



THE
Christian's Triumph
OVER
DEATH.

I COR. XV. 55.

O Death! where is thy Sting? O Grave!
where is thy Victory?



IN this Chapter, the Apostle largely insists upon that Article of the Christian Faith, which is so far above the Reach and Comprehension of Reason, that those who were the profess'd Masters of Reason, the wise *Athenians*, among whom both Learning and Civility were in their highest Elevation, yet could not even They abstain from railing Abuses, when *S. Paul* preach'd of the Resurrection unto them, *Act. xvii. 18.*

*What will this Babbling say? And, He seemeth to be a Setter forth of strange Gods, because he preached JESUS and the Resurrection. So strange and uncouth a Doctrine did this appear, that as they thought he recommended JESUS to them for a new God; so they thought, that this ἀνάστασις, or Resurrection, was some new-invented Goddess, that Paul himself worship'd, and would persuade them to be her Votaries. Which, howsoever, had certainly been of a better Rank, than many of that Rabble of Deitys which they own'd and worship'd. For, both Cicero and Clemens Alexandrinus testify of these learned Athenians, who rejected the Resurrection as a strange and novel God, that they yet erected Temples to Contumely, and Impudence, Diseases, and Ill-Fortune. And 'tis Pity, they should not always have the Favour and Presence of those Deitys. There was scarce any Superstition so absurdly ridiculous, which these Sages would not rather embrace, than the Belief of a future Resurrection, which they accounted a downright Affront to the Principles of Reason and Learning. They could not comprehend a Possibility in the Re-union of the separate Soul and Body, so contrary to their celebrated Maxim, *à privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*: Nor could*

could they conceive, that Dust scatter'd to the Four Winds of Heaven, and subjected to so many Changes, and made the Ingredients of so many other Bodys, could ever be recollected, and kneaded up again into the same Body to which it did originally belong. But I shall have no Occasion presently to vindicate the Possibility of the Resurrection, and to demonstrate, That though it may be above the Reach of Reason to conceive, yet it is not beyond the Reach of Omnipotence to effect: It is more pertinent at present to observe, that the Apostle draws a most firm and natural Consequence from the Belief of the Resurrection, to fortify us against the Dread of Death. Doth the Husbandman fear to commit his Grain to the Earth, because it must there die and rot, and lie buried under Clods and Dirt, whenas he knows, that all these Changes tend only to make it afterwards sprout up more flourishing and verdant, with the greater Beauty and Increase? So it is, saith the Apostle, with our Bodys, v. 42. *They are sown in Corruption, but raised in Incorruption; they are sown in Dishonour, but raised in Glory; they are sown in Weakness, but raised in Power:* There they lie hid under the deep Furrows of the Grave, suffering all the Debafements

of Stench, Worms, and Putrefaction. But GOD, the Great Husbandman of the World, doth but sow us in the Ground; we shall certainly sprout up again, and appear more beautiful and glorious. These Ruins of our Bodys shall be made a Foundation for a more stately Edifice; *This Corruptible shall put on Incorruption; and this Mortal shall put on Immortality, ver. 53.*

Now, the certain Hope and Expectation of this blessed Change, quite disarms Death, and leaves it without any Venom or Malignity against a Believer. To what purpose is all that ghastly Train that attends this King of Terrors, Diseases, Pains, and Languors? When they have done the utmost that they are able, they can but cast him to the Earth, whence, *Anteus* like, he riseth again with redoubled Vigour. GOD deals with us, as the *Chineze* do with their precious Earth; He lays us long under Ground, that we may be refin'd, and made fit to be Vessels of Honour prepared for our Master's Use. What a weak and impotent Adversary is this, whose Assaults are our Advantage, and whose Conquests prove his own O-
verthrow!

AND, upon this very Consideration, the Apostle doth in my Text insult over this
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contemptible Enemy, O Death! where is thy Sting? O Grave! where is thy Victory?

DEATH is here represented to us, as a venomous Serpent, but such a one, as hath lost his Sting; that though it may hiss against us, yet it cannot wound us.

Where is thy Sting? that is, Where is that which threatned to convey thy noxious and baneful Poison into us? Where is that which is thought so formidable, so destructive and pernicious in Death? And this very Question intimates to us, that there is nothing left of this venomous Quality; that now to a faithful Servant of CHRIST there is nothing deadly, no not in Death itself. I remember, I have somewhere read of a kind of Serpents, whose Poison is so very virulent, and of such quick Dispatch, that it doth immediately dissolve the Body, and reduce it to Dust. This Sting, and this Venom in it, Death doth indeed still retain, even against the best of Men; and those whom it smites shall certainly crumble away into Dust. This Sting therefore still remains.

AND, for its Victories, the Grave too can boast as many, as it hath Trophies erected in the Monuments, Inscriptions, and scatter'd Bones of those whom it hath

slain. But when Omnipotence shall rally every loose and dispers'd Dust in its former Station; when we shall become Heavenly from Earth, and Deathless from Death, we may justly, without Fear, despise the Injuries of Death, tread with Triumph upon the Earth that must bury us.

OBSERVE hence, That the Hope of a blessed and glorious Resurrection is the only sufficient Security against the Dread of Death, and a Christian's most glorious Triumph over the Grave.

IN prosecuting of this, I shall only speak to these Two Things.

First, I shall shew, That all other Considerations are too weak and feeble, to assure the Soul against the rough Assaults, and violent Terrors of Death.

Secondly, I shall shew you what there is in the Hopes and Expectation of a glorious Resurrection, that may embolden us to despise Death, as a conquer'd Enemy, and to upbraid it with this holy Scorn of the Apostle, *O Death! where is thy Sting?*

First, For the First, That all other Considerations are too weak to encourage us; let us consider those fearful and horrid Notions that Nature hath imprim'd upon us against its Enemy, how wan
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and dismal it represents his Visage; so that tho' there be nothing more certain, by the Statute Law of Heaven, than that we must die; yet withal, there is nothing more difficult than to persuade Men to die willingly. The old Philosophers, and wise Men of all Ages, have ransack'd the whole Magazine of Reason, and put into our Hands all the Weapons they could there find, which they thought might embolden us to encounter this dreadful Enemy. But yet (as the Lord *Verulam* well observes) all their great Preparations, instead of diminishing its Dread, only serv'd to make it appear the more fearful. All the Cost and Skill they bestowed upon their Armour, made them but the richer Prey to the Victor, and only serv'd to enhance the Conquests of Death, that could lay such rational and argumentative Heads in the Dust. And indeed, whatsoever meer natural Reason can put upon us, is rather for Pomp than Use; more to embellish the Mind, than to fortify the Heart: For, there is not any thing which these grave Moralists do with so much Ostentation and Contempt of Death offer unto the World, that, if it be rationally scann'd, can prove a solid Ground for Peace and Comfort in a dying Hour.

ALL that they inculcate in their Discourses on this sad Theme, may be (I think) reduced to these Three Heads.

EITHER the Necessity of Dying; or,
OUR Freedom by it from the Cares and Troubles of this Life. Or,

Lastly, The Hopes of a future Reward.

BUT none of these, so far as Reason alone can discover it, will be a sufficient Defence against the Sting of Death, nor gain the Victory from the Grave. For,

I. WHAT Relief is it, to tell us, that Death is necessary; that it is the common Lot of all Men; that every compounded Being hath those fatal Principles wreathed up in it, that will certainly work its Dissolution; and that therefore it becomes the Reason and the Spirit of a Man, to entertain that Fate that is unavoidable, with a Constancy that is unmoveable? This is frequently urged by Heathen Philosophers, in their Preparations against the Fear of Death. Πρὸς τὴν ἀνάγκην οὐκ ἀγχιαίνεται, εἰδὲ ἀπερόντα εἶναι τίθειαι τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, εἰν τὸ θνήσκον ἀποθνήσκον, saith Hierocles. A wise Man will not fret himself at Necessity, nor look upon it as some strange unexpected Accident, if that which is mortal die, and that which is compounded of Parts, fall asunder. But alas! what Comfort is all this,

this, since that which they bring for our Support, is the very thing that frights us? 'Tis the Inevitableness of Death, that makes it so exceeding terrible; it were not so dreadful, were it avoidable. And therefore, to arm Men against the Fear of Death, because it is the common Lot of all, is, in my Judgment, to as little Purpose, as if, to comfort some pitiful Wretch, they should bid him be of good Cheer, for that he must necessarily be miserable and wretched. And then,

2. As for the Freedom which they tell us Death gives from the Cares, Sorrows and Troubles of this Life; that it is the safest and most secure Refuge; the only Port we can make, when we are beaten with the Storms and Tempests of the World, though they insist on it as a principal Remedy against the Fear of Death; yet if this be all, that we shall no longer suffer Hunger, nor Cold, nor Pain; nor Misery, that Death is a universal Cure for all Diseases; that it alone removes the Wants which Life could not supply; all this will fall very short of being a sufficient Encouragement to undergo that last Arrest with a becoming Temper. For, this, if there be no more, is but like the Changing of a Fever into a Lethargy, and only brings us into such
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a gloomy Quiet; in which, as we have no Sense of Torment, so neither shall we have any of Ease, and Comfort. And to be thus free from the Burdens and Pressures of Life, will be no more a Solace to us after Death, than it was before we were born. And I am apt to think, that there are but very few, who would not be willing to compound for their Beings with their Troubles, like the weary Traveller in the Apologue, who sinking under his Burden, cry'd for Death to come and ease him. But when he beheld him appear so very grim and meagre, asking sowlly, why he call'd for him? he meekly told him, that it was only to help him up with his Load again: So, without doubt, it would fare with most Men, if they had no farther Hope than meerly to be eas'd of the Cares and Sorrows of this Life; they would rather wish to have them continue upon them to Eternity, than to be eas'd of them at such a privative Rate, since Being is more dear, than Sufferings are troublesome. But,

3. WHAT humane Reason alone can discover of a future Reward, tho' it be infinitely mean and sordid, in comparison with those sublime and refined Joys which GOD hath promis'd to us in His Word; yet

yet this indeed might be some Antidote against the envenom'd Sting of Death, and a Support against the Dread and Terror of it, if Reason could as well secure our Right unto it, as make Discovery of it. But Reason, even in Heathens themselves, hath prepared a Place of Punishment, as well as of Bliss; and the Consciences of all Men do, doubtless, discover unto them every day that Guilt, for which their Reason alone could never yet discover a sufficient Expiation: So that, instead of arming us against the Fears of Death, Reason, if we pursue it in its closest Consequences, redoubles those Terrors; and, by proving us Transgressors of the natural Law that God hath written in every Man's Heart, argues us all into Torments. Hence we read of such strange Lustrations, and horrid Methods of expiating Guilt, that usually they then committed the greatest Crimes, when they thought to compensate for them; and their very Religion was the most abominable Part of their Sins. If, therefore, meer Reason can conclude, that there is a future State of Happiness and Misery to be proportion'd out according to Mens Demerits, and their Consciences tell them that their Demerits are only such, as entitle them only to Punishment;

ment ; when they can find out no likely way of Atonement for their Guilt, this, instead of encouraging them against the Dread of Death, must needs make the Fear thereof more tormenting and killing, than if they were not at all conscious of any such future State.

BESIDES, all that our Natural Understanding can discover to be the Reward of just Actions, is only a partial Bliss to crown the Soul of Man ; which, indeed, some Sects of Philosophers held to be immortal, and to survive the Funerals of the Body. But, none of them ever believed the Resurrection of the Flesh ; and so give up the one half of Man to be lost and desperate. Now, who would not fear that dreadful Stroke, that should quite cleave away one half of him, never to be recover'd, nor re-united ? Who would not fear to undergo that Change, after which he must be no longer a Man, but only exist a bare and naked Soul ?

So that you see, all other Considerations that Reason and Philosophy can afford us, without the Expectation of a glorious Resurrection, cannot be a sufficient Defence nor Security to us against the Fears of Death. Those things are rather Flourishes of Wit, than Armour of Proof : And that last Encounter, in which
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we must all be engaged against that last Enemy, will prove too rough and boisterous for the Fineness of such formal Arguments to make good. If Mens Consolations be no better than these; That Death is necessary; That by it, they shall be freed from the Cares and Miseries of this Life; and, That their Souls shall survive, but whether in Weal, or Wo, they are not well assured: If this be all, when they come to die, it will fare with them as with cunning Fencers in the midst of a confused Battle, they will soon be put by all their artificial Play, and find, their Postures and their Wardings are all insignificant and useless. Indeed, that which alone can enable Men to meet Death with an undaunted Boldness, must be something either much below humane Reason, as Rashness, and Desperation; or else, something vastly above it, as Divine Grace and Revelation. And this, Christian Religion only hath made known to the World, discovering a perfect Expiation for Sin, in the Blood of the immaculate Lamb, the eternal Son of GOD; and withal, giving us ample Assurance, upon a pious and holy Life, of attaining to a joyful and blessed Resurrection, where the entire Man shall eternally possess a full and entire Happiness. By the former,

mer, it takes away the Sting of Death, which is Sin : By the latter, it recovers the Victory from the Grave, and throws down all its Trophies, letting those out to Life and Liberty, whom it detain'd as its Captives and Prisoners.

AND thus, I have finish'd the First thing propounded ; and have shewn you, That all other Considerations, besides that of a glorious and blessed Resurrection, are too feeble to assure and encourage Men against the Fears of Death.

Secondly, The Second is to shew you, what there is in the Hopes and Expectation of this blessed Resurrection, that may embolden us to despise Death, and to triumph over the Grave.

AND here, I shall not speak of the Glory that shall be conferr'd on the whole Man, which is consequent to the Resurrection ; but confine myself to those Advantages which we shall have in the Body only.

I. IT shall be raised an entire and perfect Body. Not a Dust, not an Atome, that is necessary to the Integration of it, shall be lost : And, though they be scatter'd up and down the World, and confusedly mix'd with other Beings, yet, by the Omnipotence of GOD, and the Ministry of Angels, every Dust shall be
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pick'd up again, and set in its due Place and Order. To this purpose, *Tertullian* speaks well, *Si non integros suscitatur Deus, non suscitatur mortuos, &c.* If GOD doth not raise us up entire, he doth not raise the Dead; for, if any Part of us be not raised, as to that we are still dead.

2. As it shall be raised up entire and perfect, so every Member of it shall be made such as may be most subservient to the Soul, and most capable of the Receipt of Glory. We shall not find our Bodies so restive, nor so unwieldy, as too often here we do. They now hang upon us as heavy Clogs, and depress us when we should be soaring up to Heaven. Then we shall no longer need our Saviour's gracious Excuse for our Infirmities, *Matth. xxvi. 41.* *The Spirit truly is willing, but the Flesh is weak.* No; this Flesh of ours, in that glorified Estate, shall hold out in all the rapturous Exercises of the Soul: And whereas now we are dull when we hear, and drowsy when we pray, and distracted when we meditate, soon tired out in any holy Performances; then, when all these Dregs and Flegm shall be purged from us, our Bodies themselves shall be all Light and Fire, Brisk and Sparkling, ready to attend every the least Motion of

the Soul, without Reluctance, and without Weariness. Then again,

3. THOUGH the Body shall be thus raised entire, and perfect in all its Limbs, yet shall they not perform any of those sordid Offices to which now they serve. They shall be discharg'd from their Offices; as the same *Tertullian* speaks; but yet they shall not therefore cease to be necessary in the Body: For, though they lose their Offices; yet must they still retain their Places, being reserved for the Sentence of the righteous Judge.

