

THE
Christian's Desire

OF

BEING ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND PRESENT
WITH THE LORD:

A S E R M O N

ON

THE DEATH

OF

Mrs. MARGARET BAXTER.



I have often thought of Cicero's wonder : " That since we consist of a mind, and a body, the skill of curing and preserving the body is so admired, as to have been thought a divine invention ; that which refers to the mind is neither so desired, before it be found out, nor so cultivated afterwards, nor is approved and acceptable to so many. Yea is even to the most, suspected, and hateful !"

TO

THE VERY REVEREND

Mr. RICHARD BAXTER.

SIR.

WHEN you assigned unto me that part not of forming a memorial for your excellent deceased consort (which is reserved to the fittest hand) but of instructing the people upon the occasion of her decease ; this text of Scripture occurring also to my thoughts (which I reckoned might sufficiently agree with the design you generally recommended to me, though I am sensible how little the prosecution did so) it put me upon considering with how great disadvantage we set ourselves, at any time, to reason against boldly inclination ; the great antagonist we have to contend against, in all our ministerial labours ! An attempt which, if a higher power set not in with us, looks like the opposing of our faint breath to the steady course of a mighty river !

I have often thought of Cicero's wonder : " That since we consist of a mind, and a body, the skill of curing and preserving the body is so admired, as to have been thought a divine invention ; that which refers to the mind is neither so desired, before it be found out, nor so cultivated afterwards, nor is approved and acceptable to so many. Yea is even to the most, suspected, and hateful !"

Even the tyrant Phalaris tells one, in an epistle (though by way of menace) that whereas a good physician may cure a distempered body, death is the only physician for a distempered mind. It works not indeed a universal cure. But of such on whom it may, how few are there that count not the remedy worse than the disease ! Yet how many thousands are there, that for greater hoped bodily advantages, afterwards, endure much more pain and trouble, than there is in dying !

We are a mysterious sort of creatures ! Yet I acknowledge the wisdom of God is great and admirable, in planting in our natures so

DEDICATION.

strong a love of this bodily life, without which the best, would be more impatient of living on earth, so long as God thinks it requisite they should; and to the worst, death would not be a sufficiently formidable punishment; and consequently human laws and justice would be, in great part, eluded.

And the same divine wisdom is not less admirable, in providing there should so generally be so much of mutual love, as doth obtain among near friends and relatives; for thereby their cohabitation and mutual offices towards each other are made pleasant and easy; which is a great compensation for the concomitant evil, that by the same love their parting with one another cannot but be rendered grievous.

But for you, who live so much upon the borders, and in the pleasant view of the other state; the one separation is, I doubt not, much easier to your sense, and the other to your fore-thoughts, than they are with the most. A perfect indifferency towards this present bodily state and life, is, in mine eyes, a most covetable thing, and my daily aim; wherein I entreat your prayers may assist,

Your most respectful, though most unworthy
fellow servant, and expectant in the work,
and hope of the gospel,

J. H.

A SERMON.

2. Cor. V. 8.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

THE solemn face of this assembly seems to tell me, that you already know the present, special occasion of it; and that I scarce need to tell any of you, that our worthy, honoured friend, Mrs. Baxter is dead. You have (it is like most of you) often met her in this place, when her pleased looks were wont to shew what delight she took to have many share in those great advantages, wherein she had a more peculiar interest; you are now to meet her here no more, but are met yourselves to lament together, that our world hath lost so desirable an inhabitant; and to learn (as I hope you design) what so instructive an occasion shall (of itself, or as it may be improved) serve to teach us.

It doth of itself most obviously teach the common document, that we, who are of the same make and mould, must all die too. And our own prudence should hereupon advance one step further, and apprehend it a most covetable thing, that the temper of our minds might comply with this unalterable state of our case; and that we be in a disposition, since we must die, to die willingly, and with our own consent. Nothing can be more irrational, or unhappy, than to be engaged in a continual quarrel with necessity, which will prevail, and be too hard for us at last. No course is so wise in itself, or good for us, as to be reconciled to what we cannot avoid; to bear a facile

yielding mind towards a determination, which admits of no repeal.

And the subject, now to be insisted on, may help us to improve the sad occasion to this very important purpose ; and shew us that dying, which cannot be willed for itself, may be joined with somewhat else which may, and ought to be so ; and in that conjunction become the object of a rational, and most complacential willingness. A subject recommended to me (though not the special text) by one, than whom I know no man that was better able to make a fit choice ; as (in the present case) none could have that right to choose. I cannot stay to discuss and open the most fruitful, pleasant series of discourse, in the foregoing verses, though there will be occasion to reflect somewhat upon it by and by ; but, in the text, the apostle asserts two things concerning the temper of his spirit, in reference to death : His confidence, and complacency, *θαρρημεν, και ευδοκημεν.*

First. His confidence, or his courage and fortitude “we are confident, I say,” he had said it before, ver. 6. We are always confident ; and assigned the cause : knowing that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord. And declared the kind of that knowledge (namely, which he had of that presence of the Lord, whereof he was deprived, by being present in the body) that is, that it was the knowledge of faith, not of sight, ver. 7. Now here he adds : We are confident, I say. It notes a deliberate courage, and the fixedness of it ; that it was not a sudden fit, a passion soon over. He had said above *θαρρηντες παντοτε*, We are confident at all times ; it was his habitual temper. And here the ingemination signifies increase, as if he had said : We grow more and more bold, and adventurous, while we consider the state of our case, and what we suffer by our presence in the body. Sense of injury or damage heightens, and adds an edge unto true valour. We would venture upon a thousand deaths, if the matter were left entirely to our own option, rather than be thus withheld any longer from the presence of our blessed Lord ; a thing whereof nothing but duty to him could make us patient. We are not destitute of the fortitude to enable us even to rush upon death, without more ado, if he did say the word ; but as yet he bids us stay, and his supreme and holy will must in all things determine ours. Therefore it is immediately subjoined, in the midst of this high transport, ver. 9. Wherefore we labour, that whether present, or absent, we might be accepted of him, or well-pleasing to him, (*ευαγεστοι αυτω ειναι*) we less mind the pleasing ourselves, than him. We are indifferent to life or death, being in the body, or out of it, in comparison of that ;

his pleasure is more to us than either. Here the highest fortitude yields and submits itself, otherwise, and for his own part, and as to what concerned his own inclination singly, and in the divided sense, the apostle to his confidence doth

Secondly. Add complacency. We are better pleased (*ευδοκουμεν μαλλον*) This is a distinct thing (a valiant man will venture upon wounds and death, but is not pleased with them) but in reference to so excellent an object, and occasion, they must mingle, and the latter runs into the former. We are willing rather (as we read it) to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. The word which we read willing, signifies to approve or like well, not a merely judicious, but complacential approbation; the word, whence comes the *ευδοκια* often ascribed to God in Scripture, which signifies the high satisfaction he takes in all his purposes, and determinations. The *ευδοκίαν θελημαίος*, Ephes. 1. 5. is certainly no tautology, but speaks how perfectly and pleasingly he agrees, and (as it were) consents with himself, in all that ever he had resolved on. This rather, says the apostle, is our *ευδοκια*, the thing that would please us best, and wherein we should most highly satisfy ourselves. It would not be the matter of our submission only, or whereto we could yield, when we cannot help it; but of our highest joy and pleasure. According as we find it was with the Psalmist, (psal. xvi.) in the same case (which though it had a further meaning in reference to Christ, had a true meaning as to himself also) therefore my heart is glad, my glory rejoices, my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*, the state of the dead, nor suffer thine holy One to see corruption, but wilt shew me the path of life; and no matter though it lie through the dark shady vale, it leads however into that blessed presence of thine (the same with that in the text) where is fulness of joy; and unto that right-hand (that high and honourable station) where are pleasures for evermore. Both these, the apostle's courage and fortitude, and his complacency or well-pleas'dness have express reference to the state of death, or of being absent from the body. The one respects it as a formidable (but superable) evil, the other as a desirable, and most delectable good. But both have reference to it in its concomitancy, or tendency, namely, as absence from the body should be accompanied (or be immediately followed) with being present with the Lord. The sense therefore of the whole verse, may be fitly expressed thus:—That it is the genuine temper of holy souls, not only to venture with confidence upon the state of absence, or separation from the body; but to choose it with great complacency and gladness, that they may be present with the Lord.

Body, we are not here to understand so generally, as if he affected, or counted upon a perpetual final state of separation from any body at all. No, the temper of his spirit had nothing in it so undutiful, or unnatural; no such reluctance, or disposition to contend against the common lot of men, the law of human nature, and the comely order which the Author of our beings, and of all nature, hath settled in the universe; that whereas one sort of creatures, that have life, should be wholly confined to terrestrial bodies; another, quite exempt from them; ours should be a middle nature, between the angelical, and the brutal. So as we should, with the former, partake of intellectual immortal spirit; and a mortal body made up, and organized of earthly materials, with the latter: which yet we might also depose, and reassume, changed and refined from terrene dross. The apostle's temper hath in it nothing of rebellion, or regret against this most apt and congruous order and constitution; he had no impatient proud resentment of that gradual debasement and inferiority that, in this respect, we are made a little lower than the angels. When Porphyry tells us, in the life of Plotinus, that he blushed as often as he thought of his being a body, it was agreeable enough to his notion of the pre-existence of the soul; that is, if it were true, that the original state of human spirits was the same with that of angels (which this is no fit season to dispute against) and that by their own fault, some way or other, they lapsed and slid down into grosser matter, and were caught into vital union with it, there was just cause of shame indeed. Apuleius's transformation (which many of you know what it means) if it had been real, was not more ignominious.

But it appears the apostle affected not a state, wherein he should be simply naked, or unclothed of any body at all; for he longs to be clothed upon with his heavenly house, ver. 2. And whereas he tells us, ver. 4. That which he groaned for, was not to be unclothed, but clothed upon; that being unclothed, doth not mean the act, but the state, that is, that he did not covet or aspire to a perpetual final state of being naked, or without any body at all. For so he speaks, ver. 3. If so be (as we read) that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. The particle *εἴς* admits to be read, since that, inasmuch as, for truly; and so the 2d. and 3d. verses will be connected thus: In this, (ver. 2.) that is, for this, namely, for this cause, as *εἰ* often signifies causality (not in this house, for *τῆσδε* and *οὗτα* will not agree) we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, that is of heaven, or suitable to heaven (*ἐξ* denotes here, as often, the matter whereof a thing is formed and made) a body made up of a

heavenly material; or (which is all one) an earthly body refined, and transformed into such a one. And then he subjoins the reason why his desire is so conditioned, and limited, or runs only in this particular current to have not, no body at all, but only not such a body. He wishes to have a body made more habile, and commodious, and fitter for the uses of a glorified soul (which hath its own more inward clothing peculiar to itself, in respect whereof that of such a body would be an additional one, a superinvestiture, as the word *επενδυσασθαι* imports) his desire is thus limited and modified for this reason. Inasmuch as, being thus clothed, we shall not be found naked, ver. 3. or without any body at all; which the law of our creation admits us not to affect, or aspire unto. And therefore in qualifying our desire thus, we shall contain ourselves within our own bounds, and not offer at any thing whereof humanity is, by the Creator's pleasure, and constitution incapable. Therefore he inculcates the same thing over again. We groan not to be unclothed, but only to be clothed upon; ver. 4. where that unclothed (the thing he desired not) must signify the state, and not the act only, is evident; in that being clothed (the thing which he did desire) must plainly be so understood. For was it only an entrance into glory he desired, and not continuance in a glorified state? Nor can this being unclothed much less, refer as an act to the present clothing of this earthly body, as if it were our being divested of that which he intended in this 4th. verse, as the thing he desired not, for then the 4th. verse would contradict this 8th. where he tells us he did desire it. The meaning then is, that he did not desire to be exempted from wearing a body, or to be without any at all: he did only covet to be absent from this body (gross and terrene as now it was) that he might be present with the Lord; with which he found being in such a body, and in the several accompanying circumstances of this bodily state, to be inconsistent. Wherefore it was a terrestrial body (the earthly house of this tabernacle, as it is ver. 1.) which he was now better pleased to quit upon this account.

And I say it is the genuine temper of a holy soul to be like-minded, not their constant, explicit, discernable sense. We must allow for accidents (as we shall note afterwards) but when they are themselves, and in their right mind, and so far as the holy divine life doth prevail in them, this is their temper.

And now, that I may more fully open this matter to you, I shall,

I. Endeavour to unfold, somewhat more distinctly, the

state of the case, in reference whereto good and holy souls are thus affected.

II. Shall shew you what is their true and genuine temper, or how it is that they stand affected, in reference to that case.

III. Shall discover how agreeable this temper is to the general frame and complexion of a holy soul.

IV. And then make such reflections upon the whole, as may be more especially useful to ourselves.

I. We are to take, as much as we can, a distinct view and state of the case. We see the apostle speaks by way of comparison, *ευδοκουμεν μαλλον*, we are willing rather. We are therefore to consider (that we may comprehend clearly the true state of this case) what the things are which he compares; and between which his mind might be supposed, as it were, to have been before (at least in order of nature before) in some suspense, till at last it come so complacentially to incline, and be determined this one way. Take the account of the whole case in these particulars.

1. There are here two principal terms, between which the motion and inclination of such a mind lies, from the one to the other. The Lord and the Body. Both do as it were attract and draw (or are apt to do) two several ways. The Lord strongly draws on the one hand, and the body hangs on, and holds, and draws in as strongly to itself as it can, on the other. The body as having us present in it. And how? not locally only, but in the way of vital union, and communion with it. And that shews how we are to understand being present with the Lord too, not by a mere local presence, but of more intimate vital union and commerce. Where, as in the union between the soul and body, the more excellent communicates life, the other receives it; so it must be here. Though now the Lord is present thus, in some measure (which this attraction supposes) yet speaking comparatively, that presence is absence, in respect of what we are to look for hereafter. Both these unions are very mysterious, and both infer very strong and powerful drawing, or holding together of the things so united.

There is no greater mystery in nature, than the union between the soul and body. That a mind and spirit should be so tied and linked with a clod of clay, that, while that remains in a due temper, it cannot by any art or power free itself! It can by an act of the will move a hand, or foot, or the whole body; but cannot move from it one inch. If it move hither and thither, or by a leap upward do ascend a little, the body still follows; it cannot shake or throw it off. We cannot take ourselves out; by any allowable means we cannot, nor by any

at all (that are at least within mere human power) as long as the temperament lasts. While that remains, we cannot go; if that fail, we cannot stay; though there be so many open avenues (could we suppose any material bounds to hem in, or exclude a spirit) we cannot go out or in at pleasure. A wonderful thing! and I wonder we no more wonder at our own make and frame in this respect, that we do not, with reverent submissive adoration, discern and confess how far we are outwitted, and overpowered by our wise and great Creator; that we not only cannot undo his work upon us, in this respect; but that we cannot so much as understand it. What so much akin are a mind and a piece of earth, a clod and a thought, that they should be thus affixed to one another; or that there should be such a thing in nature as thinking clay! But hereupon, what advantage hath this body upon the soul our spirit! In the natural union is grounded a moral one, of love and affection; which (on the soul's part) draws and binds it down with mighty efficacy.

Again, how mysterious and ineffable is the union of the Lord, and the soul; and how more highly venerable, as this is a sacred mystery! And who would not admire at their proud disdainful folly, that while they cannot explain the union between the soul and body, are ready to jeer at their just, humble, and modest ignorance, that call this other a mystical union? or, because they know not what to make of it, would make nothing, and will not allow there should be any such thing, or would have it be next to nothing. Have those words no sense belonging to them, or not a great sense, (1 Cor. 6. 17.) But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit? And, upon this supernatural union also (be it what it will) methinks the binding, and drawing power of love should not be less!

2. We must conceive in our minds, as distinctly as we can, the peculiar adjuncts of each of these more principal terms; that is, on the part of the body first, we are to consider a sensible, a grossly corporeal world, to which this body doth connaturalize us, and whereto we are attempered by our being in the body, and living this bodily life. This body, while we live in it, is the *terminus uniens*, the medium, the unitive bond between us and it. In this world we find ourselves encompassed with objects that are suitable, grateful, and entertaining to our bodily senses, and the several principles, perceptions, and appetites that belong to the bodily life; and these things familiarize and habituate us to this world, and make us, as it were, one with it. There is, particularly, a bodily people, as is intimated in the text, that we are associated with by our being in the body. The words *ενδημιουσαι* and

ἐκδημησάαι, in this verse (and the same are used verse the 6th and 9th) signify there is such a people of which we are, and from which we would be dissociated; ἐνδημος is *civis, incola*, or *indigena*, an inhabitant, or native among this or that people; as ἐκδημος is *peregrinus* one that lives abroad and is severed from the people he belonged unto. The apostle considers himself, while in the body, as living among such a sort of people as dwell in bodics, a like sort of people to himself; and would be no longer a home-dweller with these, but travel away from them, to join and be a dweller with another people.

For also, on the other hand, he considers, with the Lord, an invisible world, where he resides; and an incorporeal people, he presides over. So that the case here is, are we willing to be dispeopled from this bodily sort of people, and peopled with that incorporeal sort, the world, and community of spirits?

3. It is further to be considered in this case, that we are related both ways, related to the body, and related to the Lord; to the one people, and the other, the one claims an interest in us, and so doth the other. We have many earthly alliances, it is true, and we have many heavenly; we are related to both worlds, and have affairs lying in both. And now what mighty pleadings might the case admit, on the one hand, and the other? Were the body, apart, capable of pleading for itself, to this effect it must bespeak the soul: "I am thy body, I was made and formed for thee, and someway, by thee. Thou hast so long inhabited and dwelt with me, and in me. Thou art my soul, my life, my strength, if thou be absent, I am a carcass, and fall to dirt; and thou wilt be a maimed thing, and scarce thy whole-self." But though it cannot dictate, and do not utter such words; nature doth itself plead more strongly, than words can.

And again, how much more potently might the Lord plead for his having the soul more closely united, and intimately conversant with himself! "Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen, which were given to me, and for which I offered up my own soul. I have visited thee in thy low and abject state, said to thee, in thy blood, Live, have inspired thee with a heavenly, sacred, divine life, the root, and seminal principle of a perfect, glorious, eternal life. Let this body drop, which hath been long thy burden! let it fall and die, it matters not! Yet since thou lovest it, I will restore it thee again, pure and glorious, like mine own. I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, John. 11. 25. Never fear to venture thyself with me, nor to commit thy body to my after-care."

And now all the question will be, Which alleges the more considerable things? and the matter will be estimated, as the temper of the soul is. An earthly sordid soul, when the overture is made to it of such a translation, will be ready to say, as the Shunamite (2 Kings. 4. 13.) did to the prophet, when he offered to speak for her to the king (perhaps that her husband might be called to court, and made a great man) I dwell among my own people (an answer that in her case well expressed the true greatness of a contented mind, but in this case nothing more mean) I am well where I am, and dwell among a people like myself. So saith the degenerate abject soul, sunk into a deep oblivion of its own country; Here I dwell a fixed inhabitant of this world, among a corporeal people, where I make one. And we find how it is with this sort of people, each one charms another, and they grow familiar, have mutual ties upon one another, and there is a loathsomeness to part. Especially as here, in this lower world, we are variously disposed, and cast into several mutual relations to one another; husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all dwelling in bodies alike, cohabiting, eating and drinking daily, and conversing together. These are great and sensible endearments, by which the minds of men become as it were knit, and united to one another. How are men's spirits fixed to their own countries! *Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine*—it is by an inexpressible pleasure and sweetness, that the people of one country are as it were linked and held together.

But would not a heavenly, new-born soul say, No, this is none of my country, I seek a better, and am here but a pilgrim and stranger; this is none of my people? So it was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that conversed in the earthly Canaan, but as in a strange country; their mind being gone towards that other, which they sought. And accordingly you find it said of each of them, in their story, when they quite left this world (as also of Moses and Aaron, afterwards) that they were gathered to their people; a people that were more their own. And surely, as God (who was not ashamed to be called their God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living; we must understand this was not the congregation of the dead, to which these were gathered, otherwise than in a low, relative sense, as to us only and our world. Holy men, as they die out of one world, are born into another, to associate with them that dwell in light; and be joined to a glorious community above, the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: where all love and adore, praise and triumph together.

4. It is again to be taken into the state of this case, that we have, one way or other, actual present notices of both the states, which both sorts of objects, that stand in this competition, belong unto. Of the one, by sense and experience; we so know what it is to live in the body, and in a sensible world, and among a corporeal people: of the other, by faith; by believing as we are told by one who we are sure can have no design, or inclination to deceive us. There are many mansions saith he, in my Father's house, as good accommodations, as suitable society (and sufficiently numerous, which the many mansions implies) to be sure as any you have met with here. Faith is, in this case, to serve us instead of eyes, it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of the things not seen; (Heb. 11. 1.) as we have the notion of a country where we have not been, by the description of a person whom we can trust, and that we think intends not to abuse us by forgeries, and false representations. In reference to this country, we walk and guide ourselves by sight, in our converses, and affairs wherein we have to do with it; as to that other, by faith: as ver. 7. it is implied.

5. Yet further it is to be considered, that this body, and this bodily people and world have the present possession of us. And though the spiritualized mind do as it were step forth, and place itself between both, when it is to make its choice; yet the objects of the one sort are much nearer, the other are far distant, and much more remote.

6. That it cannot but be apprehended, that though the one sort of things hath the faster hold, the other sort are things of greater value; the one hath the more entire present possession of us, the other, the better right. Thus we see the case stated.

II. We are next to shew what the temper is of a holy soul (that is, its proper and most genuine temper) in reference to this supposed state of the case. We are willing rather, or have a more complacential inclination to be unpeopled from the body, and this bodily sort of people; and to be peopled with the Lord, and that sort of incorporeal people, over which he more immediately presides in the upper world. He speaks comparatively, as the case requires, and because all comparison is founded in somewhat absolute; therefore a simple disposition, both ways, is supposed. Whence then,

1. This temper is not to despise, and hate the body, it imports no disdainful aversion to it, or to this present state.

2. Nor is it an impetuous precipitant tendency towards the Lord, impatient of delay, mutinous against the divine disposal; or that declines present duty, and catches at the

βραβεῖον, the crown and prize, before the prescribed race be run out. A holy man is at once dutiful and wise, as a servant he refuses not the obedience of life: and as a wise man,* embraces the gain of death.

3. But it is considerate, the effect of much foregoing deliberation, and of a thorough perspection of the case; *εἰδοτες* ver. 6. knowing, or considering that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. This choice is not made blindly, and in the dark.

4. It is very determinate and full, being made up of the mixture of fortitude and complacency, as was said; the one whereof copes with the evil, of being severed from the body; the other entertains the good of being present with the Lord. Therefore this is the sense of a pious soul in the present case: as though he had said, "I do indeed love this body well, and reckon it a grievous thing to be severed from it, if that part of the case be singly considered, and alone by itself; but considering it in comparison with the other part, what is this body to me? What is it as an object of love, in comparison of being with the Lord? What is death to me as an object of fear, in comparison of being absent from the Lord! which is a death many thousand times more deadly than the other.

III. The agreeableness of this temper to the general frame, and complexion of a holy soul as such. Which will appear, if we consider—what sort of frame or impression, in the general, that is that doth distinguish a sincerely pious person from another man—and the more eminent principles in particular that are constituent of it, and do as it were compose and make it up.

1. The general frame of a holy soul, as such, is natural to it. It is not an artificial thing, a piece of mechanism, a lifeless engine, nor a superficial, an external form, an evanid impression. It is the effect of a creation (as Scripture often speaks) by which the man becomes a new creature, and hath a nature peculiar to him, as other creatures have; or of regeneration, by which he is said to be born anew. Which forms of speech, whatever they have of different signification, do agree in this, that they signify a certain nature to be the thing produced. This nature is said to be divine, (2. Pet. i. 4.) somewhat born of God, as it is expressed, 1. John. v. 4. and in many places more. And it is an intellectual nature, or the restored rectitude of such a being. Now who can think but what is so peculiarly from God, a touch and impress from him upon an intelligent subject, should with design, choice and complacency, tend to him, and make the soul

* Ambros. de bono mortis.

do so? Especially, when it is so purposely designed for remedy of the apostacy, wherein men are revolted and gone off from him? Will he suffer himself to be defeated in a design, upon which he is so industriously intent? Or is it supposable the all-wise God should so mistake himself, as to do such a work upon the spirit of man, on set purpose for an end which it is no way apt to serve; yea, and when he now takes him in hand, a second time? Nor can it be but this impression of God upon the soul, must have principal reference to our final state. It is a kind of nature, and must therefore tend to what is most perfect in its own kind. But we need not reason, in a matter wherein the word of God so plainly unfolds the scope, and the success of this his own work. By it we are said to be alive to God, through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) to turn, and move, and act towards him, as many scriptures speak. And towards him as he is most perfectly to be served, and enjoyed, in the most perfect state of life.

We are said to be begotten again, to a lively hope (1 Pet. i. 3. where hope is taken objectively, as the following words shew) to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And when, elsewhere, it had been said: Every one that doth righteousness is born of him, 1 John. ii. 29. there is immediately subjoined, chap. iii. 1, 2. a description of the future blessedness; whereto it is presently added, ver. 3. and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure: implying the hope of that blessed state to be connate, implanted as a vital principle of the new, and divine nature. And all hope, we know, involves desire in it; which is here intimated to be so powerful and prevailing, as to shape and form a man's whole course to an agreeable tenour: which it could not do, if hope were not superadded to desire; for no man pursues an end whereof he despairs. And what else is living religion, but a tendency to blessedness? a seeking honour, glory, and immortality, by a patient continuance in well doing, Rom. ii. 7. Nor need we look further than this context, for evidence that this divine impression upon the soul hath this reference; for when, ver. 4. the apostle had avowed the fervour of his desire after that state wherein mortality should be swallowed up of life, he immediately adds, ver. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for this self same thing, is God, &c. And indeed, after that transforming touch, the great business of such a soul, in this world, is but a dressing itself for the divine presence, a preparation for that state, wherein we are for ever to be with the Lord. And it is not only an incongruity, but an inconsistency; not only that which is not fit, but not possible that a man should ever de-

sign that as his end, which he cares not ever to attain ; or that for his last end, which he doth not supremely desire.

2. If we consider particular principles that belong to this holy divine nature, the more noble and eminent are faith and love. The former is the perceptive, visive principle ; the other the motive, and fruitive. And these, though they have their other manifold references, have yet, both, their final to that state of absence from this body, and presence with the Lord ; the one eying, the other coveting it, as that wherein the soul is to take up its final rest. Here some consideration should be had of objections, that some may be apt to make use of, to shift off the urgency of this truth, and excuse the unsuitable temper of their spirits to it.

(1.) That they are unassured about their states Godward, and how can they be willing to die, and be absent from the body, or not be afraid of the Lord's presence, whom they may, for ought they know, find an angry vindictive Judge, when they appear before him ?

Answer. This, which is the most considerable objection that the matter admits of, if it were directly pointed against this truth, as it hath been laid down, would answer itself. For it is not dying simply that is the object of this inclination, but dying conjunctly with being with the Lord, in his blessed joyous presence. Do not therefore divide the object, and that objection is no objection. You are unwilling to die, and be banished the divine presence ; but are you unwilling to die, and enjoy it ? Or, upon supposition you should, are you willing ? This is all that we make characteristical, and distinguishing. Where there is only an aversion to leave this bodily life and state, upon a fear we shall not be admitted into that blessed presence ; there is only an accidental obstruction to the more explicit, distinct and discernable exertions of desire this way ; which obstruction, if it be removed, the soul would then follow the course which the divine, and holy principle in it doth naturally incline to : but the mortal token is, when there is no such doubt, and yet there is still a prevailing aversion ; when men make no question, if they die they shall go to God, and yet they are not willing to go. In the former case, there is a supreme desire of being with God, only suspended ; take off that suspension, and that desire runs its natural course. In the other case, there is no desire at all. And the difference is, as between a living man that would fain go to such a place, but he is held, and therefore goes not ; and one that is not held, but is dead, and cannot stir at all. For the life of the soul towards God is love, aversion therefore is (not an absolute, but) respective death, or *quoad hoc*, a death towards him ; or, as to this thing, namely, being with him.

(2.) As for the objection of being more serviceable to children, friends, relations, or the glory of God in the world, and his church in it; upon which last account this apostle, (Phil. i. 22, 23, 24.) though he express a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, yet is in a strait, and seems also very well pleased to abide in the flesh a longer time: he can himself best judge of our serviceableness. The meaning is not that we should be willing to leave the body before he would have us, but that we should not be unwilling then. And because we know not when his time will be, and it may be presently for ought we know; we should be always willing and desirous, upon that supposition. Our desire herein should not be absolute, and peremptory, but subordinate, and apt to be determined by his will; which can determine nothing but what will be most for his own glory, and for their best good who belong to him.

But as to this instance of the apostle, we must consider what there was peculiar in the apostle's case, and what is common or ought to be, to all serious christians. There is no doubt there was this more peculiar to him (and to persons in such a capacity and station as his was) namely as he was an apostle, he was one that had seen the Lord, which was a qualification for the more special work of that office; whereupon he was as an eye witness, to testify of his resurrection; upon which so great a stress lay, in asserting the truth of the Christian religion, and propagating it with the greater assurance in the world. To testify as an apostle, therefore, could not be done by one of a following age. And it is very probable when he expresses, to the Philippians, (ver. 25.) his knowledge he should abide and continue yet longer with them all, that is, with the Christian church in the world (for we cannot suppose he was to continue at Philippi) for the furtherance of the common cause of the Christian faith, which was their common joy (and which would no doubt be increased intensively and extensively at once) he had some secret intimation, that all his work in this kind was not yet over. Nor were such monitions and advertisements unfrequent with the apostles, that specially related to the circumstances of their work. And so entirely was he devoted to the Christian interest, that wherein he saw he might be so peculiarly serviceable to it, he expresses a well pleasedness to be so, as well as a confidence that he should: as we all ought to do, in reference to any such significations of the divine will concerning us, if they were afforded to us. But as to what there is, in this instance, that is common and imitable to the generality of christians, it is no other than what we press from the text we have in hand: a desire to depart, and be with Christ, as that which is far better for us; submitted to the regulation of

the divine will, as to the time of our departure, and accompanied with a cheerful willingness to serve him here, to our uttermost, in the mean time. But we have withal little reason to think we can do God greater service, or glorify him more here, than above. There is indeed other service to be done below, which is necessary in its own kind, and must, and shall be done by some or other. But is our service fit, in point of excellency and value, to be compared with that of glorified spirits in the upper regions? We serve God by doing his will, which is, surely, most perfectly done above. And our glorifying him, is to acknowledge and adore his glorious excellencies: not to add the glory to him which he hath not; but to celebrate and magnify that which he hath: whereof certainly the large minds of glorified creatures are far more capable. He never needs hands for any work he hath to do, but can form instruments as he pleases. And what is our little point of earth or any service that can be performed by us here, in comparison of the spacious heavens, and the noble employments of those glorious orders of creatures above, which all bear their parts in the great affairs of the vast, and widely extended heavenly kingdom? We might as well suppose, that because there is, in a prince's family, employment below stairs for cooks, and butlers, or such like underlings; that therefore their service is more considerable than that of great officers, and ministers of state.

3. And for what may be thought, by some, that this seems an unnatural inclination; we must understand what we say, and what our own nature is, when we talk of what is natural, or unnatural to us. Ours is a compounded nature, that is not simply unnatural, that is contrary to an inferior nature, and agreeable to a superior. The most deeply fundamental law, of the intellectual nature in us, was to be most addicted to the supreme good. The apostacy of this world from God, and its lapse into carnality is its most unnatural state. To have an inclination to the body is natural, but to be more addicted to it, than to God, is most contrary to the sincere dictates of original, pure and primitive nature.

IV. There are now, for our use, many things to be inferred.

1. We see here, from the immediate connexion between being absent from the body, and present with the Lord, there is no place for the intervening sleep of the separate soul. Can such a presence with the Lord, as is here meant, consist with sleeping? or is sleeping more desirable than the converse with him our present state admits? But of this, much is said elsewhere.

2. Death is not so formidable a thing as we commonly

fancy. We are confident and willing rather. There is a fortitude that can oppose the terrors of death, and overcome. How many have we known die triumphing!

3. We see that men of spiritual minds, have another notion of that which we call self, or personality, than is vulgar and common. For who are the *we* that speak of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord? The body seems excluded that notion, which we know cannot be absent from itself. How like in sound is this to *Animus cujusque is quisque?* or *that the soul is the man?* I would not indeed drive this so high as some platonists are wont to do, as if the man were nothing else but a soul, sometimes using a body. Nor do therefore think the body is no more to him, than our clothes to the body, because the apostle in this context uses that similitude; for that is not to be conceived otherwise, than (as is usual in such illustrations) with dissimilitude. A vital union must be acknowledged, only neither is it agreeable with their self-debasing thoughts, that seem to make the body the more considerable part of themselves, that measure good and evil by it, as if what were grateful to the body were simply good for them, and that which offends the body simply evil; that speak or think of themselves, as if they were all body, forget that there is belonging to them an *ο εσω ανθρωπος*, as well as an *ο εξω*, an *inner man*, and an *outer*: that the latter may be decaying, when the other is renewed day by day*; that the Father of our spirits may often see cause to let our flesh suffer (and, at last, perish) for the advantage of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9, 10. So distinct are their interests and gratifications, and sometimes inconsistent. When men make therefore this bodily brutal self their centre and end, how sordid and unchristian is their temper! And how reprovable by some more noble-minded pagans, that had better learned the precept inculcated by some of them, of reverencing themselves! Of whom we find one† speaking, with a sort of disdain, Is this body, I? Another‡ saying, he might be killed and not hurt; and upbraiding to his friends their ignorance, when they inquired how he would be buried; as if he could be buried, who, he said, should be gone far enough out of their hands. Another‡‡; that the tyrant that made him to be beaten to death with iron mallets, might break that vessel of his, but himself he could not touch.

4. We learn, that when God removes any of our dear godly friends and relatives out of the body, though he displease us, he highly pleases them; for it is that they desire rather. And we are sure he pleases himself, for what can induce him, or make

* 2 Cor. iv. 16. † Epict. ‡ Socrat. ‡‡ Anaxarch.

it possible to him to do any thing against his own pleasure ; we are too apt to consider our own interest and satisfaction apart from theirs and God's, in such cases. And hence is that too vulgar and practical error, among many very serious christians ; that when such as are dear to them are taken away, they reckon their thoughts are to be principally employed, in considering such a thing as afflictive, or punitive to them. It is true that the affliction of that, as well as of any other kind, should put us upon very serious inquiry and search what the sin is, that may more especially have deserved it. But that ought, upon all occasions to be principally considered in any case, that is principal. As God did not make such a creature principally to please me, so nor doth he take away such a one principally to displease me. God's interest is supreme, their own next, mine comes after both the other. Therefore when the stream of thoughts and affections hath run principally, in such a case, upon our own affliction, it is time to check it, and begin to consider, with some pleasure, how the Lord and that translated soul are now pleased in one another ! He hath his end upon his own creature, and it hath its end, and rest in him.

5. We see the admirable power of divine grace, that it prevails against even the natural love of this bodily life ; not where discontent, and weariness of life contribute ; but even where there is a willingness to live too, upon a valuable consideration, as this apostle doth elsewhere express himself, namely, in the place before noted : and how easily the divine pleasure could reconcile him to life, notwithstanding what is said in the text, is sufficiently signified in the words immediately following it. And the effect is permanent, not a sudden transport ; (wherein many are induced to throw away their lives, upon much lower motives) this appears to be an habitual inclination. At distant times, we find the apostle in the same temper. That is not surely from the power of nature, that is so much against it, as the stream of nature now runs, that is, that a man should be willing to be plucked in pieces, and severed from himself ! And we see, (ver. 5.) whereto it is expressly ascribed: He that hath wrought us to the selfsame thing, is God.

6. How black is their character, and how sad their state that are more addicted to the body, and this bodily life, than to the Lord, and that holy blessed life we are to partake in with him ! Their character is black and horrid, as it is diverse from that which truly belongs to all the people of God, that ever lived on earth ; and so doth distinguish them from such, and place them among another sort of men that belong not to him ; such as have their portion in this life, their good things here, and who are to expect nothing hereafter, but woe and wailing. And

who would not be affrighted, that finds a mark upon him that severs him from the whole assembly of the just, and the blessed! Their state is also therefore sad and dismal, inasmuch as what they place their highest felicity in (their abode in the body) they know will continue but a little while. Who could ever, by their love of this bodily life, procure it to be perpetuated? or by their dread of mortality, make themselves immortal? Have not others, in all former ages, loved the body, and this world as much? and what is become of them? Hath not death still swept the stage from generation to generation? and taken all away, willing or unwilling? To have all my good bound up in what I cannot keep! and to be in a continual dread of what I cannot avoid! what can be more disconsolate? How grievous will it be to be torn out of the body! not to resign the soul, but have it drawn forth as a rusty sword out of the sheath; a thing which our utmost unwillingness will make the more painful, but cannot defer? No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death, Eccles. viii. 8. How uncomfortable, when the Lord's presence, the common joy of all good souls, is to me a dread! By the same degrees, by which an abode in the body is over desired, is that presence dreaded and disaffected. And how deplorable is the case, when this body is the best shelter I have from that presence! Would I lurk in the body and lie hid from the presence of the Lord? How easily, and how soon will my fortress be beaten down and laid in the dust! and I be left naked and exposed! and then how fearful things do ensue! But what now, doth this fearful case admit of no remedy? It can admit but of this only one, which therefore I would now recommend and press, the serious effectual endeavour of being, to a just degree, alienated from the body, and of having the undue love repressed and wrought down, of this bodily life. Mistake not, I go not about to persuade all promiscuously, out of hand and without more ado to desire death, or absence from the body. The desires of reasonable creatures should be reasonable, the product of valuable considerations, and rational inducements. The present case of too many, the Lord knows, admits not they should be willing to die; who are they that they should desire the day of the Lord? a day of such gloominess and darkness, as it is likely, should it now dawn, to prove to them? No, but let all endeavour to get into that state, and have their affairs in such a posture that they may be, upon good terms, reconciled to the grave; and that separation from the body may be the matter, with them, of a rational, and truly Christian choice. And since, as hath been said, there are two terms between which the inclination and motion of our souls, in this case, must lie, from the one to the other, namely, the body, and the Lord, life in the body, and

with the Lord; let such things be considered on both hands, as may justly tend to diminish and lessen our inclination and love to the one, and increase it towards the other. So as that all things being considered, and upon the whole, this may be the reasonable and self-justifying result, to be well pleased rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. And,

(1.) On the part of the body and this bodily life, consider, how costly it is to you! You lay out upon it (the most do) most of your time, thoughts, cares; the greater part, most or even all, of your estates. All the callings you can think of in the world, and which all help to maintain, at no little expence, are wholly for the body; what costly attendants must it have of cooks, bakers, brewers, mercers, physicians, lawyers, and what not? One only excepted that refers to the soul. And again, when all is done, how little serviceable is it! when you would employ it, sometimes it is sick, sometimes lame, sometimes lames the mind and intellect too, that it cannot do its office, merely through the distemper of bodily organs, is at all times dull, sluggish, indisposed; the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak.

Yea moreover how disserviceable! hinders your doing good, prompts to the doing much evil. What a world of mischief is done among men, merely by bodily lusts, and to serve fleshly appetite; these fill the world with confusion, and miseries of all sorts. All catch from others what they can, for the service of the body; hence is competition of interests and designs; no man's portion is enough for him to serve the body, (or the mind, as it is depraved by bodily inclinations) and so the world is torn by its inhabitants, countries wasted and laid desolate; religion itself made subservient to fleshly interest, and thence is the occasion of many a bloody contest, of oppressions, persecutions, and violences; whereby many times it so falls out, that such as are most vigorously engaged in a design of serving the body, destroy it, their own as well as other men's. And (which is most dreadful) souls are numerously lost and perish in the scuffle, yea and very oft upon the account, or pretence of religion, whose only design it is to save souls! And how many to save their bodies, destroy even their own souls! Not having learned that instruction of our Saviour's: not to fear them that can only kill the body; or being unable to suffer some lesser bodily inconveniences, apostatize, and abandon their religion, whereby that, and their souls too become sacrifices to the safety and accommodation of an idolized lump of clay! And how certainly (if a seasonable repentance do not intervene) do they, who only thus tempt the souls of other men, destroy their own! nor can it be doubted at this time of day, and after the

experience of so many ages, wherein Christianity hath been so visibly and grossly carnalized, but that it is a religion perverted to the support of the bodily and animal interest, that hath thus embroiled the Christian world. How plain is it, that they who desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, to strut in pomp, to glitter in secular grandeur and splendor, to live in unrebuked sensual ease and fulness, are the men that would constrain others to their carnal observances ! men that serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies. Who can think it is pure love to souls, and zeal for the true ends of the holy peaceable religion, of our blessed Jesus, that makes them so vexatious and troublesome to all, whom their fleshly arm can reach and ruin, and whom their spirit and way cannot allure and win ? Who that understands religion, and the true design of it, and the blessed end wherein it will shortly terminate, would not be glad to be rescued out of this large diffusive unquiet empire of the body, that extends itself over all things, mingling its odious impurities, even with what is most sacred ! Who would not long to be from under this reign of the beast, if he might have a fair way of escape ! And where religion is not in the case, what multitudes of terrene creatures, carthly-minded men, are stupidly going down to perdition daily, and destroying their souls by mere neglect, while they are driving designs for the body ! Which yet in the mean time, is at the best but a prison to the soul. O how could they love God ! admire and praise him ! were they once out of this body ! But it is not enough to a subject, wherein love is implanted and is a part of its nature, to have only the prospect of what is unlovely, or be told only what is not to be loved. There must be somewhat to invite and draw, as well as to repel and drive off. Therefore,

(2.) Consider also, on the other part, the Lord, and that life you are to transact and live with him. Little can now be said ; you are not ignorant where much is, and your own thoughts may, upon much conversing with the holy oracles, suggest yet more. And you have need to use your thoughts here, the more largely, where your sense doth not instruct you, as on the other part it doth. Consider the description which you are copiously furnished with, both of him and of the state in which you are to be present with him. Recount his glorious excellencies his immense and all-sufficient fulness, his wisdom, power, holiness, and love in absolute perfection. Consider his high, equal, comely, amiable regency over the blessed community above, that spiritual incorporeal people, the pleased joyful inhabitants of the celestial regions. And that he rules over them and communicates himself universally to them, in a state of perfect light, purity, peace, love and pleasure, that is also im-

mutable, and never to know end. There is nothing capable of attracting an intellectual nature, which is not here!

(3.) But on both parts, suffer yourselves to be directed also.

[1.] Take heed of over-indulging the body, keep it in subjection, use it, and serve it not. Primitive nature, and the Creator's wise and holy pleasure, ordained it to serve. Lose not yourselves in it, take heed you be not buried, where you should but dwell, and that you make not your mansion your grave. Mansion do I say? Call it as this apostle doth, and another, (2 Pet. i.) your tabernacle only, a tent pitched for you, but for a little while. Every day look upon it, and without fond pity, as destined to rottenness and corruption; and as that, which when it ceases to be your cloathing, must be worms' meat. Labour to make the thoughts easy and familiar to yourselves of leaving it, think it not an uncouth thing. How doth that part of the creation, that is inferior to you, abound with like instances? of fruits springing up out of this earth, and growing to ripeness and maturity, with husks, shells, or other integuments, which then fall off; such as never ripen, they and their enfoldings rot together. Esteem it your perfection, when your shell will fall off easily, and cleaves not so close, as to put you to pain when it is to be severed from you.

Endeavour the holy and heavenly nature may grow more and more mature in you; so death will be the more also an unregretted thing to your thoughts. By all means labour to overcome the fear of it, which that you might, our Lord also took a body. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) Reckon not much of that fear, which is only the mere regret of sensitive nature, purely involuntary; and that can no more obey the empire of the mind, or be regulated by it, than you can make straight a crooked leg by a mere act of your will, or make your body not feel pain: a fear, from which the perfection of our nature, in our blessed Lord himself, was not exempt. But it is one thing to extinguish even that fear, another to overcome it; the former is impossible to you, the latter necessary. It is overcome, when a superior principle governs you and your resolutions and course, as it did our Lord; he did not, because of it, spare himself and decline dying. You may feel perhaps somewhat of such a fear (a secret shrug) when you are to be let blood, or have a wound searched. It governs not in such a less important case, when, being convinced it is requisite, you omit not the thing notwithstanding. Labour here-

in to be hardy, and merciless to this flesh, upon the fore-thoughts of the time when God will allow you to step forth, and go out of the body: and say to it, with an obdured mind, for all thy craving, and shrinking, Thou shalt be thrown off.

Labour it may not only not be the matter of your prevailing fear, but be the matter of your hope. Look towards the approaching season, with pleasant cheerful expectation; aspire (as it belongs to you to do, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, that blessed Spirit of adoption) and groan for the adoption (the season of your being more solemnly owned for sons) namely, the redemption of the body. Rom. viii. 23. Which though it ultimately refer to the resurrection, may be allowed to have an incomplete meaning, in reference to death too; for I see not but ἀπολυτρωσιν τῆ σωμαίος, may admit such a construction, as ἀπολυτρωσιν τῶν παραβάσεων, Heb. ix. 15. that is, that redemption of the body may mean redemption from it, wherein it is burdensome, a grievance and penalty, here, as well as there. The redemption of transgressions, doth truly mean liberation from the penalty of them; from which penal evil of, and by the body, so materially, at least, it is, we are not perfectly freed, as our blessedness is not perfect till mortality be swallowed up of life, and all the adopted, the many sons, be all brought to glory together.

How happy in the mean time is your case, when death becomes the matter of your rational well grounded hope! You have many hopes, wherein you are liable to disappointment; you will then have one sure hope, and that will be worth them all, none can prevent you of this hope. Many other things, you justly hope for, are hindered by ill-minded men of their accomplishment; but all the wit and power, of your most spiteful enemies, can never hinder you from dying. And how are you fenced against all the intervening troubles of life! *Nihil metuit qui optat mori, you have nothing to fear, if you desire to die*; nothing what, at least, death will shortly put an end to. Make this your aim, to have life for the matter of your patience, and death of your desire.

[2.] On the other part also, labour to be upon good terms with the Lord, secure it that he be yours. Your way to that is short and expedite, the same by which we become his, Ezek. xvi. 8. I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Solemnly and unfeignedly accept him, and surrender yourselves; without this who can expect but to hear from him at last: Depart from me I know you not? Know of yourselves, demand an account, are you sincerely willing to be his? and to take him for yours, without limitation or reserves? Matters are then agreed between him and you, and who can break or disannul the agreement? Who can come between him and you? I often

think of the high transport, wherewith those words are uttered: the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Phil. iii. 8. This is Christian religion, not in a system, but as it is a vital principle and habit in the soul, inclining us, making us prone towards our blessed Lord, addicting and subduing us to him, uniting us with him, whereby we come to know by inward sensations, to feel the transfusions of his spiritfult light and influence, and our souls thereby caught, and bound up in the bundle of life. So we have Christ formed within, his holy truth, doctrines, precepts, promises, inwrought into the temper of our spirits. And, as it follows in that context, Phil. iii. to have him, according to the states wherein he successively was, by correspondent impressions represented in us; so as that we come to bear the image of him, crucified, and dying, first; then reviving, and rising; and afterwards, ascending and glorified. To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if, by any means, we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, ver. 10, 11.

Let us not be at rest till we find it thus, in some measure, with us. If we feel ourselves, after this manner, internally and initially conformed to him, this will be both a preparative, and a pledge of our future perfect conformity, both internal, and external. It will fit us to be ever with the Lord, and assure us we shall, and can be no where else; that he and we shall not to eternity dwell asunder. We shall neither fear to be externally conformed to him in his death, to quit and lay down the body as he did; nor despair of attaining with him the resurrection of the dead, and of being present with him in glory. Or, that he shall recover for us, out of the dust, our vile abject bodies (the *το σωμα της ταπεινωσεως ημων*) the body of our humiliation, wherein we were humbled, as he was in his (as it follows in that, Phil. iii. ver. 21.) and make it like his own glorious body, (*συμμορφον*, conform, and agreeable) by that power, by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself. In the mean time, as this present state admits, converse much with him every day; be not strangers to him, often recognize, and renew your engagements to him. Revolve in your thoughts his interest in you, and yours in him; and the nearer relation which there is between him and you, than that between you and this body. Recount with yourselves the permanency and lastingness of that relation; that whereas this body, as now it is, a terrestrial body, will not be yours long; he is to be your God for ever: that, though death must shortly separate you from this body, neither life, nor death, principalities nor powers, things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate you

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. While this body is a body of death to you, he is your life, your hope and your exceeding joy, your better, more laudable, and more excellent self, more intimate to you, than you can be to yourself, as hath been anciently, and often said, and for the obtaining whose presence, absence from the body is a very small matter.

A great prince,* in an epistle to that philosopher, tells him: I seem to myself not to be a man, as the saying is, while I am absent from Iamblicus, or while I am not conversant (*ου συνω.*) with him, that we can better endure our Lord's absence, is surely a thing itself not to be endured; we should labour, that our acquaintance with him (such as is fit to be between so great a majesty, and such mean creatures as we,) should grow daily. Yea, and endeavour to make the thoughts more familiar to ourselves, of spiritual beings in the general; for we are to serve, and converse with him in a glorious community of such creatures: An innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect, (Heb. xii. 23.) in a region where an earthly body, remaining such, can have no place. Why do we make the thoughts of a spirit, out of a body, so strange to ourselves? We meet with hundreds of spirits in bodies, and moving bodies to and fro in the streets every day, and are not startled at it. Is a body so much nearer akin to us than a spirit, that we must have so mean a thing to come between, to mediate and reconcile us to it? Why are we afraid of what we are so nearly allied unto? Can we not endure to see or think of a man at liberty (suppose it were a friend, or a brother) if we ourselves were in prison? The more easy you make the apprehension to yourselves of a disembodied spirit, that is, free, I mean, of any terrestrial body, the better we shall relish the thoughts of him who is the head of that glorious society, you are to be gathered unto; for the Lord is that Spirit, the eminent, Almighty, and all governing Spirit, (to be ever beheld too in his glorified body, as an eternal monument of his undertaking for us, and an assuring endearment of his relation to us,) the better your minds will comply with the preconceived idea we are to entertain ourselves with, of the constitution, order, employment, and delights of that vast collection of heavenly associates we shall dwell with for ever. And the more will you still incline to be absent from this body, that (among them) you may be ever present with the Lord.

* Julian Ep. ad Iamblic.

And if you thus cherish this pleasant inclination, think how grateful it will be, when it comes to be satisfied ! How natural is that rest that ends in the centre, to which a thing is carried by a natural motion ! How pleasantly doth the departed soul of that good gentlewoman, whose decease we lament, solace itself in the presence of her glorious Lord ! I shall say little concerning her, you will have her just memorial more at large ere long. I had indeed the opportunity, by an occasional abode some days under the same roof (several years before she came into that relation wherein she finished her course) to observe her strangely vivid, and great wit, and very sober conversation. But the turn and bent of her spirit towards God and heaven, more remarkably appeared a considerable time after ; which when it did, she shewed how much more she studied the interest of her soul, than the body ; and how much more she valued mental and spiritual excellencies, than worldly advantages, in the choice of her consort, whom she accepted to be the companion, and guide of her life.

She gave proof herein of the real greatness of her spirit, and how much she disdained to be guided by their vulgar measures that have not wit, and reason, and religion enough to value the accomplishments of the mind, and inner man ; and to understand that knowledge, holiness, a heavenly heart, entire devotedness to the Redeemer, a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of God, are better and more valuable things, than so many hundreds, or thousands a year. And that no external circumstances can so far dignify a drunkard, an atheist, a profane wretch ; as that (compared with one that bears such characters) he should deserve to be simply reckoned the better man. And that mere sober carnality, and ungodliness suffice not to cast the balance ; or that have so little of these qualifications for the making a true judgment, as to think that calling dishonourable and a diminution to a man, that refers immediately to the soul, and the unseen world, and that relates and sets him nearest to God.

She knew how to make her estimate of the honour of a family, and a pedigree, as things valuable in their kind ; without allowing herself so much vanity, as to reckon they were things of the most excellent kind, and to which nothing personal could be equal. And well understood, of the personal endowments of the body, and the mind, which were to have the preference. Her life might teach all those, especially of her own sex, that a life's time in the body, is for some other purposes than to indulge, and trim, and adorn the body ; which is most minded by them, who (as that shews) have, in the mean time, most neglected, and, God knows, most depraved, and deformed souls.

I hope her example, more fully and publicly represented, will more generally teach : in the mean time, this instance of our common mortality should teach us all. We see this state of life in the body, is not that we were finally made for ; yet how few seriously look beyond it ! And it is amazing to think how little the deaths of others signify, to the making us mind our own. We behave ourselves as if death were a thing only to be undergone by some few persons, here and there ; and that the most should escape, and as if we took it for granted we should be of the exempted number. How soon are impressions, from such occasions, talked, and trifled, and laughed, and jested away ! Shall we now learn more to study, and understand our own natures ? to contemplate ourselves, and our duty thereupon ? that we are a mortal, immortal sort of creatures : that we are sojourners only in a body, which we must shortly leave to dust, and worms ? that we are creatures united with bodies, but separable from them ? Let each of us think, "I am one that can live in a body, and can live out of a body. While I live in one, that body is not mine, I dwell not in mine own : " that the body must be for the Lord, as he will then be for the body : that we shall dwell comfortless and miserable in the body, if we dwell in it solitary and alone, and have not with us a better inhabitant : that our bodies are to be mansions for a Deity, houses for religion, temples of the Holy Ghost. O the venerable thoughts we should have of these bodies upon this account ! how careful should we be not to debase them, not to alienate them. If any man corrupt the temple of God, him will he destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Will a man rob God ? break and violate his house ? how horrid a burglary ! Shall we agree to resign these bodies, and this bodily life ? Our meeting will have been to good purpose, might this be the united sense of this dissolving assembly : " Lord, here we surrender and disclaim (otherwise than for, and under thee) all right and title to these bodies and lives of ours. We present our bodies holy, acceptable, living sacrifices, as our reasonable service." Let us do so, and remember we are hereafter not to live to ourselves, nor to die, at length, to ourselves, but living and dying to be the Lord's.