoured its Saviour, and made him say, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the chains of thy neck;" what will its beauty, and his delight in it be in the state of perfect glorification! As we imagine the circles in the heavens to be vastly greater than those we view upon the globe, so must we imagine in the case before us.

4. The preparations God makes for souls in heaven, speak their great worth and value. When you lift up your eyes to heaven, and behold that spangled azure canopy beset and inlaid with so many golden studs and sparkling gems, you see but the floor or pavement of that place which God hath prepared for some souls. He furnished this world for us before he put us into it; but, as delightful and beautiful as it is, it is no more to be compared with the Father's house in heaven, than the smallest ruined chapel your eyes ever beheld, is to be compared with Solomon's temple, when it stood in all its shining glory.

When you see a stately and magnificent structure built, richest hangings and furniture prepared to adorn it, you conclude some great persons are to come thither: such preparations speak the quality of the guests.

Now heaven, yea, the heaven of heavens, the palace of the great King, the presence-chamber of the Godhead, is prepared, not only by God's decree and Christ's death; but by his ascension thither in our names, and as our forerunner, for all renewed and redeemed souls. John xiv. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you."

And, where is the place prepared for them, but in his Father's house? The same place, the very same house where the Father, Son, and Spirit themselves do dwell: such is the love of Christ to souls, that he will not dwell in one house, and they in another; but, as he speaks, John xii. 26. "Where I am, there shall my servant also be." There is room enough in the Father's house

for Christ and all the souls he redeemed to live and dwell together for evermore. His ascension thither was in the capacity of a common or public person, to take livery and seisin of those many mansions for them, which are to be filled with their inhabitants, as they come thither in their respective times and orders.

5. The great price with which they were redeemed and purchased, speaks their dignity and value. No wise man will purchase a trifle at a great price, much less the most wise God. Now the redemption of every soul stood in no less than the most precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "You know" (saith the apostle there) that we were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood "of Christ, as a lamb without blemish or spot." All the gold and silver in the world was no ransom for one soul; nay, all the blood of the creatures, had it been shed as a sacrifice to the glory of justice, or even the blood which is most dear to us, as being derived from our own; I mean, the blood of our dear children, even of our first-born, the beginning of our strength, which usually has the strength of affection: I say, none of these could purchase a pardon for the smallest sin that ever any soul committed, much less was it able to purchase the soul itself, Mic. vi. 6, 7. "Thousands of" "rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," or our *first-born*, are no ransom to God *for the sin of the soul*. It is only the precious blood of Christ that is a just ransom or counter-price, as it is called, Matth. xx. 28.

Now, who can compute the value of that blood? Such was the worth of the blood of Christ, which, by the communication of properties, is truly stiled the blood of God, that one drop of it is above the estimations of men and angels; and yet, before the soul of the meanest man or woman in the world could be redeemed, every drop of his blood must be shed; for no less than his death could be a price for our souls. Hence then we evidently discern an invaluable worth in souls: A whole kingdom is taxed, when a king is to be ransomed; the delight and darling of God's soul must die, when our souls are to be redeemed. O the worth of souls!

6. This evidences the transcendent dignity and worth of souls, that *eternity is stampt upon their actions*, and theirs only, of all the beings in this world. The acts of souls are immortal as their nature is; whereas the actions of other animals, having neither moral goodness nor moral evil in them, pass away as their beings do.

The apostle therefore, in Gal. vi. 7. compares the actions of men in this world to seed sown, and tells us of everlasting fruits we shall reap from them in the next life; they have the same respect to a future account that seed hath to the harvest; "He that soweth

“iniquity shall reap vanity,” *i. e.* everlasting disappointment and misery, Prov. xxii. 8. and “they that now sow in tears, shall then “reap in joy,” Prov. xxvi. 5. Every gracious action is the seed of joy, and every sinful action the seed of sorrow; and this makes the great difference betwixt the actions of a rational soul, and those done by beasts: and if it were not so, man would then be wholly swayed by sense and present things, as the beasts are, and all religion would vanish with this distinction of actions.

Our actions are considerable two ways, physically and morally; in the first sense they are transient, in the last permanent; a word is past as soon as spoken, but yet it must and will be recalled and brought into the judgment of the great day, Mat. xii. 36. Whatever therefore a man shall speak, think, or do, once spoken, thought, or done, it becomes eternal, and abides for ever. Now, what is it that puts so great a difference betwixt human and brutal actions, but the excellent nature of the reasonable soul? It is this which stamps immortality upon human actions, and is at once a clear proof both of the immortality and dignity of the soul of man above all other creatures in this world.

7. The contentions of both worlds, the strife of heaven and hell about the soul of man, speaks it a most precious and invaluable treasure.

The soul of man is the prize about which heaven and hell contend: the great design of heaven is to save it, and all the plots of hell to ruin it. Man is a borderer betwixt both kingdoms, he lives here upon the confines of the spiritual and material world; and therefore Scaliger fitly calls him *Utriusque mundi nexus*, one in whom both worlds meet: his body is of the earth, earthly; his soul the offspring of the Deity, heavenly. It is then no wonder to find such tugging and pulling this way and that way, upward and downward, such sallies from heaven to rescue and save it, such excursions from hell to captivate and ruin it.

The infinite wisdom of God hath laid the plot and design for its salvation by Christ in so great depth of counsel, that the angels of heaven are astonished at it, and desire to pry into it. Christ in pursuance of this eternal project, came from heaven professedly to seek and to save lost souls, Luke xix. 10. He compares himself to a good shepherd, who leaveth the ninety and nine to seek one lost sheep, and having found it, brings it home upon his shoulders, rejoicing that he hath found it, Luke xv. 7.

Hell employs all its skill and policy, sets a-work all wiles and stratagems to destroy and ruin it; 1 Pet. v. 8. “Your adversary “the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” The strong man armed gets the first possession of the soul, and with all his forces and policies labours to secure it as his

property, Luke xi. 21. Christ raises all the spiritual militia, the very *posse cæli*, the powers of heaven, to rescue it, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And do heaven and earth thus contend, think you, *de lana caprina*, for a thing of nought? No, no, if there were not some singular and peculiar excellency and worth in man's soul, both worlds would never tug and pull at this rate which should win that prize. It was a great argument of the worth and excellency of Homer, that incomparable poet, that seven cities contended for the honour of his nativity.

Επὶ αὖ πόλεις διεζίζεσσι περὶ ριζαν Ομηρεν,
Σμυρνα, Ρόδος, Κολοφών, Σαλαμίν, Χίος, Ἀργός, Ἀθῆναι.

Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Chius, Argos, and Athens, were all at strife about one poor man, who should crown themselves with the honour of his birth: but when heaven and hell shall contend about a soul, certainly it much more speaks the dignity of it, than the contention of several cities for one Homer.

What are all the wooings, expostulations, and passionate beseechings of Christ's ministers? What are all the convictions of conscience, and the strong impressions made upon the affections? What are all the strokes from heaven upon men in the way of sin? I say, what are all these but the efforts of heaven to draw souls out of the snares of hell?

And what are the hellish temptations that men feel in their hearts, the alluring objects presented to their eyes, the ensnaring examples that are set round about them, but the attempts of Satan, if possible, to draw the souls of men into the same condemnation and misery with himself?

Would heaven and hell be up in arms, as it were, and strive at this rate for nothing? Thy soul, O man, how vilely soever thou depreciatest and slightest it, is of high esteem, a rich purchase, a creature of nobler rank than thou art aware of. The wise merchant knows the value of gold and diamonds, though ignorant Indians would part with them for glass beads and tinsel toys. And this leads us to

8. The eighth evidence of the invaluable worth of souls, which is the joy in heaven, and the rage in hell, for the gain and loss of the soul of man.

Christ, who came from heaven, and well knew the frame and disposition of the inhabitants of that city, tells us, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 7, 10. * No sooner is the heart of a sin-

* As often as we do good, so often the angels are glad, and the devils are sad?

ner darted with conviction, broken with sorrow for sin, and begins to cry, "men and brethren, what shall I do?" but the news is quickly in heaven, and sets all the city of God a rejoicing at it, as is in the chief city of a kingdom when a young prince is born.

We never read that Christ laughed in all his time on earth; but we read that he once rejoiced in spirit, Luke x. 21. And what was the occasion of that his joy, but the success of the gospel in the salvation of the souls of men? Now, certainly it must be some great good that so affects Christ, and all his angels in heaven at the sight of it; the degree of a wise man's joy is according to the value of the object thereof: No man that is wise will rejoice and feel his heart leap within him for gladness at a small or common thing.

And as there is joy in heaven for the saving, so certainly there is grief and rage in hell for the loss of a soul. No sooner had God, by Paul's ministry, converted one poor Lydia, at Philippi, whither he was called by an immediate express from heaven for that service, but the devil put all the city into an uproar, as if an enemy had landed on their coast; and raised a violent persecution, which quickly drave him thence, Acts xvi. 9, 14, 22.

And indeed what are all the fierce and cruel persecutions of God's faithful ministers, but so many efforts of the rage and malice of hell against them, for plucking souls as so many captives and preys out of his paws? for this he owes them a spight, and will be sure to pay them, if ever he get them at an advantage. But all this joy and grief demonstrates the high and great value of the prize which is won by heaven and lost by hell.

9. The institution of gospel-ordinances, and the appointment of so many gospel-officers purposely for the saving of souls, is no small evidence of their value and esteem.

No man would light and maintain a lamp fed with golden oil, and keep it burning from age to age, if the work to be done by the light of it were not of a very precious and important nature: what else are the dispensations of the gospel, but lamps burning with golden oil to light souls to heaven? Zech. iv. 2, 3, 4, and 12. compared: A magnificent vision is there represented to the prophet, viz. a candlestick of gold with a bowl or cistern upon the top of it, and seven shafts with seven lamps at the ends thereof, all lighted: And that these lamps might have a constant supply of oil, without any accessory human help, there are represented (as growing by the candlestick) two fresh and green olive trees on each side thereof, ver. 3. which do empty out of themselves golden oil, ver. 12. na-

and as often as we depart from good, so often the devils rejoice, and the angels are defrauded of their joy. *Aug.*

turally dropping and distilling it into that bowl, and the two pipes thereof to feed the lamps continually. Under this stately emblem you have a lively representation of the spiritual gifts and graces distilled by the Spirit into the ministers of the gospel for the use and benefit of the church, as you find not only by the angel's exposition of it here, but by the Spirit's allusion to it, and accommodation of it in Rev. xi. 3, 4. See herein what price God puts upon the salvation of souls: Gospel-lamps are maintained for their sakes, not with the sweat of ministers brows, or the expence and waste of their spirits, but by the precious gifts and graces of God's Spirit continually dropping into them for the use and service of souls. These ministerial gifts and graces are Christ's ascension-gifts, Eph. iv. 8. "When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men;" and what are the royal gifts of that triumphant day? Why, he "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, "and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, "for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of "Christ." It is an allusion to the Roman triumphs, wherein the conqueror did *spargere missilia*, scatter abroad his treasures among the people. It is reported of the palm-tree, saith one, that when it was first planted in Italy, they watered its roots with wine, to make it take the better with the soil: But God waters our souls with what is infinitely more costly than wine, he waters them with the heart-blood of Christ, and the precious gifts and graces of the Spirit; which certainly he would never do if they were not of great worth in his eyes. O how many excellent ministers, who were, as it is said of John, burning and shining lights in their places and generations, have spent themselves, and how many are there who are willing to spend, and be spent, as Paul was for the salvation of souls! God is at great expence for them, and therefore puts a very high value upon them.

Now all this respects the soul of man; that is the object of all ministerial labours. The soul is the *terminus actionum ad intra*, the subject on which God works, and upon which he spends all those invaluable treasures. It is the soul which he aims at, and principally designs and levels all to, and reckons it not too dear a rate to save it at.

No man will dig for common stones with golden mattocks, the instruments that would be worn out being of far greater value than the thing. This may convince us of what worth our souls are, and at what rates they are set in God's book, that such instruments are sent abroad into the world, and such precious gifts and graces, like golden oil, spent continually for their salvation; "Whether Paul, "or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. i. e. all set apart for the service and salvation of your souls.

10. The great encouragements and rewards God propounds and promiseth to them that win souls, speak their worth, and God's great esteem of them.

There cannot be a more acceptable service done to God, than for a man to set himself heartily and diligently to the conversion of souls; so many souls as a man instrumentally saves, so many diadems will God crown him withal in the great day. St. Paul calls his converted Philippians *his joy and his crown*, Phil. iv. 1. and tells the converted Thessalonians, they were his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of Jesus Christ at his coming," 1 Thess. ii. 19. There is a full reward assured by promise to those that labour in this great service, Dan. xii. 3. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." The wisdom here spoken of, I conceive not to be only that whereby a man is made wise to the salvation of his own soul, but whereby he is also furnished with skill for the saving of other men's souls according to that, Prov. xi. 30. "He that winneth souls is wise." And so the latter phrase is exegetical of it, meaning one and the same thing with being wise and turning many unto righteousness: And, to put men upon the study of this wisdom, he puts a very honourable title upon them, calling them מצדיקי הרבים the *justifiers of many*, as in 1 Tim. iv. 16. they are said to save others. Here is singular honour put upon the very instruments employed in this honourable service, and that is not all, but their reward is great hereafter, as well as their honour great at present, they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and the stars for ever and ever." The firmament shines like a sapphire in itself, and the stars and planets more gloriously again; but those that faithfully labour in this work of saving souls shall shine in glory for ever and ever, when the firmament shall be parched up as a scroll. O what rewards and honours are here to provoke men to the study of saving souls! God will richly recompense all our pains in this work: If we did but only sow the seed in our days, and another enter into our labours, and water what we sowed; so that neither the first hath the comfort of finishing the work, nor the last the honour of beginning it; but one did somewhat towards it in the work of conviction, and the other carried it on to greater maturity and perfection; and so neither the one nor the other began and finished the work singly, yet both shall rejoice in heaven together, John iv. 36.

You see what honour God puts upon the very instruments employed in this work, even the honour to be saviours, under God, of men's souls, James v. 20. and what a full reward of glory, joy, and comfort, they shall have in heaven; all which speaks the great

value of the soul with God. Such encouragements, and such rewards would never have been propounded and promised if God had not a singular estimation of them.

And the more to quicken his instruments to all diligence, in this great work, he works upon their fears as well as hopes; threatens them with hell, as well as encourages them with the hopes of heaven; tells them he will require the blood of all those souls that perish by their negligence: "Their blood (saith he) will I require at the watchman's hands," Ezek. xxxiii. 6. which are rather thunderbolts than words, saith Chrysostome. By all which, you see, what a weight God lays upon the saving or losing of souls: Such severe charges, great encouragements, and terrible threats had never been proposed in scripture, if the souls of men had not been invaluablely precious.

11. It is no small evidence of the precious and invaluable worth of souls, that God manifests so great and tender care over them, and is so much concerned about the evil that befalls them.

Among many others there are two things in which the tender care of God, for the good of souls, is manifested.

(1.) In his tenderness over them in times of distress and danger; as a tender father will not leave his sick child in other hands, but sits up and watches by himself, and administers the cordials with his own hands; even so the great God expresseth his care and tenderness. Isa. lvii. 15. "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Behold the condescending tenderness of the highest majesty! Is a soul ready to faint and fail, O how soon is God with it, with a reviving cordial in his hand! lest "the spirit should fail before him, and the soul which he hath made?" as it is, ver. 16. Yea, he put it into Christ's commission, "to preach good tidings to the meek, and to bind up the broken-hearted," Isa. lxi. 1. and not only inserts it in Christ's commission, but gives the same in solemn charge to all his inferior messengers, whom he employs about them. Isa. xxxv. 3. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."

(2.) His special regard to souls is evidenced in his severe prohibitions to all others to do any thing that may be an occasion of ruin to them. He charges it upon all, "That no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way," Rom. xiv. 13. that by the abuse of our own liberty, "we destroy not him for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15. And what doth all this signify but the precious and invaluable worth of souls?

12. *Lastly*, It is not the least evidence of the dignity of men's

souls, that God hath appointed the whole host of angels to be their guardians and attendants.

“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Heb. i. 14.

Are they not?] It is not a doubtful question, but the strongest way of affirmation; nothing is surer than that they are.

All.] Not one of that heavenly company excepted. The highest angel thinks it no disparagement to serve a soul for whom Christ died; well may they all stoop to serve them when they see Christ their Lord hath stooped, even to death, to save them. They are all of them.

Ministering spirits.] Διεργονα πνευματα, public officers, to whom their tutelage is committed: To them it belongs to attend, serve, protect and relieve them. The greatest barons and peers in the kingdom think it not below them to wait upon the heir apparent to the crown, in his minority; and no less dignity is here stamped by God upon the souls of men whom he calls.

Heirs of salvation.] And in some respect nearer to Christ than themselves are; on this account it is, that the angels delight to serve them. Christ's little ones upon earth have their angels, which always behold the face of God in heaven, Mat. xviii. 10. and therefore saith our Lord there, “Take heed you despise not one of those little ones;” they are greater persons than you are aware of. Nor is it enough that one angel is appointed to wait upon all, or many of them, but many angels, even a whole host of them, are sometimes sent to attend upon one of them. As Jacob was going on his way, the angels of God met him; and when he saw them he said, “This is God's host,” Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

The same two offices which belong to a nurse, to whom the father commits his child, belong also to the angels in heaven, with respect to the children of God, viz. to keep them tenderly whilst they are abroad, and bring them home to their Father's house at last. And how clearly doth all this evince and demonstrate the great dignity and value of souls? Was it an argument of the grandeur and magnificence of king Solomon, that he had two hundred men with targets, and three hundred men with shields of beaten gold for his ordinary guard every day? And is it not a mark of far greater dignity than ever Solomon had in all his glory, to have hosts of angels attending us? In comparison with one of this guard, Solomon himself was but a worm in all his magnificence.

And now lay all these arguments together, and see what they will amount to. You have before you no ordinary creature: For (1.) It was not produced, as other creatures were by a mere word of command; but by the deliberation of the great council of heaven. And (2.) Such are the high and noble faculties and powers found

in it as render it agreeable to, and becoming such a Divine original. Yea, (3.) By reason of these its admirable powers, it becomes a capable subject both of grace here and glory hereafter. (4.) Nor is this its capacity in vain; for God hath made glorious preparations for some of them in heaven. (5.) And purchased them for heaven, and heaven for them, at an invaluable price, even the precious blood of Christ. (6.) And stamp'd immortality upon their actions, as well as natures. (7.) Both worlds contend and strive for the soul, as a prize of greatest value. (8.) Their conversion to Christ is the triumph of heaven, and rage of hell. (9.) The lamps of gospel-ordinances are maintained over all the reformed Christian world, to light them in their passage to heaven. (10.) Great rewards are propounded to all that shall heartily endeavour the salvation of them. (11.) The care of heaven is exceeding great and tender over them. And (12.) The heavenly hosts of angels have the charge of them, and reckon it their honour to serve them. These things, duly weigh'd, bring home the conclusion with demonstrative clearness, to every man's understanding, *That one soul is of more value than the whole world*; which was the thing to be proved. What remains, is the improvement of this excellent subject, in these following inferences.

Inf. 1. The soul of man, appearing to be a creature of such transcendent dignity and excellency, this truth appears of equal clearness with it; *That it was not made for the body, but the body for it; and therefore it is a vile abuse of the noble and high-born soul, to subject it to the lusts, and enslave it to the drudgery of the inferior and more ignoble part.*

The very law of nature assigns the most honourable places and employments, to the most noble and excellent creatures, and the baser and inferior, to things of the lowest rank and quality. The sun, moon and stars are placed by this law in the heavens; but the *ignis fatuus*, and the glow-worm in the fens and ditches. Princes are set upon thrones of glory, the beggars lodged in barns and stables: and if at any time this order of nature is inverted, and the baser suppress and perk over the noble and honourable beings, it is looked upon as a kind of prodigy, in the civil world. And so Solomon represents it, Eccl. x. 7. "I have seen servants "upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth;" i. e. I have seen men that are worthy of no better employments than to rub horses heels, in the saddle with their trappings; and men who deserves to bear rule, and to govern kingdoms; men, who for their great ability and integrity, deserved to sit at the helm, and moderate the affairs of kingdoms; these have I seen walking as servants upon the earth; and this he calls an evil

under the sun, that is, an *ataxy*, confusion, or disorder in the course of nature.

Now there can never be that difference and vast odds betwixt one man and another, as there is betwixt the soul and body of every man. A king upon the throne is not so much above a beggar that cries at our door for a crust, as the soul is above the body; for the soul of a beggar is of the same species, original, and capacity of happiness, with the soul of the most illustrious prince; and sometimes greater excellencies of mind are found in the lowest rank and order of men. "Better is a poor and wise child, than an old, and foolish king," Eccl. iv. 13. but the soul of the meanest person in the world is better than all the bodies in it; and therefore, to make the noble, and the high-born soul a slave, a mere drudge to the vile body, as the apostle calls it, Phil. iii. 21. "The body of this vileness;" what is it but to set the beggar on horseback, and make the king lacquey after him on foot!

It was a generous resentment that a * Heathen had of the dignity of his own soul, and a very just abhorrence of so vile an abuse of it, when he said, *I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a slave to my body.*

I know there is a debt of duty the soul owes to its own body, and few souls are to be found too careless, or dilatory in the discharge thereof; where one soul needs the spur in this case, thousands need the curb. Most souls are over-heated with zeal for the concerns of the flesh, worn out and spent in its constant drudgery; their whole life is but a *serving of divers lusts and pleasures*, as the apostle speaks, Tit. iii. 3. Imperious lusts are cruel task-masters, they give the soul no rest; the more provision the soul brings in to satisfy them, the more they rage, like fire, by the addition of more fuel. What a sad sight is it to see a noble, immortal soul *enslaved*, as the apostle's word is †, Tit. i. 7. *to wine? to filthy lucre*, to a thousand sorts of vassalage; like a *tapster* in a common *inn*, now running up stairs, and then down, at every one's knock and call.

O what a perpetual hurry and noise do thousands of souls live in! so that they have no time to retire into themselves, and think for what end and use they were created and sent into this world. All their thoughts, all their cares, all their studies and labours, are taken up about the perishing, clogging, ensnaring body, which must so shortly fall a prey to the worms. How many millions of poor creatures are there that labour and toil all their life long, for a poor, bare maintenance of their bodies, and never think they have any other business to do in this world!

* *Major sum, et ad majora natus, quam ut corporis mei fîm mancipium.* Sen.

† Μη σινω πολλω δεδωλωμενας.

And how many, of an higher rank, are charmed by a thick succession of fleshly delights and pleasures, into a deep oblivion of their eternal concerns ! So that their whole life is but one entire diversion from the great business and proper end of it. James v. 5. "Ye have lived in pleasures on earth," living in them, as the fish doth in the water, its proper element, or the eel in the mud. Sometimes it falls out, at the very close of a vain voluptuous life, when you see all their delights shrinking away at the approaches and appearance of death, that they begin to be a little startled at the change, which is about to be made upon them ; and to cry, O what shall we do now ! Ah poor souls ! is that a time to think what you shall do, when you are just stepping into the awful state of eternity ? O that this had been thought on in season ! but you could find no leisure for one such thought. Now you begin to wish time had been rescued out of the hands of the cares and pleasures of this life, for better purposes ; but it is gone, and never more to be recalled.

Inf. 2. Is the soul so invaluablely precious ? Then the salvation of the soul is to be the great care, and business of every man in this life.

Where one thought is spent about this question, *What shall I eat, drink, and put on ?* a thousand should be spent about that question, "What shall I do to be saved !" If a treasure of ten, or twenty thousand pounds were committed to your trust and charge, and for which (in case of loss) you must be responsible : would not your thoughts, cares, and fears, be working night and day about it, till you are satisfied it is safe and out of danger ? And then your mind would be at rest, but not before. Thy soul, O man, is more worth than the crowns and treasures of all the princes in the world ! If all their exchequers were drained, and all their crown-jewels sold to their full value, they could never make up a half ransom for the soul of the poorest and meanest man. This invaluable treasure is committed to your charge ; if it be lost, you are lost for ever. That which St. Matthew calls the losing of the soul in my text, St. Luke calls *losing himself* ; if the soul be lost, the man is lost. The body is but as a boat fastened to the stern of a stately ship, if the ship sink, the boat follows it.

O, therefore, what thoughts, what fears, what cares should exercise the minds of men, day and night, till their precious souls are out of all danger : Methinks the sound of this text should ring a perpetual alarm in the ears of careless sinners, and make them hasten to the insurance-office, as merchants do, who have great adventures in danger at sea. It was counsel given once to a king, and worthy to be pressed upon all, from the king to the beggar, to ruminate these words of Christ one quarter of an hour every

day; "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Certainly it would make men slacken their pace and cool themselves in their hot and earnest pursuit of the trifles of this world, and convince them, that they have somewhat else to do of far greater importance.

It was not without great and weighty reason, therefore, that the apostle Peter exhorts to all diligence to make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. There are two words in this text of extraordinary weight, *Σπουδασατε*, *Give all diligence*; the word is *study*; the utmost intention of the mind, pondering and comparing things in the thoughts, valuing reasons for, and objections against the point before us, this is study; and such as calls for all diligence where the subject-matter is (as to be sure here it is) of the greatest importance: And what is the subject-matter of all this study and diligence? Why, it is the most solemn of all works that ever came under the hand of man, to make our calling and election *sure*, firm, stable, or fixed, as a building raised upon a square and strong foundation; or as a conclusion is sure, when regularly drawn from certain and indubitable premises: There can never be too much care, too much study or pains about that which can never be too well secured.

Many souls never spent one solemn hour in a close and serious debate about this matter; others have taken a great deal of pains about it; they have broken many nights sleep, poured out many prayers, made many a deep search into their own hearts, walked with much conscientious watchfulness and tenderness, proposed many a serious case of conscience to the most judicious and skilful ministers and Christians; and after all, the security is not such as fully satisfies: And probably one reason of it may be the great weight wherewith the matters of their salvation lie upon their spirits. O that these soul-concerns did bear upon all, as they do upon some! It requires more time, more thoughts, more prayers to make these things sure, than most are aware of.

Inf. 3. *If the soul be so precious, then certainly it is the special care of heaven, that which God looks more particularly after, than any other creature on earth.*

There is an active, vigilant providence that superintends every creature upon earth; there is not the most despicable, diminutive creature that lives in the world, left without the line of providence: God is therefore said to give them all their meat in due season, and for that end they all wait upon him, Psal. civ. 27. who, as a great and provident house-keeper orders daily, convenient provisions for all his family, even to the least and lowest among them: The smallest insects and gnats which swarm so thick in the air, and of the usefulness of whose being it is hard to give an account; yet as the

incomparably learned * Dr. More well observes, these all find nourishment in the world, which would be lost if they did not, and are again convenient nourishment themselves to others that prey upon them.

But man is the peculiar, special care of God; and the soul of man much more than the body. Hence Christ fortifies the faith of Christians against all distrusts of Divine Providence, even from their excellency above other creatures.

Mat. x. 31. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows;" and Mat. vi. 26. your heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the air, and "are ye not much better than they?" and ver. 30. he clothes the grass of the field, "and shall he not much more clothe you?" and so the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 9. "Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written." In all which places we have the dignity of man above all animals and vegetables in respect of the natural excellency of his reasonable soul, but especially the gracious endowments of it, which endear it far more to its Maker; this is the very hinge of the argument, and a firm ground for the believer's faith of God's tender care over both parts, but especially the soul. The body of a believer is God's creature, as well as his soul; but that being of less value, hath not such a degree of care and tenderness expressed towards it, as the soul hath: the father's care is not so much for the child's clothes, as it is for the child himself. Besides, the immediate wants and troubles of the soul, which are *idiopathetical*, are far more sharp and pinching than those it suffers upon the body's account, which are but *sympathetical*; and therefore, whenever such an excellent creature as a sanctified soul which is in Christ, or a soul designed to be sanctified, which is moving towards Christ, falls under those heavy pressures and distresses, (as it often does) and is ready to fail; let it be assured, its merciful Creator will not fail to relieve, support, revive, and deliver it, as often as it shall fall into those deep distresses.

Hear how his compassionate tenderness is expressed towards distressed souls. Isa. xlix. 15. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee."

Sooner shall a woman, the more tender sex, forget, (not the nurse-child, that only sucks her breast, but) the child, yea, the son of her womb, and that not when grown and placed abroad, but whilst it hangs upon her breast, and draws love from her heart, as well as milk from her breast, than God will forget a soul that fears him. Let gracious souls fortify their faith, therefore, in the

* Antidote, §c. p. 82.

Divine care, by considering with what a peculiar eye of estimation and care God looks upon them above all other creatures in the world: only beware you so eye not the natural or spiritual excellencies of your souls, as to expect mercy for the sake thereof, as if your souls were worthy for whose sake God should do this: no, sin nonsuited that plea; all is of free grace, not of debt: but he minds us to what reputation the new creation brings the soul with its God.

Inf. 4. If the soul of man be so precious, how precious and dear to all believers should the Redeemer and Saviour of their precious souls be?

“Unto you therefore that believe, he is precious,” saith the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Though he be yet out of our sight, he should never be one whole hour together out of our hearts and thoughts. 1 Pet. i. 8. “Whom having not seen ye love; whom though now “ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, “and full of glory.” “The very name of Christ,” saith * Bernard, “is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and a very jubilee in “the heart.” The blessed martyr, Mr. Lambert, made this his motto, None but Christ, none but Christ. Molinus was seldom observed to mention his name without dropping eyes. Julius Palmer, in the midst of the flames, moved his scorched lips, and was heard to say, Sweet Jesus, and fell asleep. Paul fastens upon his name as a bee upon a sweet flower, and mentions it no less than ten times in the compass of ten verses, 1 Cor. i. as if he knew not how to leave it.

There is a twofold preciousness of Christ, one in respect of his essential excellency and glory; in this respect he is glorious, as the only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image or character of his person, Heb. i. the other in respect of his relative usefulness and suitableness to all the needs and wants of poor sinners, as he is *the Lord our righteousness*, made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. None discern this preciousness of Christ but those that have been convinced of sin, and have apprehended the wrath to come, the just demerit of sin, and fled for refuge to the hope set before them; and to them he is precious indeed. Consider him as a Saviour from wrath to come, and he will appear the most lovely and desirable in all the world to your souls: he that understands the value of his own soul, the dreadful nature of the wrath of God, the near approaches of this wrath to his own soul, and the astonishing

* *Mel in ore, melos in aure, jubilum in corde.* Bern.

love of Christ in delivering him from it by bearing that wrath in his place and room, in his own person; cannot choose but estimate Christ above ten thousand worlds.

Inf. 5. How great a trust and charge lieth upon them to whom the care of souls is committed, and from whom an account for other men's, as well as their own souls shall certainly be required?

Ministers are appointed of God to watch for the souls of their people, and that as men that must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17. The word here translated *watch**, signifies such watchfulness as that of shepherds who keep their flocks by night in places infested by wolves, and watch whole nights together for their safety. If a man were a keeper only of sheep and swine, it were no great matter if the wolf now and then carried away one whilst he slept; but ministers have charge of souls, one of which, as Christ assures us in the text, *is more worth than the whole world*. Hear what one speaks upon this point.

‘† God purchased the church with his own blood: O what an argument is here to quicken the negligent! and what an argument to condemn those that will not be quickened up to their duty by it! O, saith one of the ancient doctors, if Christ had but committed to my keeping one spoonful of his blood in a frigid glass, how curiously should I preserve it, and how tender should I be of that glass! If then he have committed to me the purchase of that blood, should I not carefully look to my charge?’

‘What, sirs, shall we despise the blood of Christ? shall we think it was shed for them that are not worthy our care? O then let us hear those arguments of Christ, whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless. Did I die for them, and wilt thou not look after them? were they worth my blood, and are they not worth thy labour? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which is lost, and wilt not thou go to the next door, or street, or village, to seek them? How small is thy labour or condescension to mine? I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed.’

Let not that man think to be saved by the blood of Christ himself that makes light of precious souls, who are the purchase of that blood.

And no less charge lieth upon parents, to whom God hath committed the care of their children's souls; and masters that have the guardianship of the souls as well as the bodies of their families; the command is laid express upon you, that they sanctify God's sabbaths, Exod. xx. 10. to command your household in the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii. 19.

* *Αγρυπνείν* est noctes insomnes agere, quod solent viri *βελήροδοι*, pernox solitudine.

† Gildas Salvian, p. 260.

O parents, consider with yourselves what strong engagements lie upon you to do all you are capable of doing for the salvation of the precious souls of your dear children. Remember, their souls are of infinitely more value than their bodies; that they came into the world under sin and condemnation; that you were the instruments of propagating that sin to them, and bringing them into that misery; that you know their dispositions, and how to suit them better than others can; that the bonds of nature give you singular advantages to prevail and be successful in your exhortations, beyond what any others have; that you are always with them, and can chuse opportunities which others cannot; that you and they must shortly part, and never meet again till you meet at the judgment-seat of Christ; that it will be an inconceivably dreadful day to see them stand at Christ's left hand among the cursed and condemned, there cursing the day that ever they were born of such ignorant and negligent, such careless and cruel parents, as took no care to instruct, reprove, or exhort them. O who can think without horror of the cries and curses of his own child in hell, cast away by the very instrument of his being!

Is this the love you bear them, to betray them to eternal misery? Was there no other provision to be made but for their bodies? Did you think you had fully acquitted your duty when you had got an estate for them? O that God would effectually touch your hearts with a becoming sense of the value and danger of their souls and your own too in the neglect of that great and solemn trust committed to you with respect to them! And you, masters, consider, though God hath set you above, and your servants below, yet are their souls equally precious with your own: they have another Master that expects service from them as well as you. Do not only allow them time, but give them your exhortations and commands not to neglect their own souls, whilst they attend your business: think not your business will prosper the less because it is in the hand of a praying servant: their souls are of greater concernment than any business of yours can be.

Inf. 6. Are souls so precious? Then certainly the means and instruments of their salvation must be exceeding precious too, and the removal of them a sore judgment.

The dignity of the subject gives value to the instruments employed about it. It is no ordinary mercy for souls to come into such a part of the world, and in such a time as furnisheth them with the best helps for salvation. Ordinances and ministers receive their value not from their Author, but from their Object: they have a dignity stamped upon them by their usefulness to the souls of men, Acts xx. 32. the word is the *seed of life*, 1 Pet. i. 23. the regenerating instrument. It is the *bread of life*, and Job xxiii. 12. more than

our necessary food. The word is a *light*, shining in the dark world to direct your souls through all the snares laid for them unto glory. It is the soul's cordial in all fainting fits, Psal. cxix. 50. What shall I say of the word and ordinances of God? The sun that shines in heaven to give us light, the fountains, springs, and rivers that stream for our refreshment, the corn and cattle on the earth, yea, the very air we breathe in is not so useful, so necessary, so precious to our bodies, as the word is to our souls.

It cannot therefore but be a sore judgment, and a dreadful token of God's indignation and wrath, to have a restraint or scarcity of the means of salvation among us; but should there be (which God in mercy prevent) a removal and total loss of those things, wrath would then come upon us to the uttermost. What will the condition of precious souls be when the means of salvation are cut off from them? when that famine, worse than of bread and water, is come upon them? Amos viii. 11. When the ark of God (the symbol of his presence) was taken, it is said, 1 Sam. iv. 13. "That all the city cried out." When Paul took his leave of Antioch, and told them they should see his face no more, how did the poor Christians lament and mourn, as cut at the heart by that killing word? Acts xx. 37, 38. It made Christ's bowels to yern, and move within him when he saw the multitude scattered as sheep having no shepherd, Matth. ix. 36.

Matthew Paris tells us, in the year 1072, when preaching was suppressed at Rome, letters were framed as coming from hell, wherein the devil gave them thanks for the multitude of souls sent to him that year. But we need no letters from hell, we have a sad account from heaven, in what a sad state those souls are left, from whom the means of salvation are cut off: "Where no vision is, the people perish," Prov. xxix. 18. and Hos. iv. 6. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

It is sad when those stars that guide souls to Christ, (as that which the wise men saw did) are set, and wandering stars shall shine in their places. O if God remove the golden candlestick out of its place, what but the desolation and ruin of millions of souls must follow?

We account it insufferable cruelty for a man to undertake the piloting of a ship full of passengers who never learnt his compass; or an ignorant *Empiric* to get his living by killing men's bodies; but much more lamentable will the state of souls be if ever they fall, (which God in mercy prevent) into the hands of Popish guides, or *blind leaders of the blind*.

Inf. 7. If the soul be of so precious a nature, it can never live upon such base and vile food as earthly things are.

The apostle, Phil. iii. 8, 9. calls the things of this world

* *dogs meat*; and judge if that be proper food for such noble and high-born creatures as our souls are. An immaterial being can never live upon material things; they are no bread for souls, as the prophet speaks, Isa. lv. 2. "Why do ye spend money, (i. e. Time "and pains, thought and cares) "for that which is not bread?" Your souls can no more live upon carnal, than your bodies on spiritual things. Earthly things have a double defect in them, by reason whereof they are called things of nought, Amos vi. 13. of no worth or value; they are neither suitable nor durable, and therefore, in the soul's eye, not valuable.

1. They are not suitable. What are corn and wine, gold and silver, pleasures and honours, to the soul? The body, and bodily senses, can find somewhat of refreshment in them; but not the spirit: That which is bread to the body, affords no more nourishment to the soul than wind or ashes, Isa. xlv. 20. "He feedeth "of ashes." "† Ashes are that light and dry matter, into which "fuel is reduced by the fire;" the fuel, before it was burnt, had nothing in it fit for nourishment; or if the sap or juice that was in it, might in any respect be useful that way, yet all that is devoured and licked up by the fire, and not the least nutriment left in the ashes: And such are all earthly things to the soul of man. "I am the bread of life," saith Christ, a soul can feed and feast itself upon Christ and the promises; these are things full of marrow and fatness, substantial, and proper soul-nutrimment.

2. As earthly things are no way suitable to the soul, so neither are they durable. The apostle reduceth all earthly things to three heads, "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride "of life," 2 John ii. 16. he calls them all by the name of that which gives the lustre and beauty to them, and pronounceth them all fading, transitory vanities, they all pass away; as time, so these things that are measured by time, are *in fluxu continuo*, always going, and at last will be all gone. Now the soul being of an immortal nature, and these things of a perishing nature; it must necessarily and unavoidably follow, that the soul must overlive them all; and if it will do so, what a dismal case are those souls in, for whom no other provision is made, but that on which it cannot subsist, whilst it hath them, no more than the body can upon ashes or wind? and if it could, yet they will shortly fail it, and pass away for ever. So then it is beyond debate, that there lies a plain necessity upon every man to make provision in time, of things more suitable and

* The Greek word Σκυεαλον, for Κυσιεαλον, signifies that which being rejected by us is thrown to dogs.

† Cinis est crassior illa materia in quam combustum redigitur.

durable than earthly treasures are, or the soul must perish, as to its comfort, to all eternity.

Hence is that weighty counsel of him that came to save them, Luke xii. 23. "Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not," i. e. a happiness which will last as long as your souls last. Certainly, the moth-eaten things of this world are no provision for immortal spirits, and yet multitudes think of no other provision for them, but live as if they had nothing to do in this world but to get an estate.

Alas! what are all these things to the soul? They signify somewhat, indeed, to the body, and that but for a little time: for after the resurrection, the bodies of the saints become spiritual in qualities, and no more need these material things than the angels do: It is madness therefore, to be so intent upon cares for the body, as to neglect the soul; but to ruin the soul, and drown it in perdition, for the sake of these provisions for the flesh, is the height of madness.

Inf. 8. If the soul be so invaluablely precious, then it is a rational and well advised resolution and practice, to expose all other things to hazard, yea, to certain loss, for the preservation of the more precious soul.

It is better our bodies and all their comforts should perish, than that our souls should perish for their sakes. Nature teaches us to offer a hand or arm to the stroke of a sword, to save a blow from the head, or put by a thrust at the heart. It is recorded, to the praise of those three worthies, Dan. iii. 28. "That they yielded their bodies, that they might not serve, nor worship any God, except their own God." By this rule, all the martyrs of Christ governed themselves, still slighting and exposing to destruction, their bodies and estates, to preserve their souls, reckoning to save nothing, by religion, but their souls, and that they had lost nothing, if they could save them; "They loved not their lives unto the death," Rev. xii. 11.

Then do we live like Christians, when the care of our bodies is swallowed up, and subdued by that of our souls, and all creature-loves by the love of Christ. Those blessed souls hated their own bodies, and counted them their enemies, when they would draw them from Christ and his truths, and plunge their souls into guilt and danger. This was the result of all their debates with the flesh in the hour of temptation; cannot we live but to the dishonour of Christ, and the ruin of our own souls, by sinful compliance against our consciences? then welcome the worst of deaths, rather than such a life!

Look into the stories of the martyrs, and you shall find this was the rule they still governed themselves by; a dungeon, a stake, a

gibbet, any thing, rather than guilt upon the inner-man: death was welcome, even in its most dreadful form, to escape ruin to their precious and immortal souls. One kissed the apparitor, that brought him the tidings of death. Another being advised, when he came to the critical point, on which his life depended, to have a care of himself: So I will, said he, I will be as careful as I can of my best self, my soul. These men understood the value and precious worth of their own souls; certainly, we shall never prove courageous and constant in sufferings, till we understand the worth of our souls as they did. Consider and compare these sufferings in a few obvious particulars, and then determine the matter in thine own breast.

(1.) How much easier it is to endure the torments of men in our bodies, than to feel the terrors of God in our consciences. Can the creature strike with an arm like God? Oh! think what it is for the wrath of God to come into a man's bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, as the expression is, Psal. cix. 18. Sure there is no comparison betwixt the strokes of God and men.

(2.) The sufferings of the body are but for a moment. When the proconsul told Polycarp that he would tame him with fire, he replied, Your fire shall burn but for the space of an hour, and then it shall be extinguished; but the fire that shall devour the wicked will never be quenched. The sufferings of a moment are nothing to eternal sufferings.

(3.) Sufferings for Christ are usually sweetened and made easy by the consolations of the Spirit; but hell-torments have no relief, they admit of no ease.

(4.) The life that you shall live in that body, for whose sake you have damned your souls, will not be worth the having; it will be a life without comfort, light, or joy; and what is there in life, separate from the joy and comfort of life?

(5.) In a word, if you sacrifice your bodies for God and your souls, freely offer them up in love to Christ and his truth, your souls will joyfully receive and meet them again at the resurrection of the just; but if your poor souls be now ensnared and destroyed by your fond indulgence to your bodies, you will leave them at death despairing, and meet them at the resurrection howling.

Inf. 9. To conclude, *If the soul be so invaluablely precious, how great and irreparable a loss must the loss of a soul to all eternity be!*

There is a double loss of the soul of man, the one in Adam, which loss is recoverable by Christ; the other by final impenitence and unbelief, cutting it off from Christ; and this is irreparable and irrecoverable. Souls lost by Adam's sin, are within the reach of the arms of Christ; but in the shipwreck of personal infidelity, there is no plank to save the soul so cast away; of all losses, this is

the most lamentable, yet what more common : O what a shriek doth the unregenerate soul make, when it sees whither it must go, and that there is no remedy ! Three cries are dreadful to hear on earth, yet all three are drowned, by a more terrible cry in the other world ; the cry of a condemned prisoner at the bar, the cry of drowned seamen and passengers in a ship-wreck, the cries of soldiers conquered in the field ; all these are fearful cries, yet nothing to that of a soul cast away to all eternity, and lost in the depth of hell.

If a man, as Chrysostom well observes, lose an eye, an arm, a hand, or leg, it is a great loss ; but yet if one be lost, there is another to help him : for *omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, God hath given us all those members double ; *Animam vero unam*, but we have but one soul, and if that be damned, there is not another to be saved.

And it is no small aggravation to this loss, that it was a wilful loss ; we had the offers, and means of salvation plentifully afforded us ; we were warned of this danger, over and over ; we were intreated, and beseeched, upon the knee of importunity, not to throw away our souls, by an obstinate rejection of Christ, and grace ; we saw the diligence and care of others for the salvation of their souls, some rejoicing in the comfortable assurance of it, and others giving all diligence to make their *calling and election sure* : we knew that our souls were as capable of blessedness, as any of those that are enjoying God in heaven, or panting after that enjoyment on earth ; yea, some souls that are now irrecoverably gone, and many others who are going after them, once were, and now are not far from the kingdom of God ; they had convictions of sin, a sense of their loss, and miserable state ; they began to treat with Christ in prayer, to converse with his ministers and people, about their condition, and after all this, even when they seemed to have clean escaped the snares of Satan, to be again entangled, and overcome ; when even come to the harbour's mouth, to be driven back again, and cast away upon the rocks. O what a loss will this be !

O thou that createdst souls with a capacity to know, love, and enjoy thee for ever ; who out of thine unsearchable grace sentest thine own Son out of thy bosom to seek and save that which was lost, pity those poor souls that cannot pity themselves : let mercy yet interpose itself betwixt them and eternal ruin ; awaken them out of their pleasant slumber, though it be at the brink of damnation, lest they perish, and there be none to deliver them.

Doct. 2. *How precious and invaluable soever the soul of man is, it may be lost, and cast away for ever.*

This proposition is supposed, and implied in our Saviour's words in the text, and plainly expressed in Mat. vii. 13. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." The way to hell is thronged with passengers; it is a beaten road; one draws another along with him, and scoffs at those that are afraid to follow, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *Facilis descensus averni*; it is pleasant sailing with wind and tide. Some derive the word *hell* from a verb which signifies to carry, or thrust in; millions go in, but none return thence: millions are gone down already, and millions more are coming after, as fast as Satan and their own lusts can hurry them onward. You read not only of single persons, but whole nations drowned in this gulph. Psal. ix. 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God." How rare is the conversion of a soul in the dark places of the earth, where the sound of the gospel is not heard? The devil drives them in droves to destruction, scarce a man reluctant or drawing back*.

And though some nations enjoy the inestimable privilege of the gospel of salvation, yet multitudes of precious souls perish, notwithstanding, sinking into hell daily, as it were, betwixt the merciful arms of a Saviour stretched out to save them. The light of salvation is risen upon us, but Satan draws the thick curtains of ignorance, and prejudice about the multitude, that not a beam of saving light can shine into their hearts. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

If our gospel.] Ours, not by way of institution, as the authors, but by way of dispensation, as the ministers and preachers of it; and certainly, it was never preached with that clearness, authority, and efficacy by any mere man, as it was by Paul and the rest of the apostles; and yet the gospel so powerfully preached, is by him here supposed to

Be hid.] If not as to the general light and superficial knowledge of it, yet as to its saving influence and converting efficacy upon their hearts: this never reacheth home to the souls and spirits of multitudes that hear it, but it is never finally so hidden, except

To them that are lost.] So that all those to whom the converting and saving power of the gospel never comes, whatever names, and

* The Latin word, *Infernus*, i. e. Hell, is derived from a verb signifying to thrust in, because the wicked are so hurried and cast headlong into it, that they can never ascend out of it.

reputations they may have among men, yet this text looks upon them all as a lost generation: They may have as many amiable, homiletical virtues, as sweet and lovely natures, as clear and piercing eyes, in all other things, as any others; but they are such, however,

Whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded.] Satan is here called the god of this world, not properly, but by a mimesis; because he challenges to himself the honour of a god, and hath a world of subjects that obey him; and, to secure their obedience, he blinds them, that they may never see a better way or state, than that he hath drawn them into. Therefore he is called the ruler of the darkness of this world, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience. The eye of the soul is the mind, that thinking, considering, and reasoning power of the soul; this is, as the philosophers truly call it, the *το ηγεμονικον*, the leading faculty to all the rest, the guide to all the other faculties, which, in the order of nature, follow this their leader: If this be blinded, the will, which is *cæca potentia*, a blind power in itself, and all affections blindly following the blind, all must needs fall into the ditch. And this is the case of the far greater part of even the professing world. Let us suppose a number of blind men upon an island, where there are many smooth paths, all leading to the top of a perpendicular cliff, and these blind men going on continually, some in one path, and some in another, but all in some one of those many paths which lead to the brink of their ruin, which they see not; it must needs follow, if they all move forward, the whole number will in a short time be cast away, the island cleared, and its inhabitants dead, and lost in the bottom of the sea. This is the case of the unregenerate world; they are now upon this habitable spot of earth, environed with the vast ocean of eternity; there are multitudes of paths leading to eternal misery; one man takes this way, and another that, as it is Isa. liii. 6. "We have "turned every one to his own way;" one to the way of pride, another to the way of covetousness, a third to the way of persecution, a fourth to the way of civility and mortality; and so on they go, not once making a stand, or questioning to what end it will bring them, till at last over they go, at death, and we hear no more of them in this world: And thus one generation of sinners follows another, and they that come after approve, and applaud those miserable wretches that went before them, Psal. xlix. 13. and so hell fills, and the world empties its inhabitants daily into it. Now I will make it my work, out of a dear regard to the precious souls of men, and in hope to prevent (which the Lord in mercy grant) the loss, and ruin of some, under whose eyes this discourse shall fall, to note some of the principal ways in which

precious souls are lost, and to put such bars into them, as I am capable to put; and, among many more, I will set a mark upon these following twelve paths, wherein millions of souls have been lost, and millions more are confidently, and securely following after, among which, it is likely, some are within one step, one day, or hour, to their eternal downfall and destruction. There is but one way in all the world, to save, and preserve the precious souls of men, but there are many ways to lose and destroy them: It is here, as it is in our natural birth, and death, but one way into the world, but a multitude out of it. And first,

The first way to hell discovered.

1. And to begin where, indeed, the ruin of very many doth begin, it will be found, that *ill education is the high-way to destruction*; vice need not be planted; if the gardener neglect to dress, sow, and manure his garden, he need not give the weeds a greater advantage; but if he also scatter the seeds of hemlock, docks, and nettles into it, he spoils it, and makes it fit for nothing. Many parents, and those godly too, are guilty of too many neglects, through carelessness, worldly incumbrances, or fond indulgence; and whilst they neglect the season of sowing better seed, the devil takes hold of it; if they will not improve it, he will: If they teach him not to pray, he will teach them to curse, swear, and lye; if they put not the bible, or catechism in their hands, he will put obscene ballads into them: and thus the offspring of many godly parents turn into degenerate plants, and prove a generation that know not the God of their fathers. This debauched age can furnish us with too many sad instances hereof. Thus they are spoiled in the bud; simple ignorance in youth, becomes affected and wilful ignorance in age; blushing sins in children become impudent in age; and all this for want of a timely, and prudent preventing care. Others there are of the rude and ignorant multitude, who are bred themselves much like the beasts they daily converse withal; and so they are fitly described, Job xxx. 6, 7. Go into their houses, and you may sooner find in the window, or upon the shelf, a pack of cards, than a bible or a catechism; their beds and tables differ little, or not at all, from the stalls and cribs where beasts lie down and feed, in respect of any worship of God among them; or if, for fashion-sake, a few words be huddled over in the evening, when their bodies are tired, the man saith something, he scarce knows what, the wife is asleep in one corner, the children in another, and the servants in a third. This is the education multitudes of parents give their children all the week, and when the sabbath comes, the most they learn to know at church, is, where their own

seat stands, and that it is necessary to speak with such a neighbour after prayers about such or such a bargain, or business for the next week.

And others there are, who breed their children as profanely, as these do sottishly; teaching them, by their examples, the newest oaths that were last minted in hell, and to revile and scoff all serious godliness, and the sincere professors of it, smiling to hear with what an emphasis they can talk in the dialect of devils, and how wittily they can droll upon godly ministers and Christians.

Such families are nurseries for hell; and though God, by an extraordinary hand of providence, now and then snatches a soul by conversion from among them, as a brand out of the fire; yet generally, they die as they live, going "to the generation of their fathers, where they shall never see light," Psal. xlix. 19. I know education and regeneration are two things; but I also know one is frequently made the "instrument of working the other, and that "the * favour of what first seasons our youth (generally) abides "to old age," Prov. xxii. 6. We may observe, all the world over, how tenacious men are of that which is *αποπαροδοτον*, delivered to them by their parents. O what a cut must it be to the heart of that father whose son's life shall tell his conscience what a profane son's lips once told his father to his face! "If I have done evil, I have learnt it of you †." Had they felt more of your prudent correction, it might have prevented their destruction. Prov. xxiii. 14. "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver "his soul from hell." That this is a common beaten path to hell, is beyond all question; but how to bar it up, and stop the multitudes that are engaged in it to their own ruin, this is the labour, this is the work. I cannot be large, but I will offer a few weighty considerations.

The first way to hell barred.

1. Let all parents consider, what a fearful thing it is to be the instruments of ruining for ever, those that received their beings instrumentally from them, and to seek whose good they stand obliged, by all the laws of God and nature.

In vain are all your cares and studies for their bodies, whilst their souls perish for want of knowledge. You rejoiced at their birth, but they will have cause to curse the day they were born of you, and say, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the "night in which I was conceived." You were solicitous for their

* *Quo semel est imbuta recens, &c.*

† *Si male feci, a te didici.*

bodies, but careless of their souls; earnest to see them rich, but indifferent whether they were gracious; you neglected to teach them the way of salvation, but the devil did not neglect to teach them the way of sin. You will one day wish you had never been parents, when the doleful cries of your damned children shall ring such notes as these in your ears: ‘O cursed father! O cruel, ‘merciless mother! whose examples have drawn me after you, ‘into all this misery. You had time enough, and motives ‘enough to have warned me of this place and misery whilst my ‘heart was tender, and my affections pliable: Had it not been as ‘easy to have put a Bible as a play-book before me? To have chas- ‘tised me when I provoked God by sin, as when I provoked you ‘about a trifle? One word spoken in season might have saved my ‘soul; one reproof wisely given and set on by your example, might ‘have preserved me. Had it not been the same pains to have ask- ‘ed me, child, what wilt thou do to be saved? As, what wilt ‘thou do to live in this world? Or, had I but observed any serious ‘religion in you, had I but found or heard my father or mother ‘upon their knees in prayer, it might have awakened me to a con- ‘sideration of my condition. In my youth I was shame-faced, ‘fearful, credulous, and apt to imitate; had you but had wisdom ‘as other parents have, to have taken hold of any of these handles ‘in time, you had rescued my soul from hell. Nay, so cruel have ‘you been to your own child, that you allowed me no time (if I ‘had had a disposition) for any exercise of religion; yea, you have ‘quenched and stifled the sparks of convictions and better incli- ‘nations that sometimes were in my heart. O happy had it been ‘if I had never been born of you, or seen your faces.’ This must be the result and issue of your negligence, except God, by some other hand (which is no thanks to you) rescue them from their impending ruin.

2. Let all children, whose unhappy lot it is to be born of, and educated by, carnal and irreligious parents, consider, God hath endued them with reason, and a conscience of their own, to enable them to make a better choice than their parents did, and that there is no taking sanctuary from the wrath of God in their parents’ examples. We read, in 1 Kings xiv. 13. of a good Abijah, “in whom was found some good thing towards the Lord “God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.” Here was a child that would not follow his wicked father to hell, though he had both the authority of a father, and of a king over him. “You must “honour your parents, but still you must prefer your God before “them †.” God will never lay it to your account as your sin,

† *Amandus genitor, sed præponendus Creator.*

but place it to the account of your duty, and comfort, that you refused to follow them in the paths of sin and destruction. No law of God, no tie of nature binds you to obey their commands, or tread in their steps, farther than they command in God's authority and name, and walk in his ways. Your temptations, indeed, are strong, and disadvantages great; but the greater will the mercy of your deliverance be: It will be no plea for you, at the judgment-seat, to say, Lord, my father or mother did so and so, before me, and I thought I might safely follow them; or thus, and thus, they commanded me, and I thought I was bound, by thy command, to obey them. Therefore look to your own souls, if they are so desperate as to cast away their own. If some children had not minded their own salvation more than their parents minded it, they had never been saved.

3. Let this consideration work upon the hearts, and bowels of all serious Christians, to pity, and help those that are like to perish under this temptation; and if their parents be so ignorant, that they cannot, or so negligent, that they do not instruct and warn their own children; you that at any time have an opportunity to help them, have compassion on them, and do it. It is true, they are none of your children by nature; but would it not be a singular honour, and comfort to you, if God should make them so by grace? Thousands of children (and, it may be some of you) are more indebted to mere strangers, upon this account, than to their nearest relations; you know not how much good an occasional word may do them: All have not ability to be so publicly useful this way, as a late worthy minister of our own nation hath been, who, in compassion to the dark and barbarous corners in Wales, where ignorance and poverty shut up the way of salvation to them, at a vast expence procured the translation, and printing of the bible in their own tongue, and freely sent it among them. O you that have the bowels of Christians in you, pity, and help them! What is it, for the saving of a precious soul, to drop a serious exhortation, as you have opportunity, unto them, to bestow a bible, or suitable book upon them? Believe it, these little sums of shillings, and pence, so bestowed, will stand for more, in the *audit-day*, than all the hundreds, and thousands, other ways expended.

The second way to hell discovered.

II. A second way to hell, in which multitudes are found hastening to their own damnation, is the way of affected ignorance, The generality of people, even in a land enlightened with the gospel, are found grossly ignorant of Christ, the true and only way to

heaven, and of repentance and faith, the only way to Christ; and thus the people perish for want of knowledge, Hos. iv. 6. If the tree of knowledge had been hedged in from the common people, as it is in Popish countries; and it had been criminal to find a bible in our houses, there might have been some cloak and pretence for our ignorance: But to be stupidly ignorant of the most obvious, plain and necessary truths, and yet bred up among bibles and ministers! O how ominous a darkness is this, foreboding the blackness of darkness for ever! For if the hiding of the gospel from the hearts of men be a token to them that they are lost souls, how much notional light soever they may have; much more must they be lost to all intents, from whose hearts and heads too it is judicially hidden. They that know not God are in the catalogue of the damned, 2 Thess. i. 8. and if this be life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; then this must be death eternal to be grossly and affectedly ignorant both of God, the end, and Christ the way, by the rule of true opposition, John xvii. 3.

Look over the several countries in the professing world; go into the families of country farmers, day labourers, and poor people, and except here and there a family, or person, into whose heart God hath graciously shined; what barbarous, brutish ignorance overspreads them: They converse from morning to night with beasts, though they have souls which are fit companions for angels, and capable of sweet converse with God. The earth hath opened her mouth, and swallowed up all their time, strength, thoughts, and souls, as it did the bodies of Corah and his company. They know the value of a horse or cow, but know not the worth of Christ, pardon, or their own souls: They mind daily what work they have to do with their hands, but forget all they have to do upon their knees; their whole care is to pay their fine or rent to their landlord, but not a thought who shall pay their debts to God. They are so far from putting unnecessary business aside to make way for the service of God, that God's service is put aside as an unnecessary business, to make way for the world: The world holds them fast till they are asleep, and will be sure to visit them as soon as their eyes are open, that there may be no vacancy or door of opportunity left open for a thought of their souls, or another life, to slip in: Or, if at any time they think, or speak of these matters, then the world, like Pharaoh, when Israel spake of sacrificing, is sure to speak of more work.

And thus they live and die without knowledge; there is no key of knowledge (as it is fitly called, Luke xi. 52.) to open the door of the soul to Christ; he and his ministers, therefore, must stand without; pity they may, but help they cannot, till knowledge open

the door: Satan is ruler of the darkness of this world, Eph. vi. 12, that is, of all blind and ignorant souls. Ignorance is the chain with which he binds them fast to himself, and till that chain be knocked off by Divine illumination, they cannot be emancipated, and made free of Christ's kingdom; Acts xxvi. 18. "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." Ignorance, indeed, incapacitates a man to commit the unpardonable sin; but what is he the nearer whilst it disposes him to all other sins which damn as well as that? By ignorance it is, that all the essays of the gospel for men's salvation are frustrated; that naked assent is put in the place of saving faith, morality mistaken for regeneration, a few dead duties laid in the room of Christ and his righteousness. Indeed it would fill a greater book than this is, to shew the mischievous effects of ignorance, and how many ways it destroys the precious souls of men: but seeing I can speak but little in this place to it, let me bar up this way to hell, if it be possible, by a few serious considerations.

The second way to hell shut up.

1. Let the ignorant consider, God hath created their souls with a capacity of knowing him and enjoying him as well as others that are famed in the world for knowledge and wisdom. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* The faculty is in man, but the wisdom and knowledge that enlightens it from God; as the dial shews the hour of the day when the sun-beams fall upon it. If, therefore, God be sought unto in the use of such helps and means as you have, even the weakest and dullest soul hath a capacity of being made wise unto salvation. Psal. xix. 7. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

Augustine tells us of a man so weak and simple, that he was commonly reputed a fool in all the neighbourhood; and yet saith, I believe the grace and fear of God was in him; for when he heard any swear, or take the name of God in vain, he would throw stones at them, and shew his indignation against sin by all the signs he could make.

2. You that are so grossly ignorant in the matter of your salvation, are many of you very knowing, prudent, and subtle persons in the affairs of the world. Luke xvi. 8. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Had those parts which you have, been improved and heightened by study and observation about spirituals, as they have been about earthly things, you had never been so ignorant or dead-hearted as you are: You might have been as well versed in your bibles, as you

are in the almanacks you yearly buy and study. You might have understood the proper seasons of salvation as well as of husbandry. The great and necessary points on which your salvation depends, are not so many or so abstruse and intricate, but your plain and in-artificial heads might have understood them, and that with less pains than you have been at for your bodies: What though you cannot comprehend the subtilties of schoolmen, you may apprehend the essentials of Christianity. If you cannot strictly and scholastically define faith, what hinders, if your hearts were set upon Christ and salvation, but you may feel it? Which is more than many learned men do that can define and dispute about it. You cannot put an argument in mood and figure; no matter, if you can by comparing your bibles and hearts together, draw savingly and experimentally this conclusion; I am in Christ, and my sins are pardoned. You cannot determine whether faith goes before repentance, or repentance before faith; but for all that you might feel both the one and the other upon your own souls, which is infinitely better. It is not, therefore, your incapacity, but negligence and worldliness that is your ruin.

3. How many are there of your own rank, order, and education, all whose external advantages and helps you have, and all your incumbrances and discouragements they had, who yet have attained to an excellent degree of saving knowledge and heavenly wisdom? How often have I heard such spiritual, savoury, experimental truths, in conference and prayer from plain rustics, such spiritual reasonings about the great concerns of salvation, such judicious and satisfying resolutions of cases depending upon the sensible and experimental part of religion, as have humbled, convinced, and shamed me, and made me say *surgunt indocti*, &c. these are the men that will take heaven from the proud and scornful *ingeniosi* of the world; not many wise, not many learned and acute. Many knowing and learned heads are in hell, and many illiterate and weak ones gone to heaven; and others in the way thither who never had better education, stronger parts, or more leisure than yourselves: So that you are without excuse.

To conclude, Would you heartily seek it of God, and would the Spirit (which he hath promised to give them that ask him) become your teacher, how soon would the light of the saving knowledge of God in the face of Christ shine into your hearts! No matter how ignorant, dull, and weak the scholar be, if God once become the teacher. You are not able to purchase, or want time to read many books; but if once you were sanctified persons, the anointing you would receive from the Father would teach you all things, 1 John ii. 27. your own hearts would serve you for a commentary upon a

great part of the bible; it would make you of a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: One drop of your knowledge would be more worth than all learned arts and sciences in the world to you. And is God so far from you, and his illuminating Spirit at such a distance, that there is no hope for you to find him? Is there never a private corner about your houses or barns, or in the fields, where you can turn aside, if it be but a quarter of an hour at a time, to pour out your souls to God, and beg the Spirit of him? Miserable wretch! Is thy whole life such a cumber and clutter of cares and puzzles about the world, that thou hast no leisure to mind God, soul, or eternity? O doleful state! the Lord in much mercy pity and awaken thee. Wilt thou not once strive and struggle to save thy soul? What, perish, as it were, by consent! How great then is that blindness!

The third way to hell discovered.

III. A vast multitude of precious souls are lost for ever by following the examples, and being carried away with the course of this world: It is indeed a poor excuse, a silly argument, That the multitude do as we do; yet, as * Junius rightly observes, men's consciences take sanctuary here, and they think themselves safe in it: For thus they reason, *If I do as the generality do, I shall speed no worse than they speed: and certainly God is more merciful than to suffer the greatest part of mankind to perish.* They resolve to follow the beaten road †, let it lead whither it will.

Thus the Ephesians, in their unregenerate state, “walked according to the course of this world,” Eph. ii. 2. and the “Corinthians were carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were “led,” 1 Cor. xii. 2. just as a drop of water is carried and moved according to the course and current of the tide: For look as every drop of water in the sea is of one and the same common nature, so are all carnal and unsanctified persons; and as these waters being collected into one vast body in the ocean, unite their strength, and make a strong current, this way or that; so doth the whole collective body of the unregenerate world, all the particular drops move as the tide moveth. Hence they are said “to have received the “spirit of this world,” 1 Cor. ii. 12. one common spirit or principle acts and rules them all; and therefore they must needs be carried away in the same course. And there are two special considerations that seem to determine them by a kind of necessity to do

* What a poor mean defence have they who think themselves safe from the example of their superiors. *Jud. Paral. b. 2.*

† The example of the multitude is a very poor argument.

as the multitude do; the one is, that they find it the easiest and most commodious way to the flesh; here they meet with quietness and safety: hereby they are exempt from reproaches, losses, persecutions and distresses for conscience sake: Rest is sweet, and here only they think to find it. The other is, the prejudice of singularity, and manifold tribulations they see that little handful that walk counter to the course of the world involved in; this startles them from their company, and fixes them where they are. Against such sensible arguments, it is to no more purpose to oppose spiritual considerations, motives drawn from the safety of the soul, or importance of eternity, than it is for a man to turn the tide or course of a river with his weak breath.

Add to this, That as one sinner confirms and fixes another, wedging in each other, as men in a crowd *, who must move as it moves; so they make it their business to render all that differ from them odious and ridiculous: So the apostle notes their practice and Satan's policy in it, 1 Pet. iv. 4. wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, ξενίζονται; they gaze strangely at them. And that is not all; they not only gaze at them as a strange generation, making them signs and wonders in Israel, as the prophet speaks, but they defame, revile, and speak evil of them, representing them as a pack of hypocrites, as turbulent, factious, seditious persons, the very pests of the times and places they live in; and all this, not for doing any evil against them, but only for not doing evil with them, because *they run not with them into the same excess of riot*. Thus the world smiles upon its own, and derides those that are afraid to follow them to hell, by which it sweeps away the multitude with it in the same course.

The third way to hell shut up.

But O! if the Spirit of God would please to set on, and follow home the following considerations to your hearts, you would certainly resolve to take a persecuted path to heaven, though few accompany you therein, rather than swim like dead fishes with the stream into the dead sea of eternal misery.

1. Though you go with the consent and current of the world, yet you go against the express law and prohibition of God: He hath laid his command upon you, "not to be conformed to the world," Rom. xii. 2. "That you live not the rest of your time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God," 1 Pet. iv. 2.

* No man errs to his own hurt only, but spreads madness among his neighbours.
Seneca.

“That you follow not a multitude to do evil,” *Exod. xxiii. 2.*
 “That you go not in the way of evil men.” *Prov. iv. 14.* “That
 “you have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”
 All these, and many more, are commands flowing from the highest
 sovereign authority, obliging your consciences to obedience under
 the greatest penalties; by them your state must be cast to all eter-
 nity in the day of judgment: you may make a jest of the precept,
 but see if you can do so of the penalty.

2. Other men, in all ages of the world, that were as much con-
 cerned in the world as you, and valued their lives, libertiss, and es-
 tates as well as you, have yet got out of the croud, disengaged
 themselves from the way of the multitude, and taken a more soli-
 tary and suffering path out of a due regard to the safety of their
 souls: And why should not you love them as well, and care for
 them as much as ever any that went before you did? Noah walked
 with God all alone, when all flesh had corrupted their ways;
 Elijah was zealous for the Lord, when he knew of none to stand by
 him, but thought he had been left alone; Job was upright with
 God in the land of Uz; Lot stood by himself, a godly non-confor-
 mist, in a vile, debauched Sodom; David was a wonder to many;
 so was Jeremiah, and those few with him, for signs and wonders
 in Israel; I demand of your consciences what discouragements have
 you that these men had not? Or what encouragements had they
 that you have not? Why should not the salvation of your souls be
 as precious in your eyes as theirs was in theirs? Shall you be im-
 poverished and persecuted if you embrace the way of holiness? So
 were they. Shall you be reproached, scorned, and reviled: So
 were they. All your discouragements were theirs, and all their
 motives and encouragements are yours.

3. Is not the way which you have chosen marked out by Christ
 as the way to destruction? And that which you dare not chuse and
 embrace as the way to life? See the marks he has given you of
 both in that one text, *Mat. vii. 13, 14.* “Enter ye in at the strait
 “gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to
 “destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because
 “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto
 “life, and few there be that find it.” And where now is your
 encouragement and hope that God will be more merciful than to
 damn so great a part of the world? If you will do as the many do,
 dream not of speeding as well as that little flock, separated by sanc-
 tification from the multitude, shall speed. You have your choice,
 to be damned with many, or saved with few; to take the broad,
 smooth-beaten road to hell, or the difficult, suffering, self-denying
 path to heaven. O then make a seasonable, necessary stand, and
 pause a while; consider your ways, and turn your feet to God’s

testimonies : It is a great and special part of your salvation to save yourselves from this untoward generation.

The fourth way of losing the soul opened.

IV. Multitudes of souls are daily lost by rooted *habits*, and long-continued *custom* in sin. When men have been long settled in an evil way, they are difficultly reclaimed : *Physicians* find it hard to cure a *cachexy*, or ill habit of body ; but it is far more difficult to cure an ill custom and habit in sin. Jer. xiii. 23. “ Can the leopard “ change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin ? Then may ye also do “ good that are accustomed to do evil. The spots of a *leopard*, and the hue of an *Ethiopian*, are not by way of external, accidental adhesion ; if so, washing would fetch them off : But they are innate and contempered, belonging to the constitution, and not to be altered ; so are sinful habits and customs in the minds of sinners : By this means it becomes a second nature as it were, and strongly determines the mind to sin. *A teneris assuescere multum est*, It is a great matter to be accustomed to this way, or that, said Seneca ; yea, *Caput rei est, hoc vel illo modo, hominem assuefieri*,—It is the very head or root of the matter to be so or so accustomed, saith Aristotle. Very much of the strength of sin rises from customary sinning. A brand that hath been once in the fire easily catches the second time. Every repeated act of sin lesseneth fear and strengtheneth inclination. A horse that took an ill stroke at first breaking, and hath continued many years in it, is very difficultly, if ever, to be brought to a better way. What men have been accustomed to from their childhood, they are tenacious of in their old age. Hence it is that so few are converted to Christ in their old age. It was recorded for a wonder, in the primitive times, that Marcus Caius Victorious became a Christian in his old age. Time and usage fix the roots of sin deep in the soul. Old trees will not bow as tender plants do. Hence all essays and attempts to draw men from the course in which they have walked from their youth, are frustraneous and unsuccessful. The drunkard, the adulterer, yea, the self-righteous moralist, are by long continued usage so fixed in their course, and all this while conscience so stupified by often repeated acts of sin, that it is naturally as impossible to remove a mountain, as a sinners will thus confirmed in his wickedness. However, let the trial be made, and the success left to him to whom no length of time nor difficulty must be objected or opposed.

The fourth way to hell shut up by two considerations.

1. Let it be considered, the longer any man hath been engaged

in, and accustomed to the way of sin, the more reason and need that man hath speedily and without delay to repent and reform his course; there is yet a possibility of mercy, a season of salvation left: How far soever a soul is gone on towards hell, none can say it is yet too late. When Mr. Bilney the martyr heard a minister preaching thus, *O thou old sinner thou hast gone on in a course of sin these fifty or sixty years; dost thou think that Christ will accept thee now, or take the devil's leavings?* Good God! said he, what preaching of Christ is here! Had such doctrine been preached to me in my troubles, it had been enough utterly to have discouraged me from repentance and faith. No, no, sinner, it is not yet too late, if at last thy heart be touched with a real sense of thy sin and danger. The word is plain, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

An abundant pardon thou needest; thy sins, by long-continued custom and frequent repetitions, have been abundantly aggravated; and an abundant pardon is with God for poor sinners: he will abundantly pardon, but then thou must come up to his terms: thou must not expect pardon or mercy when thy sins have forsaken thee, but upon thy forsaking them; yea, such a forsaking as includes a resolution or decree in thy will to return to them no more, Hos. iv. 8. There must be a change of thy way, and that not from profaneness to civility only, which is but to change one false way to heaven for another, or the dirty road to hell for a cleaner path on the other side of the hedge; but a total and final forsaking of every way of sin, as to the love and habitual practice of it; yea, and thy thoughts too, as well as thy ways. There must be an internal, as well as an external change upon thee; yea, a positive, as well as a negative change; a turning to the Lord, as well as a turning from sin; and then how long soever thou hast walked in the road towards hell, there will be time enough, and mercy enough to secure thy returning soul safe to heaven.

2. Canst thou not forbear thy customary sin, upon lesser motives than the salvation of thy soul? And if thou canst, wilt thou not much more do it for the saving of thy precious, immortal soul? Suppose there were but a pecuniary mulct, of an hundred pounds, to be certainly levied upon thy estate, for every oath thou swearest, or every time thou art drunk, wouldst thou not rather choose reformation than beggary? And is not the loss of thy soul a penalty infinitely heavier than a little money? But, as the wise Heathen*

* These things seem cheap to us, which cost very dear, and which we could not purchase, though we should give our house for them. *Sen. Ep. 42.*

observed, *Ea sola emi putamus, pro quibus pecuniam solvinus; ea gratuita vocamus pro quibus nos ipsos impendimus*: We reckon those things only to be bought, which we part with money for; and that we have those things gratis, for which we pay ourselves. Is nothing cheap in our eyes but ourselves, our souls! do we call that *gratis*, that will cost us so dear? Darius threw away his massy crown when he fled before Alexander, that it might not hinder him in his flight. Sure your souls are more worth than your money, and all the enjoyments you have in this world. It had been an ancient custom among the citizens of Antioch, to wash themselves in the baths; but the king forbidding it, they all presently forbore, for fear of his displeasure: whereupon Chrysostom convinced them of the vanity of that plea for customary sinning. “You see, (saith he), how soon fear can break off an old custom; and shall not the fear of God be as powerful to over-master it in us, as the fear of man *?” O friends, believe it, it “is better for you to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, than having two hands, or eyes to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

The fifth way of losing the soul opened.

V. The fifth way, by which an innumerable multitude of souls are eternally lost, is by the baits of sensual, sinful pleasures.

Some customary sins have little, or no pleasure in them; as swearing, malice, &c. but others allure, and entice the soul by the sensual delight that is in them: this is the bait with which multitudes are enticed, ensnared, and ruined to all eternity. It is a true and grave observation of the philosopher †, “That we are impelled, as it were, to that which is evil, by the alluring blandishments of pleasure.” This was the first bait by which Satan caught the souls of our first parents in innocency, Gen. iii. 6. “The tree was pleasant to the eye.” Pleasure quickens the principles of sin in us, and enflames the desires of the heart after it. Every pleasant sin hath a world of customers, and, cost what it will, they resolve to have it. I have read of a certain fruit, which the Spaniards found in the Indies, which was exceeding pleasant to the taste; but nature had so fenced it, and double-guarded it with sharp and dangerous thorns, that it was very difficult to come at it: they tore their clothes, yea, their flesh, to get it; and therefore called the fruit, *Comfits in hell*. Such are all

* Οὐαὶ οὐτι ἐν δα φόβος ευκολως λυπται συνήθεια, &c. Hom. 14.

† Voluptatum blanditiis delinīti, ad ea gerenda omnia quæ prava sunt impellimur. Arist. lib. 2. Eth. c. 3.

the pleasures of sin, *consists in hell*; damnation is the price of them, and yet the sensitive appetite is so outrageous and mad after them, that at the price of their souls, they will have them. Thus the wicked are described, Job xxi. 13. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave:" That is, their whole stock of time is spent in cares and labours to get wealth, and when they have gotten it, the rest of their life is spent in those sensual pleasures that wealth brings in, or in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. The rich man, in the parable, fared deliciously every day, Luke xvi. where his voluptuous life is described, and in that description, the occasion of his damnation is insinuated. In a pampered and indulged body, is usually found a neglected and starved soul. But how shall the ruin of souls this way be prevented?

The fifth way to hell shut up, by three considerations.

1. Consider how the morality of Heathens had bridled their sensual lusts and appetites, and caused them with a generous disdain to repel those brutish pleasures, as things below a man. "What more foolish, what more base," saith Seneca *, "than to patch up the good of a reasonable soul out of things unreasonable?" "That is the pleasure worthy of a man, not to glut his body, nor to irritate those lusts in whose quietness is our safety †." This is the constant doctrine of all the Stoicks.

O what a shame is it to hear Heathenism out-brave Christianity! and principles of mere morality enable men to live more soberly, temperately and abstemiously, than those who enjoy the greatest pattern and highest motives in the Christian religion are found to do? 'Thou embracest pleasure, saith the Heathen, but I bridle it; thou enjoyest it, I only use it; thou thinkest it thy chief good; I esteem it not so much as good; thou dost all for pleasure's sake, but I nothing at all on that account.' These therefore shall be your judges.

2. Always remember sensual pleasures are but the baits with which Satan angles for the precious soul: there is a fatal hook under them. O if men were but aware of this, they would never purchase pleasure at so dear a rate. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant; but he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depth of hell,"

* *Quid stultius turpiusve quam bonum rationalis animi, ex irrationalibus nectere?* Sen. Ep. 92.

† *Illā est voluptas, et homine et viro digna, non implere corpus, et sagiuare, nec cupiditas irritare, quarum tutissima est quies.* De Benef. lib. 7. c. 11.

Prov. ix. 17, 18. Pliny tells us that the mermaids have most enchanting, charming voices, and frequent pleasant, green meadows, but heaps of dead men's bones are always found where they haunt. That which tickles the fancy stabs the soul. If the pain, (as Anacreon well observes) were before the pleasure, no man would be tempted by it; but the pleasure being first, and sensible, and the torment coming after, and, as yet invisible, this allures so many to destruction. "At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," Prov. xxiii. 32. If sin did sting and bite at first, none would touch it; but it tickles at first, and wounds afterward. O what man that is in his wits would purchase eternal torments for the sensual, brutish pleasures of a moment! * The pleasures of sin bewitch the affections, blind the judgment, stupify the heart, so that sober and impartial judgment finds no place. The heart is enticed, the lusts are enraged; cost what it will, sinners will gratify their lusts.

3. If you are for pleasure, certainly you are out of the way to it, who seek it in the fulfilling of your lusts. If your hearts were once sanctified and brought under the government of the Spirit, you would quickly find a far more excellent pleasure in the crucifying of your lusts, than now you seek in the gratification and fulfilling of them. Rom. viii. 13. "If ye, through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" i. e. ye shall live the most joyful, peaceful, and comfortable life of all persons in the world, a life of highest delight and true pleasure; for so far as your lusts are mortified, the vigorous, healthful frame, and due temper of your soul is restored, and your evidences for heaven cleared; both which are the springs of all spiritual delight and pleasure. Can any creature-enjoyment, or any beastly lust afford a pleasure like this? Do not you find the life you live in sinful pleasures quite beneath the dignity of a man? and are they not followed with bitter after-reckonings, gripes and flashes of conscience: *Even in the midst of laughter the heart is sad, and the end of that mirth is heaviness*: O ponder seriously what a trifle it is you sell your precious souls for! Is it not a goodly price you value them at? the fugitive, empty, beastly pleasures of a moment, for the torments of eternity.

The sixth way of losing the soul opened.

VI. There are also innumerable souls lost for ever by the dis-

* *Breve est quod delectat, æternum quod cruciat*; i. The pleasure is short-lived, but the torment is perpetual.

tracting cares of this world which eat up^d all their time, thoughts, and studies; so that there is no room for Christ, or one serious hour about salvation. It is too true an observation which Sir Walter Raleigh makes upon the common mechanics and poor labourers, their bodies are the anvils of pain, and their souls the hives of unnumbered cares and sorrows, whilst the voluptuous and rich spend their time and studies in purveying for new pleasures, and filling their heads with projects of that nature. The poorer sort have their heads and hearts filled day and night with anxious thoughts and cares how to get bread, pay their rents or debts, and struggle through the miserable necessities that pinch them on every side; many children, it may be, to provide for, and little or nothing out of which to make it: here is brick that must be made, and no straw to make it of; he borrows here to pay there: debts increase, and abilities decrease; he toils his body all the day, and when his tired carcass calls for rest to enable him for new work to-morrow; the cares of the world invade him on his bed, and keep him sighing or musing there, when, poor man! he had load enough before for one.

And now, what room is there left for salvation work? or how can any spiritual seed that is cast into such a brake of thorns prosper? "The cares of this life, (saith Christ) spring up, and choak "it," Mark iv. 19. Tell not them of heaven and Christ, they must have bread; talk not to them of the necessity or comfort of a pardon, they must pay their debts to men. O the confused buz and clutter that these thoughts and cares make in their heads! So that no other voice can be heard. And thus multitudes spend their whole lives in a miserable servitude in this world, and by that are cast upon a more miserable and restless state for ever in the world to come; one hell here, and another hereafter. And what shall be done for them? Is there no way for their deliverance? O that God would direct, and bless the following considerations to them, if it may be expected they may at any time get through the brake in which they are involved, and find them at leisure to bethink themselves!

The sixth way to hell shut up, by five considerations.

1. Bethink thyself, poor soul! as much as thou art involved and plunged in the necessities and distracting cares of this life; others, many others, as poor and necessitous, and every way as much embroiled in the cares of the world as you are, have minded their souls, and taken all care and pains for their salvation, notwithstanding: yea, though millions of your rank and order are destroyed by the snares of the devil, yet God hath a very great number, indeed the greatest of any rank of men among those that are

low, poor, and necessitous in the world. The church is called the "congregation of the poor," Psal. lxxiv. 20. because it consisteth mostly of men and women of the lowest and most despicable condition in this world; they are all poor in spirit, and most of them poor in purse. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, (saith James) hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" James ii. 5.

Now, if others, many others, as much entangled in the necessities, cares, and troubles of the world as you, have yet struggled through all those difficulties and discouragements to heaven; why should you not strive for Christ and salvation as well as they? your souls are as valuable as theirs, and their discouragements and hinderances as great and as many as yours.

2. Consider your poor and necessitous condition in the world, hath something in it of motive and advantage to excite and quicken you to a greater diligence for salvation than is found in a more full, easy, and prosperous state; for God hath hereby imbittered this world to you, and made you drink deeper of the troubles of it than other men: they have the honey, and you the gall; they have the flower, and you the bran; but then, as you have not the pleasures, so you have not the snares of a prosperous condition; and your daily troubles, cares, and labours in it do even prompt you to seek rest in heaven, which you cannot find on earth. Can you think you were made for a worse condition than the beasts? What, to have two hells, one here, and another hereafter? Surely, as low, miserable, and despicable as you are, you are capable of as much happiness as any of the nobles of the world; and, in your low and afflicted condition, stand nearer to the door of hope than they do. Ah! methinks these thoughts do even put themselves upon you, when your spirits are overloaded with the cares, and your bodies tired with the labours of this life. Is this the life of troubles I must expect on earth? Hath God denied me the pleasures of this world? O then let it be my care, my study, my business to make sure of Christ, to win heaven, that I may not be miserable in both worlds. How can you avoid such thoughts, or put by such meditations which your very station and condition even forceth upon you?

3. Consider how all the troubles in this world would be sweetened, and all your burdens lightened, if once your souls were in Christ, and in covenant with God. O what heart's ease would faith give you! what sweet relief would you find in prayer! These things, like the opening of a vein, or tumour when ripe, would suddenly cool, relieve, and ease your spirits; could you but go to God as a Father, and pour out your hearts before him, and cast all your cares and burdens, wants and sorrows upon him; you

would find a speedy out-let to your troubles, and an inlet to all peace, all comforts, and all refreshments; such as all the riches, honours, and fulness of this world cannot give: you would then find Providence engage itself for your supply, and issue all your troubles to your advantage; you would suck the breasts of those promises in the margin *, and say, all the dainties in the world cannot make you such another feast; you would then see your bread, your clothes, and all provisions for you and yours, in God's promises, when you are brought to an exigence, and would certainly find performances as well as promises, all along the course of your life.

4. Say not you have no time to mind another world: God hath not put any of you under such an unhappy necessity; you have one whole day every week, allowed you by God and man, for your souls; you have some spare time every day, which you know you spend worse than in heavenly thoughts and exercises; yea, most callings are such as will admit of spiritual exercises of thoughts, even when your hands are exercised in the affairs of this life: besides, there are none of you but have, and must have daily some relaxations and rest from business; and if your hearts were spiritual, and set upon heaven, you would find more time than you think on, without prejudice to your callings, yea, to the great furtherance of them, to spend with God. I can tell you when and where I have found poor servants hard at work for salvation, labouring for Christ, some in the fields, others in barns and stables, where they could find any privacy to pour out their souls to God in prayer. As lovers will make hard shifts to converse together, so will the soul that is devoted to God, and in earnest for heaven; and though your opportunities be not so large, they may be as sweet, as successful, and to be sure sincere, as those whose condition affords them more time, and greater external conveniencies than you enjoy: more business is sometimes dispatched in a quarter of an hour in prayer, yea, let me say in a few hearty ejaculations of soul to God, in a few minutes, than in many long and elaborate duties. If thou cast in thy two mites of time into the treasury of prayer, having no more, thou mayest, as Christ said of the poor widow, *give more than those that cast in of their great abundance of time and talents.*

5. Lastly, Consider, Jesus Christ is no respecter of persons, the poorest and vilest on earth, are as welcome to him as the greatest. He chose a poor and mean condition in this world himself, conversed mostly among the poor, never refused any because of his poverty: "God accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regard-

* Heb. xiii. 5. Isa. xli. 17. Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10. Psal. xci. 15. Rom. viii. 28.

“eth the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of “his hands,” Job xxxiv. 19. and that both in respect of their natural constitution, as men, and their civil conditions, as rich or poor men. Riches and poverty make a great difference in the respects of men, but none at all with God. If thou be one of God’s poor, he will accept, love, and honour thee above the greatest (if graceless) person in the world. Poverty is no bar to Christ or heaven, though it be to the respects of men, and the pleasures of this life. Away, then, with all vain pretences against a life of godliness, from the meanness of your outward condition; heaven was not made for the rich, and hell only for the poor: No; how hard soever you find the way thither, I am sure Christ saith, *It is hard for a rich man to enter into that kingdom.*

The seventh way of losing the soul discovered.

VII. The seventh beaten path to destruction, is by groundless presumption; *præsумendo sperant, et sperando pereunt*, by presumption they have hope, and by that hope they perish.

There are divers objects of presumption, amongst which, these three are most usual and most fatal, viz. that they have,

1. That grace which they have not.
2. That mercy in God they will not find.
3. That time before them which will fail them.

1. Many presume they have that grace in them, which God knoweth they have not: So did Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Here is a dangerous conspiracy betwixt a cunning devil, and an ignorant, proud heart, to ruin the soul for ever; they stamp their common grace for special; they put the old creature, by a general profession, into the new creature’s habit, and lay a confident claim to all the privileges of the children of God.

2. They presume upon such mercy in God, as they will never find; they expect pardoning and saving mercy, out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, when there is not one drop of mercy dispensed in any other way. The whole œconomy of grace is managed by the Mediator, Jude, ver. 21. all saving mercies come through him, upon all that are in him, and upon no others. God is, indeed, a merciful God, and yet presumptuous sinners will find judgment without mercy, because they are not found in the proper way and method of mercy. Thousands, and ten thousands carve out and dispose of the mercy of God at their own pleasure, write their own pardons, in what terms they think fit, and

if they had God's seal to confirm and ratify them, it were all well ; but, alas ! it is but a night-vision, a dream of their own brain.

3. But especially, men presume upon time enough for repentance hereafter : they question not but there are as fit, and as fair opportunities of salvation to come, as are already past ; and in this snare of the devil, thousands are taken in the very prime and vigour of their youth : that age is voluptuous, and loves not to be interrupted with severe and serious thoughts and courses ; and here is a salvo fitted exactly to suit their inclination, and quiet them in their way, that they may pursue their lusts without interruption.

I cannot follow the sin of presumption at present, in all these its courses and ways ; and therefore will apply myself to the case last mentioned, which is so common to the world.

The seventh way to destruction shut up by five weighty considerations.

1. I would beg all those young, voluptuous sinners, whose feet are fast held in the snare of this temptation, seriously to bethink themselves, whether they are not old enough to be damned, whilst they judge themselves too young to be seriously godly. There are multitudes in hell of your age and size ; you may find graves in the church-yard, of your own length, and skulls of your own size : men will not spare a nest of young snakes because they are little. If you die christless and unregenerate, it is the same thing, whether you be old or young ; there is abundance of young spray, as well as old logs, burning in the flames of hell.

2. If you knew the weight and difficulty of salvation work, you would never think you could begin too soon. Religion is a business which will take up all your time ; many have repented they began so late, none that they began so soon *. Say not, *the penitent thief found mercy at the last hour*, for his conversion was extraordinary, and we must not hope for miracles : besides, he could never encourage himself in sin, with the hope and expectation of such a miraculous conversion ; he was the only example of a sinner that was ever so recovered, in scripture, and this was recorded, not to nourish presumption, but to prevent despair. If ten thousand persons died of the plague, and one only of the whole number infected with it escaped, it is no great encouragement that you shall make the second. O think, and think again, how many thousands now on earth, have been labouring and striving, forty or fifty years together, *to make their calling and election sure* : and yet, to this day, it is not so sure as they would have it : they are afraid,

* I repent, O Lord, that I loved thee too late. *Aug.*

after all, time will fail them for finishing, and you think it is too early for beginning so great a work.

3. Others have begun sooner than you, and finished the great and main work, before you have done any thing. Abijah was very young, scarce out of his childhood, "when the grace of God was found in him," 1 Kings xiv. 13. The fear of God was in Obadiah, when but a youth, 1 Kings xviii. 12. Timothy was not only "a Christian, but a preacher of the gospel, "in the morning of his life," 2 Tim. iii. 15. What have you to plead for yourselves, which they had not? Or what arguments and motives to godliness had they which you have not? You shall be judged *per pares*, by those of your own age and size; their seriousness shall condemn your vanity.

4. The morning of your life is the flower of your time, the freshest and fittest of all your life for your great work; now your hearts are tender and impressive, your affections flowing and tractable, your heads clear of distracting cares and hurries of business, which come on afterwards in thick successions: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, whilst the evil days come not," Eccl. xii. 1, 2. If a man has an important business to do, he will take the morning for it, knowing if that be slipped, a croud and hurry of business will come on afterwards, to distract and hinder him. I presume, if all the converts in the world were examined in this point, it would be found, that at least ten to one were wrought upon in their youth; that is the moulding age.

5. And if this proper, hopeful season be elapsed, it is very unlikely that ever you be wrought upon afterwards: how thin and rare, in the world, are the instances and examples of conversion in old age! Long-continued customs in sin harden the heart, fix the will, and root the habits of vice so deep in the soul, that there is no altering of them; your ears then are so accustomed to the sounds of the world, that *Christ* and *sin*, *heaven* and *hell*, *soul* and *eternity*, have lost their awful sound and efficacy with you. But it is a question only to be decided by the event, Whether ever you shall attain to the years of your fathers? It is not the sprightly vigour of your youth that can secure you from death. What a madness, then, is it, to put your souls and eternal happiness, upon such a blind adventure? What if your presumption, of so many fair and proper opportunities hereafter, fail you, as it hath failed millions, who had as rational and hopeful a prospect of them as you can have: where are you then? And if you should have more time and means, than you do presume upon, are you sure your hearts will be as flexible and impressive as they now are? O beware of this sin of vain presumption, to which the generality of the damned owe their everlasting ruin!

The eighth way of losing the soul opened.

VIII. The eighth way of ruining the precious soul, is, by drinking in the principles of Atheism, and living without God in the world.

Atheism stabs the soul to death at one stroke, and puts it quite out of the way of salvation; other sinners are worse than beasts, but Atheists are worse than devils, for they believe, and tremble; these banish God out of their thoughts, and, what they can, out of the world, living as *without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. It is a sin that quencheth all religion in the soul. He that knows not his landlord cannot pay his rent: he that assents not to the being of a God, destroys the foundation of all religious worship; he cannot fear, love, or obey him, whose being he believes not: this sin strikes at the life of God, and destroys the life of the soul.

Some are Atheists in opinion, but multitudes are so in practice; "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Psal. xiv. 1. though he hath engraven his name upon every creature, and written it upon the table of their own hearts; yet they will not read it: or if they have a slight, fluctuating notion, or a secret suspicion of a Deity, yet they neither acknowledge his presence, nor his providence. *Fingunt Deum talem qui nec videt, nec punit*, i. e. They make such a God, who neither sees nor punishes. They say, "How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark clouds? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not," Job xxii. 14.

Others profess to believe his being, but their lives daily give their lips the lie; for they give no evidence in practice, of their fear, love or dependence on him: If they believe his being, they plainly shew they value not his favour, delight not in his presence, love not his ways, or people; but lie down and rise, eat and drink, live and die without the worship, or acknowledgment of him, except so much as the law of the country, or custom of the place extorts from them. These dregs of time produce abundance of Atheists, of both sorts; many ridicule and hiss religion out of all companies into which they come, and others live down all sense of religion; they customarily attend, indeed, on the external duties of it, hear the word; but when the greatest, and most important duties are urged upon them, their inward thought is, This is the preacher's calling, and the man must say something to fill up his hour, and get his living. If they dare not put their thoughts into words, and call the gospel *Fabula Christi*, the fable of Christ, as a wicked Pope once did; or say of hell, and the dreadful sufferings of the damned, as Galderinus the Jesuit did, *Tunc credam cum illuc venero*; I will believe it when I see it: yet their hearts and

lives, are of the same complexion with these men's words : they do not heartily assent to the truth of the gospel which they hear, and though bare assent would not save them, yet their assent, or non-assent, will certainly damn them, except the Lord heal their understandings and hearts, by the light and life of religion. To this last sort I shall offer a few things.

The eighth way to hell shut up by six weighty considerations.

1. You that attend upon the ordinances, but believe them no more than so many devised fables, nor heartily assent to the truth of what you hear ; know assuredly, that the word shall never do your souls good, it can never come to your hearts and affections in its regenerating and sanctifying efficacy, whilst it is stopt and obstructed in your understandings in the acts of assent. And thus you may sit down under the best ordinances all your lives, and be no more the better for them, than the rocks are for the showers of rain that fall upon them ; Heb. iv. 2. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." This is Satan's chief strength and fatness, wherein he trusteth ; he fears no argument, whilst he can maintain his post : the devil hath no surer prisoner than the Atheist ; there is no escaping out of his possession and power, whilst this bolt of unbelief is shut home in the mind or understanding. An unbelieved truth never converted or saved one soul from the beginning of the world, nor never shall to the end of it. Those bodies that have the *Boulema*, or dog-appetite, whatever they eat, it affords them no nourishment or satisfaction, they thrive not with the best fare : just so it is with your souls, no duties, no ordinances can possibly do them good ; as in argumentation, no conclusion, be it never so regularly drawn, and strongly inferred, is of any force to him that denies principles.

2. If you assent not to the truth of the gospel, you not only make God speak to your souls in vain, which is fatal to them : but you also make God a liar, which is the greatest affront a creature can put upon his Maker ; 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar." Vile dust, darest thou rise up against the God that made thee, and give him the lie ? An affront which thy fellow creature cannot put up, or bear at thy hands. Darest thou at once stab his honour, and thy own soul ? Are not the things that thou lookest on as *romances* and golden dreams, mere artifice, neatly contrived to cheat and awe the world ? Are they not all built upon the veracity of God, which is the firmest foundation and greatest security in the world ? Hath he not intermingled,

for our satisfaction, not only frequent assertions, but his asseverations and oath to put all beyond doubt? and yet dare any of you lift up your ignorant, blind understandings against all this, and give him the lie? Surely the wrath of God shall smoke against every soul of man that doth so, and his own bitter, lamentable, doleful experience shall be his conviction shortly, except he repent.

3. Dare any of you give the thoughts of your hearts as certain conclusions under your hands, and stand by them to the last, and venture all upon them.

Wretched Atheist! bethink thyself, pause a while, examine thine own breast; whatever thy vile atheistical thoughts sometimes are, is there not at other times a fear of the contrary? A jealousy that all these things which thou deridest and sportedst thy wicked fancy with, may, and will prove true at last? When thou readest or hearest that text, John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already;" his mittimus is already made for hell: doth not thy conscience give thee a secret gird, like a stitch in thy side? Dare you venture all upon this issue, that if those things you find in the word be true, you will stand to the hazard of them? If that be a truth, Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned," you will be content to be damned? Or if, Rom. viii. 13. be a truth, That "they who live after the flesh shall die," you will run the hazard, and bear the penalty of eternal death? If Heb. xii. 14. prove true, That "without holiness no man shall see God," you will be content to be banished from his presence for evermore? Speak your hearts in this matter, and tell us, do not you live betwixt atheistical surmises, that all these are but cunning artifices, and fears, that at last they will prove the greatest verities.

4. Hath not God given you all the satisfaction you can reasonably desire of the undoubted truth and certainty of his word? What would you have which you have not already? Would you have a voice from heaven? the scriptures you read or hear are a more sure word than such a voice would be, 1 Pet. i. 19. Or would you have a messenger from hell? He that believeth not the written word, neither would believe "if one should rise from the dead," Luke xvi. 31. View the innate characters of the scripture, is it not altogether pure and holy, full of Divine wisdom and awful majesty, and in every respect such as evidenceth its author to be the wise, holy, and just God, who searcheth the hearts and reins? Look upon the seals and confirmations of it: hath not God confirmed it by divers miracles from heaven, a seal which neither men nor devils could counterfeit? And do not you see the blessing and power of God accompanying it in the conversion and wonderful change of men's hearts and lives, which can be done by no

other hand than God's? Say not, the miracles, which confirm the gospel, are but uncertain traditions, and except you yourselves see them wrought, you cannot believe them. There are a thousand things which you do believe, though you never saw them; and what you require for your satisfaction, every man may require the same for his; and so Christ must live again in all parts of this world, and repeat his miracles over and over in all ages to satisfy the unreasonable incredulity of those that question their truth, after the fullest confirmation and seal hath been given, that is capable to be given, or the heart of man can desire should be given; and if all this should be done, you might be as far from believing as now you are; for many of those that saw and heard the things wrought by Christ contradicted and blasphemed, and so might you.

5. Satan, who undermines your assent to these things, is forced to give his own: he that tempts you to look on them as fables, himself knows and is convinced that they are realities; "The devils also believe and tremble," James ii. 19. they know and feel the truth of these things, though it be their great design and interest to shake your assent to them: they know Christ is the Son of God, and that there will be a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and that there are torments prepared for themselves, and all whom they seduce from God, Matth. viii. 29. If you ungod God, you must unman yourselves: yea, not only make yourselves less than men, but worse than devils.

6. In a word, let thy own heart, O Atheist, be judge, whether these be real doubts still sticking in your minds, after you have done all that becomes men to do for satisfaction in such important cases. Or whether they be not such principles as you willingly foment and nourish in your hearts as a protection to your sensual lusts, whose pleasures you would fain have without interruptions and overawings by the fears of a judgment to come, and a righteous retribution from a just and terrible God! Examine your hearts in that point, and you will soon find the cheat to be in that I here point you to: you have not studied the word impartially, nor brought your doubts and scruples with an humble, unbiassed, teachable spirit to those that are wise and able to resolve them, much less prayed for the Spirit of illumination; but willingly entertained whatever atheistical wits invent, or the devil suggests, as a defensive against the checks of conscience and fears of hell in the way of sin. You are loth those things should be true which the scriptures speak, and are glad of any colourable argument or pretence to still your own consciences. Is not this the case? The Lord stop your desperate course; your paths lead to hell.

The ninth way of losing the precious soul opened.

IX. Precious souls are daily plunged into the gulf of perdition by *profaneness* and *debauchery*. How many every where lie wallowing in the puddle? glorying in their shame, and running into all excess of riot? The hypocrite steals to hell in a private, close way of concealed sin; but the profane gallop along the public road at noon day; "They declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not;" Isa. iii. 9. "The shew of their countenance testifieth against them." The hypocrite hath devotion in his countenance, and heaven in his mouth; you know not by his words and countenance whither he is going; but the profane hide it not, they are past shame, and above blushing at the most horrid impieties. Look, as God hath some servants more eminent, forward, and courageous in the ways of godliness than others, men that will not hide their principles, or be ashamed of the ways of godliness in the face of danger; so the devil hath some servants as eminent for wickedness who scorn to sneak to hell by concealment of their wickedness, but avow and own it, without fear or shame, in the open sight of heaven and earth. Wherever they come, they defile the air they breathe in with horrid blasphemies and obscene discourses not to be named, and leave a strong scent of hell behind them.

This age hath brought forth multitudes of these monsters, the reproach and shame of the nation that bred them. I have little hope to stop any of them in their career and full speed to hell. They have lost the *sense of sin*, the restraints of *shame* and *fear*; and then what is left to check them in their course? I cannot hope that such a discourse as this shall ever come into their hands, except it be to sacrifice it to the flames; yet not knowing the ways of providence, which are unsearchable, and what use God may make upon one occasion or another of these following considerations, I will adventure to drop a few words upon these forlorn sinners, as far as they seem to be gone beyond recovery; beseeching the Lord to make way for these things to their hands and hearts, and make them the instruments of pulling some of them as brands out of the burning.

The ninth way to hell, by profaneness, stopt.

1. And first, let it be laid to heart, that though the case and state of many thousand souls be doubtful and uncertain, so that neither themselves nor any other know what they are, or to whom they belong! yet thy condition, O profane sinner, is without controversy, miserable and forlorn; all men know whose you are, and

whither you are going. The apostle appeals, in this case, to the bar of every man's reason and conscience, as a thing allowed and yielded by all, Eph. v. 5. "For this ye know, (saith he) that no "whoremonger, or unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an "idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of "God." This is a clear case, there is no controversy about it. Many there be in a doubtful case, but no doubt of these, they are fast and sure in the power of Satan: and as sure as God is a God of truth, they that die in this condition shall never see his face. And to the same purpose again, 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Know ye not that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not "deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor "effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, "nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall "inherit the kingdom of God." *Know ye not?* saith he, q. d. "Sure you cannot be so ignorant and blind to think that there is "any room in heaven for such wretches as these. If the righteous "be scarcely saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear? "If all strictness, holiness, self-denial, diligence, be all little enough "to win heaven, what hope can there be of those that not only cast "off all duties of religion, but also cast themselves into all the "opposite ways and courses which directly lead to damnation?" He that refuseth his food endangers his life; but he that drinks poison, certainly and speedily destroys it.

2. As far as you are gone in a course of profaneness, you are not yet gone beyond the reach of mercy and all hopes of salvation, if now at last, after all your debaucheries and profaneness, the Lord touch your hearts with the sense of your sinful and miserable state, and turn your feet to his testimonies. When the apostle, in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. had told us the doom of such men, upon the supposition of their perseverance in that course, yet presently adds, as a motive to their repentance, an example of mercy upon such wretches as these, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," ver. 11. The golden sceptre of free grace hath been held forth to many, as profane and notorious sinners as you, to blaspheming Saul, to a Mary Magdalen, to a Manasseh. It is not the greatness of the sin, but the impenitence and infidelity of the sinner that ruins him. Well, then, there is a certainty of damnation if you go on, and yet a possibility of forgiveness and mercy before you; a mercy invaluable.

3. Nay, this is not all; but in some respect there is more probability and hope of your return and repentance, than there is of many others who have led a more sober, smooth, and civil life than you have done. Your profaneness hath more dishonoured

God, but the morality and civility of some men secure them faster in the snare of the devil: They have many things in themselves to build up their presumptuous hopes upon, but you have nothing. It is hard for conviction to reach that man's conscience that hath righteousness of his own to trust in; but methinks it should have an easier access to yours, whose notorious courses lay your consciences naked and bare before the word to be wounded by it. Christ's ministry had little success among the Pharisees, who were righteous in their own eyes, but it wrought effectually upon *Publicans* and *Sinners*. Hence Christ told them, Matth. xxi. 31. that "Publicans and Harlots go into the kingdom of God before them." Publicans were esteemed the worst of men, and Harlots the worst of women; yet the one, and the other, as vile as they were, stood fairer for conviction, and consequently for salvation, than those that thought they needed *no repentance*. All this is matter of hope, and runs into a powerful motive and loud call to repentance. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

The tenth way leading to destruction marked.

X. Deep and fixed prejudices against godliness, and the sincere professors thereof, precipitate thousands of souls into their own ruin and damnation.

It was not without a weighty reason, that Christ denounced that wo upon the world, Matth. xviii. 7. "Wo unto the world, because of offences." The poor world will be ruined by scandals and prejudices; they will take such offences at the ways of godliness, that they will never have good thoughts of them any more. "This sect is every where spoken against," Acts xxviii. 22. and so Christians are condemned, *δια την φημην*, because of the common reproach, as Justin Martyr complained. All the scandals which fall out in the church, are so many swords and daggers put into the hands of the wicked world to murder their own souls withal. Some have sucked in such opinions of the ways of godliness as make them irreconcilable enemies to them, and fierce opposers of them. And from hence are most of the persecutions that befall the people of God. When you see showers of slanders and reproaches going before, expect storms of persecutions coming after. Slanders beget prejudices, and these prepare for persecutions. O how keen and fierce are the minds of many against the upright and innocent servants of God, whom they have first represented to themselves in such an odious dress and character, as the devil hath drawn them in, upon their fancies and imaginations! So the primitive Christians were represented to the Heathens as monsters, and their conventions in the night, occasioned by the fury of persecutors,

were reported to be for lascivious and barbarous ends, to deflower virgins, and murder innocent children: And by this artifice the Heathens were secured against conversion to Christ. This hath been the policy of hell from the beginning, and it hath prospered so much in the world, that Satan hath no reason to change his hand. But how may this plot of hell be defeated, and the ruin of souls prevented?

The tenth way of destroying souls shut up by two counsels.

1. It will be impossible to prevent the ruin of a great part of the world by prejudices against the ways of godliness, except those who profess them, walk more holily and conformably to the rule and pattern of Christ, whose name is called upon by them. I shall therefore first address my discourse to the professors of religion, beseeching them, in the bowels of Christ, to take pity upon the multitude of souls which are daily ruined and destroyed by their scandals and miscarriages. Did you live according to the rules you profess, "your well-doing would put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Pet. ii. 15. and consequently the ruin of many might be prevented. I remember * Bernard, speaking of the lewd and loose life of the priests of his time, sighs out this just and bitter complaint to God about it; *Misera eorum conversatio plebis tue miserabilis subversio est*: O Lord! said he, their miserable conversation is the miserable subversion of thy people. O! of how many, who glory in the title of the sons of the church, may Christ say as Jacob did of his two lewd sons, Simon and Levi, "You have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land," Gen. xxxiv. 30.

And how many professors, who pretend to more than ordinary reformation and holiness, do shed soul-blood by their scandalous conversations. † Salvian brings in the wicked of his age upbraiding the looseness of Christians, in this manner; "Behold, those men who boast themselves redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, and profess themselves dead to the world, yet are conquered by the lusts of it." And ‡ Cyprian, long before his day, brings in the Heathens thus insulting over looser Christians: "Where is that catholic law which they believe? Where are the examples of piety and chastity, which they should learn? They read the gospel, yet are immodest; they hear the apostles, yet are

* Bern. in Convers. Pauli, Ser. 1.

† *Ecce qui jactant se redemptos a tyrannide Satanæ, qui prædicant se mortuos mundo, nihilominus a cupiditatibus suis vincuntur.* Salvian.

‡ *Ubi est catholica lex quam credunt? Ubi pietatis et castitatis exempla quæ discunt? Evangelia legunt, et impudici sunt; Apostolos audiunt, et inebriantur.* Cyp.

“drunk.” O professors! where are your bowels to the poor souls of sinners? If your neighbour’s ox or ass fall into the pit, you are bound to deliver him, if you can; and will you not do as much for a precious soul, as you would do for a beast? Nay, you dig pits, by your scandalous lives, to destroy them. If you sin, there are instruments enough to spread it, and multitudes of souls ready prepared to take the infection. Say not, if they do, the fault is theirs; for though they are principals in the murder of their own souls, by taking the scandal, yet you are accessories in giving it: He is a mad man that will kill himself with a sword, and he no better that will put it into his hand.

O, therefore, if you have any regard to the precious souls of men, live up to the rules of your profession! O, be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a perverse and froward generation! let the heavenliness of your conversation stop those mouths that accuse you as men of a worldly spirit; let them see, by your moderation in seeking it, your patience in losing it, your readiness in distributing it, that it is a groundless calumny under which your names suffer. Let them see, by your apparel, company, and discourses, you are not such proud, lofty spirits, as you are represented to be. Convince them, by your flexibleness to all things that are lawful and expedient, by manifesting, as much as in you lieth, that it is the pure bond and tie of conscience, which keeps you from compliance in all other things, and by your meekness in suffering, for such non-compliance, that you are not such turbulent, factious incendiaries, as the wicked world slanderously reports you to be. Convince the world by your exact righteousness in all your civil dealings, and by the lip of truth in all your promises and engagements, that you have the fear of God in your hearts, as well as the livery of Christianity upon your backs. In a word, so live, that none may have just ground to believe the impudent slanders the devil raises in the world against you. Let your light so shine before men, that you may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Without your care and circumspection, the shedding of a world of precious soul-blood can never be prevented.

2. Let me advise and beseech all men to be so just to others, and merciful to their own souls, as not to cast them away for ever, by receiving prejudices against godliness, from the miscarriages of some, who make more than a common profession of it. To prevent this fatal effect of scandal and prejudice at religion, I desire a few particulars may be impartially weighed.

First, Very many of those scandals, bandied up and down the world against the professors of godliness, are devised and forged in hell, as so many traps and snares to catch and destroy men’s souls, to beget an irreconcilable aversion and enmity in men to the ways

of God. "They devise deceitful matters (saith the Psalmist) against them that are quiet in the land," Psal. xxxv. 20. So Jer. xviii. 18. "Come, say they, let us devise devices against Jeremiah, and smite him with the tongue." And there is as little equity in the credulous receiver, as there is honesty in the wicked forger of these slanders: with one arrow of censure you wound no less than three, viz. the honour of God, your innocent brother, and your own souls: As to the two former wounds, they will in due time be healed; God will vindicate his own name fully, and the reputation of his innocent servants shall be cleared, and repaired abundantly; but, in the mean time, your souls may perish by the wounds prejudices have given, so that you may never be reconciled to godliness and its professors whilst you live, but turn scoffers and persecutors of them.

Secondly, Examine whether the matters that are charged upon them as their crimes, be not their duties. Sometimes it falls out to be so; and if so, you fight more immediately and directly against God, than men. This was David's case, Psal. lxxix. 10. "When I wept, and chastened my soul, that was to my reproach;" my piety was turned to reproach. They called his tears crocodile's tears, and his fastings, hypocritical shadows of devotion and humility. Thus the very matter of his duty was turned into scorn and reproach. And so it was with the primitive Christians, their very owning of themselves to be Christians was crime enough to condemn them.

Thirdly, If professors of religion do in some things act unbecoming their holy profession, yet every slip and failing in their lives, is no sufficient warrant for you to censure their persons as hypocrites; much less to fall upon religion itself, and condemn it for the faults of them that profess it. There is many an upright heart overtaken by temptation. You see their miscarriages, but you see not their humiliations and self-condemnations before God for them. 'Foul, and fearful (saith a grave divine*) was the scandal of David; and what was the issue? Presently the enemies of God and godliness began to lift their heads, and fall upon David's religion, 2 Sam. xxii. they blasphemed the name of God. 'O, this is he that was so grand a zealot, that the zeal of God's house did eat him up. This is the man, that, out of his transcendent zeal, danced before the ark; this is he that prayed thrice a day, at morning, noon, and night: This is he that was so precise and strict in his family, that a wicked person should not

* Jer. Dyke, of scandal, p. 53.

‘ dwell in his house. This your great, precise zealot, hath defiled the wife, and murdered the husband. Now you see what his religion is, now you see what comes of this profession of so much holiness and godliness.’

O that men would seriously consider their evil in such censures as these ! what is all this to religion ? Doth religion any way countenance, or patronize such practices ? Nay, doth it not impartially and severely condemn them ? It is the glory of the Christian religion, that it is pure and undefiled, James i. 27. These practices flow from no principle of religion, nor are chargeable upon it, for it teacheth men the very contrary, Tit. ii. 11, 12. If I see a Papist sin boldly, or an Arminian slight grace, I justly condemn their principles, in, and with their practices, because Popery sets pardons to sale, and Arminianism exalts nature into the place of grace : But doth the doctrine of the gospel lead to any immoralities ? Charge it, if you can.

Fourthly, And as senseless a thing it is to condemn all, for the miscarriages and faults of some ; which, yet, is the common practice of the world. Are all that profess godliness loose and careless ? No ; many are an ornament to their holy profession, and the glory of Christianity, and why must the innocent be condemned for the guilty ? What is your reason and ground for that ? Why might not the enemies of Christianity have condemned the eleven apostles upon the fall of Judas ? Had they not as good a warrant for it, as you have for this ?

To conclude, You little know what a snare of the devil is laid for your souls, in all those prejudices and offences, you take at the ways and professors of godliness ; and what a wo you bring upon your own souls by them. You speak evil of persons and things you know not, and prejudice is like still to keep you in ignorance of them. “ Wo to the world (saith Christ) because of offences ; and “ blessed is he that is not offended at me.”

The eleventh way of ruining the precious soul opened.

XI. The eleventh way, wherein abundance of precious souls perish in the christianized and professing world, is the way of formal hypocrisy in religion, and zeal about the externals of worship. Such a generation of men have, in all ages, mingled themselves with the sincere worshippers of God ; and the inducement to it is obvious ; the form of godliness is an honour, but the power of it a burden. By the former, earthly interests are accommodated ; by the latter, they are frequently exposed and hazarded.

We find in the Jewish church, abundance of such chaff intermixed with the wheat, which the doctrine of Christ discovered, and

purged out of the floor, Mat. iii. 9, 12. such were the Pharisees, who were exceeding zealous for traditions, and the external rites and ceremonies of the law, but inwardly full of all filthiness, Mat. xv. 7, 8, 9. Men that honoured the dead, and persecuted the living saints; that revered the material temple, and destroyed the living temples; that strained at gnats of ceremonies, and swallowed down the grossest immoralities.

And well had it been, if this generation had ended with the state and time of the church; but we find a prophecy of the increase of these men in the latter days, 2 Tim. iii. 5. which is every where sadly verified. Religion runs into stalk, and blade, into leaves, and suckers, which should be concocted into pith and fruit: Yea, it is of sad consideration, that amongst many high pretenders to reformation, their zeal, which should nourish the vitals of religion, and maintain their daily work of mortification and communion with God, spends itself in some by-opinion, whilst practical godliness visibly languisheth in their conversations. How many are there that hate doctrinal errors, who yet perish by practical ones? who hate a false doctrine, but, in the mean time, perish by a false heart? It is very difficult to reclaim this sort of men from the error of their way; and thereby save their souls from hell. However, let the means be used, and the success left with God.

The eleventh way to hell, by formality, barred up.

1. No sin entangles the souls of men faster, or damns them with more certainty and aggravation, than the sin of formal hypocrisy; it holds the soul fastest on earth, and sinks it deepest into hell. There was no sort of men upon whom the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, had so little success and effect, as the Scribes and Pharisees; they derided him, when *publicans* and *sinner*s trembled, and believed, Luke xvi. 14, 15. The form of godliness wards off all convictions; their zeal for the externals of religion secures them against the fears of damnation, whilst in the mean time, their hypocrisy plunges them deeper into hell than others that never made such shews of sanctity and devotion: "He shall appoint him his portion with hypocrites;" Mat. xxiv. 51. that is, he shall be punished in hell, as hypocrites are punished, *viz.* with the greatest, and sorest punishment. Hypocrisy is a double iniquity, and will be punished with double destruction: their ungrounded hopes of heaven serve but to pull up their wretched souls to a greater height of vain confidence, which gives them the more dreadful jerk in their lamentable, and eternal disappointment.

2. Blind, superstitious zeal, which spends itself only about the externals of religion, usually prepares, and engageth men in a

more violent persecution of those that are really godly, and conscientious. The Lord opened a great door of opportunity at Antioch to Paul; the whole city came together to attend the discoveries of Christ in the first publication of the gospel, and the poor Gentiles began to taste the sweetness of the gospel; but the devil, perceiving his kingdom begin to totter, immediately stirred up his instruments to persecute the apostles, and drive them out of the country: and who more fit for that work, than the devout, and honourable women? Acts xiii. 15. These stirred up their husbands, and all they had influence upon, under a fair pretence of zeal for the law, to obstruct the progress of the gospel. *No bird (saith one) like the living bird, to draw others into the net.* Men of greatest names, and pretensions to religion, if graceless, are the most dangerous instruments the * devil can employ to the ruin and extirpation of true godliness. Such a zealot was Paul, in his unregenerate state.

3. Nothing is more common, than to find men hot and zealous against false worship, whilst their hearts are as cold as a stone in the *vitals*, and *essentials* of *true religion*. Many can dispute warmly against *adoration of images, praying to angels and saints departed*, who all the while are like those dead images which others worship. Jehu was a zealot against idolatry; and yet the vital power of true godliness was a stranger to his soul, 2 Kings x. 15, 16. The Pharisees spared no pains to make a *proselyte*, and yet all the while were the children of the devil themselves, Mat. xxiii. 15.

This was a sad case, yet what more common? The Lord open the eyes of these men, and convince them, in season, that their zeal runs in the wrong channel, and spends itself upon things which shall never profit them. O if they were but as much concerned to promote the love of God, and life of godliness in themselves and others, as they are about some external accidents and appendages of religion, what blessings would they be to the world, and what evidence would they have of their own sincerity?

The twelfth way to hell, opened.

XII. The twelfth way to hell, in which many souls are carried on smoothly, and securely, to their own destruction, is, the way of *mere civility* and *moral honesty*, wherein men rest as in a safe state, never doubting but a civil life will produce an issue into an happy death. *Moral honesty* is a lovely thing, and greatly tends to the peace and order of the world; but it is not saving grace, nor gives any man a good title to Christ and salvation. Indeed there

* Satan ascends by the rib, as by a ladder to the heart. *Gregor.*

can be no grace in that soul in which civility and moral honesty are not found : but these may be found in thousands that have no grace.

That which ruins souls, is not the exercise of moral virtues, but their reliance upon them : they use their morality as a shield to secure their consciences from the convictions of the word, which would shew them their sinful and miserable state by nature. Thus the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12. " God I thank thee, that I am " not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as " this publican ;" he blesseth himself in the conceits of his own safety and happiness. Let debauched and profane persons look to it, I am well enough ; though, alas ! poor man, his being less evil, at best, could but procure him a cooler hell, or a milder flame. This was the case of the young man, Matth. xix. 28. and like a young man, indeed, he reasons. He sums up all the stock of his civil life, and thinks it strange if that be not enough to make a purchase of eternal life. *What lack I yet ?* Alas ! poor soul, every thing necessary to salvation : the very first stone was not laid, when he thought the building was finished : And this is the case of multitudes, both young and old ; and that which greatly confirms, and settles them in this their dangerous security, is the general, indistinct doctrine of some, who pretend to be guides to the souls of others, the scope of whose ministry aims at no higher mark than to civilize the people, and press moral duties upon them, as if this were all that were necessary to salvation : Nay, it is well if some do not industriously pull down the pale of distinction betwixt morality and regeneration, and tell the world, in plain English, *That there is no reason to put a difference betwixt such as are baptized, and live morally honest, and those that have saving grace ; and they that do so, are only a few, who are highly conceited of themselves, and censorious of all others, whom they please to vote formal, and moral.*

This, indeed, is the way to fix them where they are ; if Christ had not taken another method with Nicodemus, and his ministers had not pressed *the necessity of regeneration, and the insufficiency of moral honesty to salvation*, how thin had the number of true converts been, though, at most they are but a handful in comparison of the *unregenerate* !

O that God would bless what follows, to undeceive and save some poor soul out of this dangerous snare of the devil !

The twelfth way to damnation barred, by three considerations.

1. Blind not yourselves with the lustre of your own moral virtues, a life smoothly drawn with civility through the world : for though it must be acknowledged there is a loveliness, and attracting sweetness in morality and civility, yet these things rather res-

pect earth than heaven, and are designed for the conservation of the order and peace of this world, not for your salvation and title to the world to come. Without justice and truth, *kingdoms* and *commonwealths* would become *mountains of prey*, and *dens of robbery*. Where there is no trust there can be no traffic; and where there is no truth, there can be no trust. Civility is the very basis of human society; a world of good accrues to men by it, and abundance of mischief is prevented by it; but it never gave any man *an interest in Christ*, or *a title to salvation*. The Romans and Lacedemonians, who perished in the darkness of Heathenism, excelled in morality; there is nothing of Christ or regeneration in these things, how much of excellency soever be ascribed to them. Paul, the Pharisee, was a blameless person, touching the law, and yet, at the same time, not only utterly ignorant of Christ, but a bitter enemy to him, and all that were his. Till you can find another way to heaven than by regeneration, repentance, and faith, never lean upon such a deceitful and rotten prop, as mere civility is.

2. *Civilized nature is unsanctified nature* still; and without *sanctification* there is no *salvation*, Heb. xii. 14. Civility adorneth nature, but doth not change it. Moral virtues are so many sweet flowers strewed over a dead corpse, which hide the loathsomeness of it, but inspire not life into it. “* *Morality hides and covers, but never mortifies, nor cures the corruptions of nature;*” and mortified they must be, or you cannot be saved: take the best nature in the world, and let it be adorned with all the ornaments of morality (which they call *homiletical virtues*) and add to these all the common gifts of the Spirit, which are for assistance and ministry; yet all this cannot secure that soul from hell, or be the ground-work for a just claim to any promise of salvation: all this is but nature improved, not regenerated. Morality is neither produced as saving grace is, nor works such effects as grace worketh; there are no pangs of repentance introducing it, it may cost many an aking head, but no aking heart for sin; no such distressed outcries as that, Acts ii. 37. “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Nor doth it produce such humility, self-abasement, heavenly tempers, and tendencies of soul, as grace doth. Cheat not yourselves, therefore, in so important a concern as salvation is, with an empty shadow.

3. Civility is not only found in multitudes that are out of Christ, but may be the cause and reason why they are christless: mistake not, I am not pleading the cause of profaneness, nor disputing civility out of the world; I heartily wish there were more of it to be found in every place; it would exceedingly promote the peace,

* *Abscondit, non abscondit vitia.* Lactans.

order and tranquillity of the world: but yet it is certain, that the eyes of thousands are so dazzled with the lustre of their own morality, that they see no need of Christ, nor feel any want of his righteousness, and this is the ruin of their souls. Thus Christ brings in the Pharisee with his proud boast, that he is “no extortioner, adulterer, nor unjust, or such an one as that publican,” Luke xviii. 11. O what a saint doth he vote himself, when he compared his life with the others! Well, then, beware you be not deceived by thinking you are safe, because you are got out of the dirty road to hell, when, all the while you have only stepped over the hedge into a cleaner path to damnation. *You have had a short account of some few of those many ways in which the precious souls of men are eternally lost: Let us briefly apply it in the following inferences.*

Infer. 1. If there be so many ways of losing the soul, and such multitudes of souls lost in every one of them, *then the number of saved souls must needs be exceeding small.*

The number of the saved may be considered, either *absolutely* or *comparatively*: In the first consideration they appear great, and many, even a great multitude, which no man can number, Rev. vii. 9. but if compared with those that are lost, they make but *a small remnant*, Isa. i. 9. *a little flock*, Matth. xii. 32. For when we consider how vastly the kingdom of Satan is extended, who is called *the god of this world*, from the world of people who are in subjection to him, how small a part of this earthly globe is enlightened with the beams of gospel-light, and that Satan is the acknowledged ruler of all the rest, Eph. vi. 12. But when it shall be farther considered, that out of this spot, on which the light of the gospel is risen, the far greatest part are lost, also: O what a poor handful remains to Jesus Christ, as the purchase of his blood!

It is of trembling consideration, how many thousands of families, amongst us, are mere nurseries for hell, parents bringing forth and breeding up children for the devil; not one word of God (except it be in the way of blasphemy, or profaneness) to be heard among them. How naturally their ignorant and wicked education puts them in the course and tide of the world, which carries them away irresistibly to hell; how one sinner confirms and animates another, in the same sinful course, till they are all past hope, or remedy: how the rich are taken with the baits of sensual pleasures, and the poor lost in the brake of distracting, worldly cares, except here and there a soul plucked out of the snare of the devil, by the wonderful power, and arm of God. On the one side, you may see multitudes drowned in open profaneness and debauchery; and, on the other side, many thousands securely sleeping in the state of

civility and morality: some key-cold, and without the least sense of religion; others hell-hot with blind zeal, and superstitious madness against true godliness, and the sincere practisers of it. Some living all their days under the ordinances of God, and never touched with any conviction of their sin and misery; others convinced, and making some faint offers at religion; but their convictions (like blossoms nipt with a frosty morning) fall off, and no fruit follows. And as *rubies*, *sapphires*, and *diamonds* are very few, in comparison of the *pebbles* and *common stones* of the earth; so are true Christians in comparison of multitudes that perish in the snares of Satan.

Inf. How little reason have the unregenerate to glory, and boast themselves in their earthly acquisitions and successes, whilst in the mean time, their souls are lost! they have gotten other things, but lost their souls. It is strange to see how some men, by rolling a small fortune up and down the world (as boys do a snow-ball) have increased the heap, and raised a great estate; they have attained their design and aim in the world, and hug themselves in the pleased thoughts of their happiness; but, alas, among all the thoughts of their gains, there is not one thought of what they have lost. O if such a thought as this could find room in their hearts, ‘I have indeed gotten an estate, but I have lost my soul; I have much of the world, but nothing of Christ; gold and silver I have, but grace, peace, and pardon I have not; my body is well provided for, but my soul is naked, empty, and destitute.’ Such a thought, like the sentence written on the wall, would make their hearts fail within them. What a rapture and transport of joy did the sight of a full barn cast that worldling into! Luke xii. 19, 20. “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;” little dreaming that death was just then at the door, to take away the cloth, guest, and all together; that the next hour his friends would be scrambling for his estate, the worms for his body, and the devils for his soul.

O how many have not only lost their souls, whilst they have been drudging for the world, but have sold their souls to purchase a little of the world! parted, by consent, with their best treasure for a very trifle, and yet think they have a great bargain of it! Surely, if poor sinners did but apprehend what they have lost, as well as what they have gained, their gains would yield them as little comfort as Judas’ money did, for which he sold both his soul and Saviour. Instead of those pleasing frolicks of wanton worldlings, what a cold shiver would run through all their bones and bowels, did they but understand what it is to lose a gracious God, and a precious soul, and both eternally, and irrecoverably!

The just God remains still to avenge and punish the sinner;

but the favour of God, that friendly look is gone; the peace of God, that heaven upon earth, is gone; the essence of the soul remains still, but its purity, peace, joy, hope, and happiness, these are gone; and these being gone, what can remain, but a tormenting, piercing sight of those things, for which you have sold them?

Infer. 3. Hence let us estimate the evil of sin, and see what a dreadful thing that is, which men commonly sport themselves with, and make so light of: it is not only a wrong and injury to the soul, but the loss and utter ruin of the soul for ever.

It is said, Prov. viii. 36. "He that sinneth against me, wrong-eth his own soul." And if this were all the mischief sin did us, it were bad enough; a wrong to the soul is a greater evil than the ruin of the body or estate, and all the outward enjoyments of this life can be; but to lose the precious soul, and destroy it to all eternity, O what can estimate such a loss! Now the result and last effect of sin is death, the death of the precious soul. Rom. vi. 21. "The end of those things is death." So Ezek. xviii. 4. "The soul that sinneth shall die."

Sin doth not destroy the being of the soul by *annihilation*, but it doth that which the damned shall find, and acknowledge to be much worse; it cuts off the soul from God, and deprives it of all its felicity, joy, and pleasure, which consists in the enjoyment of him. Such is the dolefulness and fearfulness of this result and issue of sin, that when God himself speaks of it, he puts on a passion, and speaks of it with the most feeling concernment. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? q. d. Why will you wilfully cast away your own souls? Why will you choose the pleasures of sin for a season, at the price of my wrath and fury poured out for ever? O think of this, you that make so light a matter of committing sin! We pity those, who, in the depth of melancholy or desperation, lay violent hands upon themselves, and in a desperate mood, cut their own throats; but certainly for a man to murder his own soul, is an act of wickedness as much beyond it, as the value of the soul is above that of the body.

Inf. 4. What an invaluable mercy is Jesus Christ to the world, who came on purpose to seek and to save such as were lost?

In Adam all were shipwrecked and cast away: Christ is the plank of mercy, let down from heaven to save some. The loss of souls by the fall, had been as irrecoverable as the loss of the fallen angels, had not God, in a way above all human thoughts and counsels, contrived the method of their redemption. It is astonish-

ing to consider the admirable harmony and glorious triumph of all the divine attributes, in this great project of heaven, for the recovery of lost souls. It is the "wonder of angels," 1 Pet. i. 12. the "great mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. the matter and subject of the triumphant song of redeemed saints, Rev. i. 5. and well it may, when we consider a more noble species of creatures finally lost, and no Mediator of reconciliation appointed betwixt God and them: this is to save an earthen pitcher, whilst the vessel of gold is let fall, and no hand is stretched out to save it.

But what is most astonishing, is, that so great a person as the Son of God, should come himself from the Father's bosom, to save us, by putting himself into our room and stead, being made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. He leaves the bosom of his Father, and all the ineffable delights of heaven, disrobes himself of his glory, and is found in fashion as a man, yea, becomes a worm, and no man; submits to the lowest step and degree of abasement, to save lost sinners. What a low stoop doth Christ make in his humiliation to catch the souls of poor sinners out of hell! Herein was love, that God sent his own Son, "to be the propitiation of our sins," 1 John iv. 10. and "God so loved the world," John iii. 16. at this rate he was content to save lost sinners.

How seasonable was this work of mercy, both in its general exhibition to the world, in the incarnation of Christ, and in his particular application of it to the soul of every lost sinner, by the Spirit! When he was first exhibited to the world, he found them all lost sheep gone astray, every one turning to his own way, Isa. liii. 6. he speaks of our lost estate by nature, both collectively, or in general: "we all went astray:" and distributively, or in particular, "Every one turned to his own way;" and in the fulness of time a Saviour appeared.

And how seasonable was it, in its particular application? How securely were we wandering onwards in the paths of destruction, fearing no danger, when he graciously opened our eyes by conviction, and pulled us back by heart-turning grace! No mercy like this: it is an astonishing act of grace. It stands alone!

Inf. 5. If there be so many ways to hell, and so few that escape it, how are all concerned to strive, to the utmost, in order to their own salvation?

In Luke xiii. 23. a certain person proposed a curious question to Christ; "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He saw a multitude flocking to Christ, and thronging with great zeal to hear him; and he could not conceive but heaven must fill proportionably to the numbers he saw in the way thither. But Christ's answer, ver. 24. at once rebukes the curiosity of the questionist, fully resolves the question propounded, and sets home his own duty and greatest

concernment upon him. It rebukes his curiosity, and is, as if he should say,—Be the number of the saved more or less, what is that to thee? Strive thou to be one of them. It fully solves the question propounded, by distinguishing those that attend upon the means of salvation, into Seekers and Strivers. In the first respect there are many, who by a cheap and easy profession, seek heaven; but take them under the notion of strivers, i. e. persons heartily engaged in religion, and who make it their business, then they will shrink up into a small number; and he presseth home his great business, and concern upon him, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.*

By *gate* understand whatsoever is introductive to blessedness and salvation; by the epithet *strait*, understand the difficulties and severities attending religion; all that suffering and self-denial, which those that are bound for heaven should reckon upon, and expect: and by *striving*, understand the diligent and constant use of all those means and duties, how hard, irksome, and costly soever they are. The word *αγωνίζεσθαι* hath a deep sense and emphasis, and imports striving, even to an agony; and this duty is enforced two ways upon him, and every man else: First, by the indisputable sovereignty of Christ, from whom the command comes; and also from the deep interest and concern every soul hath in the commanded duty. It is not only a simple compliance with the will of God, but what also involves our own salvation and eternal happiness in it: our great duty, and our greatest interest are twisted together in this command; your eternal happiness depends upon the success of it. A man is not crowned except he strive lawfully, i. e. successfully and prevalently. O therefore, so run, so strive, that ye may obtain! if you have any value for your souls, if you would not be miserable to eternity, strive, strive! Believe it, you would find that the assurance of salvation drops not down from heaven in a night-dream, as the Turks fable their Alcoran to have done in that *lail-ato hazili*, night of demission, as they call it; no, no; the righteous themselves are scarcely saved; many seek, but few find. Strive, therefore, as men and women that are heartily concerned for their own salvation; sit not, with folded arms, like so many heaps of stupidity and sloth, whilst the door of hope is yet open, and such a sweet voice from heaven calls to you, saying, Strive, souls, strive, if ever you expect to be partakers of the blessedness that is here to be enjoyed; strive to the utmost of your abilities and opportunities. Such an heaven is worth striving to obtain, such an hell is worth striving to escape, such an invaluable soul is worth striving to save.

I confess, heaven is not the purchase or reward of your striving: no soul shall boastingly say there, Is not this the glory which my

duties and diligence purchased for me? and yet, on the other side, it is as true, that without striving you shall never set foot there. Say not, it depends upon the pleasure of God, and not upon your diligence; for it is his declared will and pleasure, to bring men to glory in the way, though not for the sake of their own striving. As in the works of your civil calling, you know all the care, toil, and sweat of the husbandman, avails nothing of itself, except the sun and rain quicken and ripen the fruits of the earth; and yet no wise man will neglect ploughing and harrowing, sowing and weeding, because these labours avail not, without the influences of heaven, but waits for them in the way of his duty and diligence. Rational hope sets all the world to work. Do they plough in hope, and sow in hope, and will you not pray in hope, and hear in hope? You that know your souls to be hitherto strangers to Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit; how is it that you take them not aside sometimes out of the distracting noise and hurries of the world, and thus bemoan them?

‘O my poor graceless, christless, miserable soul, how sad a case art thou in! Others have, but thou never feltest the burden of sin; thousands in the world are striving and labouring, searching and praying, to make their calling and election sure; whilst thou sittest still with folded hands, in a supine regardlessness of the misery that is hastening upon thee. Canst thou endure the devouring wrath of God? Canst thou dwell with everlasting burnings? Hast thou fancied a tolerable hell? Or, is it easy to perish? Why dost thou not cast thyself at the feet of Christ, and cry, as long as breath will last, Lord, pity a sinful, miserable, undone, and self-condemning soul? Lord, smite this rocky heart, subdue this stubborn will, heal and save an undone soul ready to perish: The characters of death are upon it, it must be changed or condemned, and that in a little time. Bowels of pity, hear the cry of a soul distressed, and ready to perish.

And you that do not understand the case and state your souls are in, have you never a bible near you? O turn to those places, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. where you will presently find the more obvious marks and characters God hath set upon the children of perdition; and if you find not yourself in that catalogue, among the unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, &c. then turn to John iii. 3. and solemnly ask thy own soul this question, Am I born again? Am I a new creature, or still in the same condition I was born in? What solid evidence of the new birth have I to rely upon, if I were now within a few grasps of death? Am not I the man or woman who lives in the very same sins which the word of God makes the symptoms and characters of damnation? And doth not my *conscience*

witness against me, that I am utterly void and destitute of all that saving grace, and a mere stranger to the regenerating work of the Spirit, without which there can be no well bottomed hope of salvation? And if so, are not the tokens of death upon me? Am not I a person marked out for misery? And shall I sit still in a state of so much danger, and not once strive to make an escape from the wrath to come? Is this vile body worth so much toil and labour to support and preserve it? And is not my soul worth as much care and diligence to secure it from the everlasting wrath of the great, just, and terrible God? O that the consideration of the wrath to come, the multitudes all the world over preparing as fuel for it, and the door of opportunity yet held open to souls by the hand of grace to escape that wrath, might prevail with thy heart, reader, to strive, and that to the uttermost, to secure thy precious soul from the impending ruin.

EPH. v. 16.

—*Redeeming the time (or opportunity) because the days are evil.*

TIME is deservedly reckoned among the most precious mercies of this life; and that which makes it so valuable are the commodious seasons and opportunities for salvation which are vouchsafed to us therein: opportunity is the golden spot of time, the sweet and beautiful flower, growing upon the stalk of time*. If time be a *ring* of gold, opportunity is the rich *diamond* that gives it both its value and glory. The apostle well knew the value of time; and seeing how prodigally it was wasted by the most, doth therefore in this place, earnestly press all men to redeem, save, and improve it with the utmost diligence. In this, and the former *verse*, we have,

1st, The duty enjoined, *Walk circumspectly.*

2dly, The *injunction* explained;

1. More generally, *Not as fools, but as wise.*

2. More particularly, *Redeeming the time.*

3. The exhortation strongly enforced with a powerful motive, *Because the days are evil.*

Among these particulars, my discourse is principally concerned about the redemption of time, or opportunities, which in this life are graciously vouchsafed us, in order to that which is to come: And here it will be needful to enquire,

* Καίρος αὐτοῦ χρόνος.

1. What the apostle means by *time*.

2. What by *the redemption of time*.

1. Time is taken more largely and strictly according to the double acceptation of the Hebrew word מָוֶלֶת which signifies sometimes *time*, and sometimes *occasion, season, or opportunity*, and accordingly is expressed by $\chi\rho\omicron\nu\nu\varsigma$ and $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$, *tempus* and *tempestivitas*: the latter is the word here used, and denotes the commodiousness and fitness of some parts of time above others, for the successful and prosperous management and accomplishment of our main and great business here, which is to secure our interest in Christ, and glorify God in a course of fruitful obedience. For these great and weighty purposes our time is graciously lengthened out, and many fit opportunities presented us in the revolutions thereof.

2. By the *redemption of time**, we must understand the study, care, and diligence of Christians, at the rate of all possible pains, at the expence of all earthly pleasures, ease, and gratifications of the flesh, to rescue their precious seasons, both of salvation and service, out of the hands of temptations, which so commonly rob unwary souls of them. Satan trucks with us for our time, as we did at first with the silly Indians for their gold and diamonds, who were content to exchange them for glass-beads, and tinsel-toys. Many fair seasons are forced, or cheated out of our hands, by the importunity of earthly cares, or deceitfulness of sensual pleasures: at the expence and loss of these, we must redeem and rescue our time for higher and better uses and purposes. We must spend these hours in prayer, meditation, searching our hearts, mortifying our lusts, which others do, and our flesh fain would spend, in sensual pleasures and gratifications of the fleshly appetite. If ever we expect to win the port of glory, we must be as diligent and careful as seamen are, to take every gale that blows, directly or obliquely, to set them forward in their voyage. The note from hence is this:

Doct. *That the wisdom of a Christian is eminently discovered in saving and improving all opportunities in this world, for that world which is to come.*

God hangs the great things of eternity upon the small wires of times and seasons in this world: that may be done, or neglected in a day, which may be the ground-work of joy or sorrow to all eternity. There is a nick of opportunity which gives both success and facility to the great and weighty affairs of the soul as well as body; to come before it, is to seek the bird before it be hatched;

* Εξαγοραζόμενοι τον καιρον.

and to come after it, is to seek it when it is fled. There is a two-fold season, or opportunity of salvation.

1. One was Christ's season for the purchase of it.

2. The other is ours for the application of it.

1. Christ had a season assigned him for the impetration and purchase of our salvation; so you hear his Father bespeaking him, Isa. xlix. 8. "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee," בערתי רען, *in tempore opportuno voluntatis, vel placito*. It was the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ to set in with the Father's time, to comply with his season: and it became a day of salvation, because it was the acceptable time which Christ took for it.

2. Men have their seasons and opportunities for the application of Christ and his benefits, to their own souls: 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then as workers together with God, beseech you also, that you receive not the grace of God in vain; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." He exhorts the Corinthians not to dally or trifle any longer in the great concerns of their salvation; for now, saith he, is your day. Christ had his day to purchase it, and he procured a day also for you to apply it, and this is that day; you enjoy it, you live under it: that golden day is now running: O! see that you frustrate not the design thereof, by receiving the gospel-grace in vain.

Now two things concur to make a fit season of salvation to the souls of men.

1. The external means and instruments.

2. The agency of the Spirit internally by, or with those external means.

1. Men have a season of salvation, when God sends the means and instruments of salvation among them. When the gospel is powerfully preached among a people, there is a door opened to them: 2 Cor. ii. 12. "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel, a door was opened to me of the Lord." God, as it were, unlocks the door of heaven by the preaching of the gospel: Souls have then an opportunity to step in and be saved.

2. But yet it is not a *wide and effectual door* (as the apostle phrases it, 1 Cor. xvi. 9.) till the Spirit of God joins with, and works upon the heart by those external means and instruments; as the waters of the pool of Bethesda had no inherent senative virtue in themselves, until the angel of the Lord descended and troubled them: but both together make a blessed season for the souls of men. Then he stands at the door, and knocks, by convictions and persuasions, Rev. iii. 20. strives with men as he did with the old

world by the ministry of Noah, Gen. vi. 3. Now the door of opportunity is indeed opened: but this will not always last; there is a time when *the Spirit ceases to strive*, and when *the door is shut*, Luke xiii. 25.

There is a season, when by the fresh impression of some *ordinance* or *providence* of God, men's hearts are awakened, and their affections stirred. It is now with the souls of men as it is with fruit trees in the spring, when they put forth blossoms; if they knit and set, fruit follows, if they be nipt and blasted, no fruit can be expected. For all convictions and motions of the affections are to grace, much the same thing as blossoms are to fruit, which are but the rudiments thereof, *fructus imperfectus et ordinabilis*, somewhat in order to it; and look, as that is a critical and hazardous season to trees, so is this to souls. I do not say it is in the power of any soul to make the work of the Spirit effectual and abiding, by adding his endeavours to the Spirit's motions; for then conversion would not be the free and arbitrary act of the Spirit, as in John iii. 8. neither would souls be born of God, but of the will of man, contrary to John i. 13. And yet it is not to be thought or said, that men's endeavours and strivings are altogether vain, needless, and insignificant; because, though they cannot make God's grace effectual, his grace can make them effectual; they are our duty, and God can bless them to our great advantage. Now there are, among others, five remarkable essays, efforts, or strivings of a soul under the impression and hand of the Spirit, that greatly tend to the fixing, settling, and securing of that great work on the soul; and it is seldom known any soul miscarries in whom these things are found.

1. Deep, serious, and fixed consideration, which lets conviction deep into the soul, and settles it, and roots it fast in the heart, Psal. cxix. 59. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." There are close and anxious debates in those souls in whom convictions prosper to full conversion: they sit alone, and think close to their great and eternal concerns: they carry their thoughts back to the evils of their life past, then smite on the thigh, and cry, *What have I done?* They run their thoughts forward into eternity, and that to a great depth, and then cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" They deliberate and weigh, in their most advised thoughts, what is to be done, and that speedily, for escaping wrath to come: thus they fix those tender, weak, and hazardous motions, which die away in multitudes of souls; and, in the loss of them, the seasons of salvation are also lost.

2. The first stirrings and motions of the Spirit upon men's hearts, do then become a season of salvation to them, when they are accompanied with spiritual, fervent, and frequent prayer: so

it was with Paul, Acts ix. 11. "Behold he prayeth." It is a good sign when souls get alone, and effect privacy and retirement, to pour out their fears, sorrows, and requests unto God. It is in the espousals of a soul to Christ, as it is in other marriages; a third person may make the motion, and bring the parties together, but they only betwixt themselves must conclude and agree the matter. Prayer is the first breath which the new creature draws in, and the last (ordinarily) it breathes out in this world. This nourishes and maturates those weak, tender, and first motions after God, and brings them to some consistence and fixedness in the soul.

3. Then do those motions of the Spirit on men's hearts make a season of salvation to them, when they remain and settle in the heart, and are in them *per modum quietus*, by way of rest and abode, following the man from place to place, from day to day; so that whatever unpleasing diversions the necessities and incumbrances of this world at any time give, yet still they return again upon the heart, and will not vanish or suffer any longer suspension: but in others, who lose their blessed advantage and season, it is quite contrary; James i. 23, 24. "They are as one that seeth his natural face in a glass, and goeth away and forgetteth what manner of man he was." He sees some spot on his face, or disorder in his band, which he purposeth to correct; but by one occurrence or another, he forgets what he saw in the glass, and so goes all the day with his spot upon him. This was an evanid light purpose, which came to nothing for want of a present execution; just so it is with many in reference to their great concerns: but if the impression abide in its strength, if it return, and follow the soul, and will not let it be quiet, it is like then to prosper, and prove the time of mercy indeed to such a soul.

4. An anxious solicitude and inquisitiveness about the means and ways of salvation, speaks an effectual door of salvation to be set open to the souls of men, Acts ii. 37. and xvi. 30. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Men and brethren, what shall we do?" q. d. we are in a miserable condition: Oh, you the ministers of Christ, instruct, counsel, and shew us what course to take! Is there no balm in Gilead? no door of hope in this valley of Achor? Alas! we are not able to dwell with our own fears, terrors, and presages of wrath to come. Oh for a messenger, one among a thousand, to teach us the way of salvation. Thus the Lord rivets and fixes those motions in some souls, that vanish like a morning mist or dew in others.

5. Lastly, That which secures and completes this work, is the execution of those purposes and convictions, by falling, without delay, to the work of faith and repentance in good earnest, dally-

ing no more with so great a concern, standing no longer at *shall I? shall I?* when mean while time flies away, and opportunities may be lost: but bring their thoughts and debates to a peremptory resolution, as the *Lepers* at Samaria did; and seeing themselves shut up to one only door of hope, there they resolve to take their station, lying at the feet of Jesus Christ, and casting their poor burdened souls upon him, whatever be the issue. When the Spirit of God ripens the first motions to this, and carries them through that critical season thus far, there is an effectual door of opportunity opened indeed: this is an acceptable time, a day of salvation: but oh! how many thousands miscarry in this season, and like trees removed from one soil to another, die in the removal!

But certainly, it is the most solemn and important concern of every soul to watch upon all these seasons of salvation, when God comes nigh to them by convictions and motions of his Spirit; and to put the same value upon these things that they do upon their souls, and the salvation of them. This is the door of hope set open, a fresh gale to carry you home to your port of glory. Salvation is now come nigh to your souls; there is but a little betwixt you and blessedness. Wise and happy is that soul which knows and improves its season. To persuade and press men to discern and improve such seasons as these, is the principal work of the preachers of the gospel, and that special work to which I now address myself, in the following motives and arguments.

Arg. 1. And first, who, that hath the free exercise of reason, and the sense of a future eternal estate, would carelessly neglect any season of salvation, whilst he seeth all the rational world so carefully attending, and watching all opportunities to promote and secure their lower concerns and designs for the present life?

Is not the saving a man's soul as weighty a concern as the getting of an estate? You cannot but observe how careful merchants are, to nick the opportunity which promiseth them a good turn; how do poor seamen look out for a wind to waft them to their port, and industriously shift their sails, to improve every flaw that may set them on their voyage; how many miles tradesmen will travel to be in season at a fair, to put off, or purchase goods to their advantage: No entertainments, recreations, or importunities of friends can prevail with any of these, to lose a day on which their business depends; all things must give way to their business; they all understand their seasons, and will not be diverted. But, alas! what childish toys are all these, compared with their salvation! what is the loss of a little money to the loss of a man's soul? If a man's life depended upon his being at such a place, by such a precise hour, sure he would not oversleep his time that morning; and

had he but the least fear of coming too late, every stroke of the clock would strike to his heart; and yet remissness and carelessness, in such a case as this, is infinitely more excusable than in the matter of salvation. Certainly the solicitude and care of all the world for the interests thereof, yea, your own diligence and circumspection in temporal things, will be an uncontrollable and confounding self-conviction to you in the day of your account, and leave you without plea or apology for your supine neglects of the seasons of salvation.

Arg. 2. The consideration of the uncertainty and slippery nature of these spiritual seasons, must awaken in us all care and diligence to secure and improve them: This nick of opportunity is *tempus labile*, a slippery season; it is but short in itself, and very uncertain: "To-day, whilst it is said to-day (saith the apostle) if ye will hear "his voice," Heb. iii. 15. q. d. You have now a short, uncertain, but most precious and valuable season for your souls, lay hold on it whilst it is called *to-day*; for if this season be let slip, the time to come is called by another name, that is not *to-day*, but *to-morrow*. Your time is the *present time*; take heed of procrastinating and putting it off, till that which is called *to-day*, (which is your *only season*) be past and gone. The precious inch of time, though it be more worth than all the other greater parts and portions of your time, yet it is as much *in fluxu*, in hasty motion, and spending as other parts of time are; and being once lost, is never more to be recalled or recovered. Few men know, or understand it whilst it is current: other seasons for natural, or civil actions are known and stated, but the time of grace is not so easily discerned, and therefore commonly mistaken, and lost: And this comes to pass partly through,

1. Presumptuous hopes.

2. Discouraging fears.

1. Presumptuous hopes, which put it too far forth, and persuade us this season is yet to come; that we have time before us, and that *to-morrow* shall be as *to-day*. "Thus through presumption *," "men hope, and by their presumptuous hopes they perish." This is the ruin of most souls that perish.

2. Discouraging fears put it too far back, and represent it as long since past and gone, whilst it is yet in being, and in our hands. By such pangs of desperation, Satan cuts the nerves of industry and diligence, and causes souls to yield themselves as by consent for lost, and hopeless, even whilst the gospel is opening their eyes, to see their sin and misery, which is a part of the work in order to their recovery. Thus the eyes of thousands are dazzled that they

* *Præsumendo sperant, et sperando pereunt.*

cannot discern the season of mercy, and so it slides from them as if it had never been.

God came near to them in the means of their conversion, yea, and nearer in the motions of his Spirit upon their consciences and affections; but they knew not the time of their visitation, and now the things of their peace are hid from their eyes. Had those convictions been obeyed, and those purposes that were begotten in their hearts, been followed by answerable executions of them, happy had they been to all eternity: But their careless neglects have quenched them, and the door is shut; and who knows whether it may be opened any more? O dally not with the Spirit of God, resist not his calls! his motions on the soul are tender things; they may soon be quenched, and never recovered.

Arg. 3. Neglect not the seasons of mercy, the day of grace, because opportunity facilitates the great work of your salvation; it is much easier to be done in such a season than it can be afterwards: An impression is easily made on wax, when melted, but stay till it be hardened, and if you lay the greatest weight on the seal, it leaves no impression upon it. Much so it is with the heart, there is a season when God makes it soft and yielding, when the affections are thawed, and melted under the word; conscience is full of sense and activity, the will pliable: Now is the time to set in with the motions of the Spirit; there is now a gale from heaven, if you will take it, and if not, it tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men: Neglect of the season is the loss of the soul. The heart, like melted wax, will naturally harden again, and then to how little purpose are your own feeble essays? Heb. iii. 15. It is both easy and successful striving when the Spirit of God strives in you, and with you; you are now workers together with God, and such work goes on smoothly and sweetly; that which is in motion is easily moved; but if once the heart is set, you may labour to little purpose.

Arg. 4. The infinite importance and weight of salvation, is alone, instead of all motives and arguments, to make men prize and improve every proper season for it. It is no ordinary concern, it is your life, yea, it is your eternal life; the solemnity and awfulness of such a business as this is enough to swallow up the spirit of man. O what an awful sound have such words as these, Ever with the Lord? Suppose you saw the glory of heaven, the full reward of all the labours and sufferings of the saints, the blessed harvest of all their prayers, tears, diligence, and self-denial in this world; or suppose you had a true representation of the torments of hell, and could but hear the wailings of the damned, for the neglect of the season of mercy, and their passionate, but vain wishes for one of those days which they have lost: Would you think any care, any

pains, any self-denial too much, to save and redeem one of these opportunities? Surely you would have a far higher estimation of them than ever you had in your lives.

A trial for a man's whole estate is accounted a solemn business among men; the cast of a dye for a man's life is a weighty action, and seldom done without anxiety of the mind, and trembling of the hand: Yet both these are but children's play compared with salvation-work.

Three things put an unspeakable solemnity upon this matter; it is the precious soul, which is above all valuation, that lies at stake, and is to be saved, or lost. The saving or losing of it is not for a time, but for ever; and this is the only season in which it will be eternally saved or cast away: All hangs upon a little inch of time, which, being over-slipt and lost, is never more to be recalled or recovered. *Lord! with what serious spirits, deep and weighty considerations, fears, and tremblings of heart, should men and women attend the seasons of their salvation!*

Believe it, reader, since thy soul projected its first thoughts, there never was a more weighty and concerning subject than this presented to thy thoughts. O! therefore, let not thy thoughts trifle about it, and slide from it as they use to do in other things of common concernment.

Arg. 5. If we set any value on the true pleasure of life, or solid comfort of our souls at death, let us by no means neglect the special seasons and opportunities of salvation we now enjoy.

These two things, the pleasure of life, and comforts in death, should be prized by every man more than his two eyes; certainly no being at all is more desirable than a being without these: Take away the true, spiritual pleasure of life, and you level the life of man with the beast that perisheth; and take away the hope and comfort of the soul in death, and you sink him infinitely below the beasts, and make him a being only capable of misery for ever.

Now there can be no true, spiritual pleasure found in that soul that has neglected and lost his only season of salvation: All the solid delight and comfort of life results from the settlement and security of a man's great concern in the proper season thereof. The true mirth of the *converted Prodigal* bears date from the time of his return, and *reconciliation to his father*, Luke xv. 24. Two things are absolutely pre-requisite to the comfort of life, *viz. a change of the state by justification, and a change of the frame and temper of the heart by sanctification.* To be in a pardoned state, is a matter of all joy, Mat. ix. 2. and "to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. viii. 6. No good news comes to any man before this; and no bad news can sink a man's heart after this.

And for hope and comfort in death, let none be fond to expect

it, till he has first complied with, and obeyed God's call in the time thereof: A careless life never did, nor never will produce a comfortable death. What is more common among all that die, not stupid and senseless, as well as unregenerate and christless, than the bitter, dolorous complaints of their mis-spent time, and losing their seasons of mercy? *Reader, if thou wouldst not feel that anguish thou hast seen and heard others to be in on this account, know the time of thy visitation, and finish thy great work whilst it is day.*

Arg. 6. Neglect no season of salvation which is graciously afforded you, because your time is short; death and eternity are at the door. "You know that you must shortly put off these tabernacles," 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. that when a few years are come, you "shall go the way whence you shall not return," Job xvi. 22. All the living are listed soldiers, and must conflict, hand to hand, with that dreadful enemy death, and there is no discharge in that war, Eccles. viii. 8. It will be in vain to say, You are not willing to die; for willing, or unwilling, away you must go, when death calls you. It will be as vain to say, You are not ready; for ready or unready you must be gone when death comes. Your readiness to die would indeed be a cordial to your hearts in death; but then you must improve and ply the time of life, and husband your opportunities diligently; carelessness of life, and readiness for death are inconsistent, and exclusive of each other. The bed is sweeter to none than the hard labourer, and the grave comfortable to none but the laborious Christian. You know nothing can be done by you after death; the *compositum* is then dissolved; you cease to be what you were, to enjoy the means you had, and to work as you did. O therefore slip not the only season you have, both of attaining the end of life, and escaping the danger and hour of death.

The USE.

I shall close all with a word of exhortation, persuading (if possible) the careless and unthinking neglecters of their precious time and souls, to awake out of that deep and dangerous security in which they lie fast asleep on the very brink of eternity, and "to-day, whilst it is yet called to-day," to hear God's voice calling them to repentance and faith, and thereby to Christ and everlasting blessedness. "Behold, he yet stands at the door, and "knocks," Rev. iii. 20. The door of hope is not yet finally shut, there are yet some stirrings at certain times in men's consciences: God comes near them in his word, and in some rousing acts of providence, the death of a near relation, the seizure of a dangerous disease, the blasting and disappointment of a man's great design and project for this world, a fall into some notorious sin; these, and many such like methods of providence, as well as the

convincing voice of the word, have the efficacy of an awakening voice to men's drowsy consciences; and if careless sinners would but attend to them, and follow home those motions they make upon their hearts, who knows to what these weak beginnings might rise and prosper? The souls of men are, as it were, embarked in the calls of God, your life is bound up in them; if these are lost, your souls are lost; if these abide upon you, and grow up to sound conversion, you are saved by them. More particularly consider,

1. What a mercy it is, to have your lot providentially cast under the gospel; to be born under, and bred up with the means and instruments of conversion and salvation. We have lived from our youth up, under the calls of God, and within the joyful sound of the gospel; "God hath not dealt so with other nations," Psal. cxlvii. 20. Though others should seek the means of life, they cannot find them; and though you seek them not, you can hardly miss them.

2. How great a mercy it is, to have your lives lengthened out hitherto by God's patience under the gospel! that neither that golden lamp, nor the lamp of your life, (both which are liable to be extinguished every moment) are yet put out. Thousands and ten thousands, your contemporaries, are gone out of the hearing of the voice of the gospel, they shall never hear another call; the treaty of God is ended with them; the master of the house is risen up, and the doors are shut. Your neglects and provocations have not been inferior to theirs: but the patience and goodness of God has exceeded and abounded to you beyond whatever it did to them.

3. Bethink yourselves what an aggravation of your misery it will be, to sink into hell with the calls of God sounding in your ears! to sink into eternal misery, betwixt the tender, out-stretched arms of mercy! this is the hell of hell, the emphasis of damnation, the racking engine on which the consciences of the damned are tortured. "And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell, Matth. xi. 23. Such a fall, after so high an exaltation, is the very strappado which will torment your consciences. Hell will prove a cooler and milder place to the Heathens that never enjoyed your light, means, and mercies in this world, than it will to you. None sink so deep into misery in the world to come, as they that fall from the fairest opportunities of salvation in this world.

4. Let no man expect that God will hear his cries and intreaties in time of misery, who neglects and slights the calls of God in time of mercy. God calls, but men will not hear: the day is coming, "when they shall cry, but God will not hear," Prov. i. 24, 25.

“ Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? Job xxvii. 9. No; he will not: and this is but a just retribution from the righteous God, whose calls and counsels men have set at nought. But whatever men now think of it, it is certainly the greatest misery incident to men in all the world: for as no words can make another fully sensible what a privilege it is to have the ear, favour, pity, and help of God in a day of straits; so it is impossible for any words to express the doleful state and case of that soul whom God casts off in trouble, and whose cries he shuts out.

5. Beware of neglecting any call of God, because that call you are now tempted to neglect, may be the last call that God ever intends to give your souls. Sure I am, there is a call which will be the last call of God to rebellious sinners, and after that no more calls, but an eternal deep silence: *his Spirit shall not always strive with men*; and the more motions and calls you have already slighted, the more probable it is that this may be the last voice of God in a way of mercy to thy soul: and what if, after this, God should seal up thy heart, and judicially harden it? make thy will utterly inflexible, and thine ears deaf, as he threatens, Isa. vi. 10. What an undone, miserable man or woman art thou then! Oh! beware of provoking the sorest of all judgments, by persisting any longer in a course of rebellion against light and mercy.

6. Whilst your hearts put off and neglect the calls of God, you can by no means arrive to the evidence and assurance of your election; for your election is only secured to you by your effectual calling, 2 Pet. i. 10. There is no way for men to discern their names written in the book of life, but by reading the work of sanctification in their own hearts, Rom. x. 8. I desire no miraculous voice from heaven, no extraordinary signs, or unscriptural notices and informations in this matter: Lord, let me but find my heart complying with thy calls, my will obediently submitting to thy commands; sin my burden, and Christ my desire: I never crave a fairer or surer evidence of thy electing love to my soul: and if I had an oracle from heaven, an extraordinary messenger from the other world, to tell me thou lovest me, I have no reason to credit such a voice, whilst I find my heart wholly sensual, averse to God, and indisposed to all that is spiritual.

7. What reason have you why you should not presently embrace the call of God, and thankfully lay hold only on the first opportunity and season of salvation? Have you any greater matters in hand than the salvation of your precious souls? Is there any thing in this world that more concerns you? If the affairs of this life be so indispensably necessary, and those of the world to come so indifferent; if you think that meat and drink, trade and business, wife,

and children are such great things, and Christ, the soul, and eternity, such little things; or if you think salvation to be a work of the greatest necessity, and yet may safely enough be put off to an uncertain time, I may assure you, you will not be long of this mind. How soon are all the mistakes of men in these matters rectified in a few moments after death! Rectified, I say, but not remedied; your opinion will be changed, but not your condition.

8. Do you not every day easily and readily obey the calls of Satan and your own lusts, whilst God and conscience are suffered to call and strive with you in vain? If Satan or your lusts call you to the tavern, to the world, and sinful pleasures, you speedily comply with their call, and yield a ready obedience; if pride or covetousness call, or passion and revenge call, they need not call twice; and shall God and conscience call only in vain? Lord, what a creature is man become! If a vain companion call, you have no power to deny him; if God call, you have no ear to hear him.

9. You cannot but observe the obedience and diligence of many others, how seriously, painfully, and assiduously they ply, and follow on the work of their own salvation, and yet are no more concerned in the events and consequences of these things than you are. Doth it not trouble you when you compare yourselves with them? Do not such thoughts as these sometimes arise in your hearts upon such observations? ‘Lord, what a difference is there like to be betwixt their end and mine, when there is so apparent a difference in our course and conversation? Doth not God distinguish persons in this world by the frames of their hearts, and tenor of their lives, in order to the great distinction he will make betwixt one and another in the day of judgment? Have not I as precious a soul to save or lose as any of them? What is the matter that I sit with folded arms, whilst they are working out their salvation with fear and trembling? Why should any man or woman in the world be more careful for their souls than I for mine? Surely its capacity and excellency is equal with theirs, though my care and diligence be so unequal.’

10. To conclude, God will shortly give you an irresistible call to the grave, and after that his voice shall call to you in your graves, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment*: But wo be to you, wo and alas that ever you were born, if you should hear the call of God to die, before you have heard and obeyed his call to Christ! Will your death-bed be easy to you? Can you with any hope or comfort shoot the gulph of eternity before you have done one act for the security of your own souls from the wrath to come? It is a dreadful thing for a poor christless soul to sit quivering upon the

lips of a dying sinner, not able to stay, nor yet endure a parting pull from the body, in such a case as it is.

In a word ; If that God had made, and will shortly judge you ; if the Redeemer that shed his invaluable blood, and now offers you the purchases and benefits of it ; if you have any love to, or care of your own souls, which are more worth than the whole world ; if you have any value for heaven, or dread of hell, then, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for your precious soul's sake, trifle with heaven and hell no longer, but be in earnest to *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*. Could I think of any other means or motives to secure your souls from danger, I would surely use them : could I reach your hearts effectually, I would deeply impress this great concern upon them : But I can neither do God's part of the work, nor yours ; it is some ease to me, I have in sincerity, (though with much imperfection and feebleness) done part of my own : The Lord prosper it by the blessing of his Spirit in the hearts of them that read it. *Amen.*