

all the councils and combinations of the enemy ; he fees them in their train, and can blow them up in their own mine.

OF THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

THE next attribute is, ‘ God is eternal,’ Pf. cx. 2. ‘ From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.’ The schoolmen distinguish between *ævum et æternum*, to explain the notion of eternity. There is a three-fold being : 1st, Such a being as had a beginning, and shall have an end ; so all sensitive creatures, the beasts, fowls, fishes ; these at death are destroyed, and return to dust ; their being ends with their life. 2d, Such a being as had a beginning, but shall have no end, as the angels and souls of men ; they are eternal *a parte post* ; they abide for ever. 3d, Such a being as is without beginning, and without ending, and that is proper only to God. He is *semper existens*, viz. from everlasting to everlasting : it is God’s title, a jewel of his crown : (1.) He is called ‘ the King eternal,’ 1 Tim. i. 17. (2.) Jehovah, a word that properly sets out God’s eternity ; a word so dreadful, that the Jews trembled to name or read it ; therefore used another word, Adonai, Lord. Jehovah contains in it time past, present, and to come, Rev. i. 14. ‘ Which is, and which was, and which is to come ;’ it interprets the word Jehovah. (*Which is*) He subsists of himself, having a pure and independant being. (*Which was*) God only was before time. There is no searching into the records of eternity. (*Which is to come*) His kingdom hath no end : his crown hath no successors, Heb. i. 8. ‘ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.’ The doubling of the word ratifies the certainty of it, as the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream did. I shall prove that God only could be eternal, without beginning. Angels could not ; they are but creatures, though spirits ; they were made ; and therefore their beginning may be known ; their antiquity may be searched into ; if you ask when they were created ? Some think before the world was ; but not so : for what was before time was eternal : the angels’ first rise and original reacheth no higher than the beginning of the world. It is thought by the learned, that the angels were made that day on which the heavens were made, Job xxxviii. 7. ‘ When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’ St. Hierom, Gregory, and venerable Bede, understands it of the angels, when God laid the foundation-stone of the world, the angels being then created, did sing the anthems of joy and praise ; the angels could not be before time ; for what was before time was eternal. It is only proper to God to be eternal, without begin-

ning: He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, Rev. i. 8. No creature can write itself Alpha, that is only a flower of the crown of heaven, Exod. iii. 14. 'I am that I am,' viz. He who exists from and to eternity.

Use 1. Here is thunder and lightning to the wicked; God is eternal, therefore the torments of the wicked are eternal. God lives for ever; and as long as God lives he will be punishing the damned.—This, methinks, should be as the hand-writing upon the wall, Dan. v. 5. it should 'make their joints to be loosed,' &c. The sinner takes liberty to sin; he breaks God's laws, like a wild beast that breaks over the hedge, and leaps into forbidden pasture; he sins with greediness, Eph. iv. 19. as if he thought he could not sin fast enough. But remember, this is one of God's names, Eternal; and as long as God is eternal, he hath time enough to reckon with all his enemies. To make sinners tremble, let them think of these three things; the torments of the damned are without intermission, without mixture, and eternal.

1. Without *intermission*. Their pains shall be acute and sharp, and no relaxation; the fire shall not be slackened or abated, Rev. xiv. 11. 'They have no rest day nor night;' like one that hath his joints stretched continually on the rack, and hath no ease: therefore the wrath of God is compared to a stream of brimstone, Isa. xxx. 33. Why to a stream? Because a stream runs without intermission; it runs, and doth not stop; so God's wrath runs like a stream, and pours out without any intermission. In the pains of this life, there is some abatement and intermission; the fever abates, after a fit of the stone, the patient hath some ease: but the pains of hell are intense and violent, *in summo gradu*; the damned soul never saith, I am now more at ease.

2. Without *mixture*. Hell is a place of pure justice. In this life, God in anger remembers mercy, he mixeth compassion with suffering, Deut. xxxiii. 25. A sinner's shoe was of iron, but his foot was dipt in oil. Affliction is the iron-shoe, but mercy is mixed with it; here is the foot dipt in oil. But the torments of the damned have no mixture, Rev. xiv. 10. 'They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture.' No mixture of mercy. How is the cup of wrath said to be full of mixture, Psal. lxxxv. 8. 'They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture.' No mixture of mercy. How is the cup of wrath said to be full of mixture, Psal. lxxxv. 8. 'The wine is red, it is full of mixture;' yet in the Revelation it is said to be without mixture? It is full of mixture, that is, it is full of all the ingredients that may make it bitter; the worm, the fire, the curse of God, all these are bitter ingredients. It is a cup

mixed, yet it is without mixture, viz. there shall be nothing to afford the least comfort, no mixture of mercy; so it is a cup without mixture. In the sacrifice of jealousy, Numb. v. 15. there was no oil put to it; so, in the torments of the damned, there is no oil of mercy to abate their sufferings.

3. Without *cessation, eternal*. The pleasure of sin are but for a season, but the torments of the wicked are for ever. Sinners have a short feast, but a long reckoning. Origen erroneously thought, that after a thousand years the damned should be released out of their misery: but the worm, the fire, the prison are all eternal, Rev. xiv. 11. 'The smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever.' *Pœnæ gehennales puniunt, non finiunt*. Prosper. Eternity is a sea without bottom and banks. After millions of years, there is not one minute in eternity wasted; and the damned must be ever burning, but never consuming, always dying, but never dead, Rev. ix. 6. 'They shall seek death, but shall not find it.' The fire of hell is such, as multitudes of tears will not quench it, length of time will not finish it; the vial of God's wrath will be always dropping upon a sinner. As long as God is eternal, he lives for ever to be avenged upon the wicked. O eternity! eternity! who can fathom it? Mariners have their plummets to measure the depths of the sea; but what line or plummet shall we use to fathom the depth of eternity? The breath of the Lord kindles the infernal lake, Isa. xxx. 33. and where shall we have engines or buckets to quench that fire; O eternity! if all the body of the earth and sea were turned to sand, and all the air up to the starry heaven were nothing but sand, and a little bird should come every thousand year, and fetch away in her bill, but the tenth part of a grain of all that heap of sand, what a numberless number of years would be spent before that vast heap of sand would be fetched away? Yet if at the end of all that time, the sinner might come out of hell (tho' long) yet there would be some hope: but this word Ever, breaks the heart, 'The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,' What a terror is this to the wicked, enough to put them into a cold sweat, to think, as long as God is eternal, he lives for ever to be avenged upon sinners.

Q. Here a question may be moved, *Why sin that is committed in a short time, should be punished eternally?*

Ans. We must hold with St. Augustine, "that God's judgments on the wicked, *ocult esse possunt, injusta esse non possunt*, may be secret, but never unjust." The reason why sin committed in a short time is eternally punished, is because every sin is committed against an infinite essence, and no less than eternity of punishment can satisfy. Why is treason punished with confiscation and death, but because it is against the king's

person, which is sacred? much more that offence which is against God's crown and dignity, is of an heinous and infinite nature, and cannot be satisfied with less than eternal punishment.

Use 2. Of comfort to the godly: God is eternal therefore lives for ever to reward the godly, Rom. ii. 7. 'To them who seek for glory and honour, eternal life.' The people of God here are in a suffering condition, Acts xx. 23. 'Bonds and afflictions abide me.' The head being crowned with thorns, the feet must not tread upon roses. The wicked are clad in purple, and fare deliciously, while the godly suffer. Goats climb upon high mountains, while Christ's sheep are in the valley of slaughter. But here is the comfort, God is eternal, and he hath appointed eternal recompences for the saints: in heaven are fresh delights, sweetness without surfeit; and that which is the crown and zenith of heaven's happiness, is, it is eternal,' 1 John ii. 15. Were there but the least suspicion that this glory must cease, it would much eclipse, yea imbitter it: but it is eternal. What angel can span eternity? 2 Cor. iv. 17. 'An eternal weight of glory.' The saints shall bathe themselves in the rivers of divine pleasure: and these rivers can never be dried up, Psal. xvi. 11. 'At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' This is the Elah, the highest strain in the apostle's rhetoric, 1 Theff. iv. 17. 'Ever with the Lord.' There is peace without trouble, ease without pain, glory without end, 'Ever with the Lord.' Let this comfort the saints in all their troubles; their sufferings are but short, but their reward is eternal, Eternity makes heaven to be heaven; 'tis the diamond in the ring: O blessed day, that shall have no night! the sun light of glory shall rise upon the soul, and never set! O blessed spring, that shall have no autumn, or fall of the leaf! the Roman Emperors have three crowns set upon their heads, the first of iron, the second of silver, the third of gold: so the Lord sets three crowns on his children, grace, comfort and glory; and this crown is eternal, 1 Peter v. 4. 'Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.' The wicked have a never-dying worm, and the godly a never-fading crown. O how should this be a spur to virtue! How willing should we be to work for God? Though we had nothing here, God hath time enough to reward his people: the crown of eternity shall be set upon their head.

Use 3. Of exhortation. 1. In general, study eternity. Our thoughts should chiefly run upon eternity. We are all for the present, something that may delight the senses. If we could have lived (as Augustine saith) *a cunabulis mundi*, from the infancy of the world to the world's old age, what were this? What is time, measured with eternity? As the earth is but a small point to the heaven, so time is but, nay scarce a minute to eternity! And, then, what is this poor life which crumbles

away so fast? O think of eternity! *Annos æternos in mente habe*: Brethren, we are every day travelling to eternity: and whether we wake or sleep, we are going our journey; some of us are upon the borders of eternity. O study the shortness of life and length of eternity.

2. More particularly; think of God's eternity, and the soul's eternity. 1. Think of God's eternity. He is the Ancient of days, who was before all time. There is a figurative description of God, Dan. vii. 9. 'The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.' His white garment, wherewith he was clothed, signified his majesty; his hair, like the pure wool, his holiness; and the Ancient of days, his eternity. The thoughts of God's eternity would make us have high adoring thoughts of God. We are apt to have mean, irreverent thoughts of him, Psal. l. 21. 'Thou thoughtest I was such an one as thyself;' weak and mortal, but if we would think of God's eternity, when all power ceaseth, he is King eternal, his crown flourisheth for ever, who can make us happy or miserable for ever, this would make us have adoring thoughts of God; Rev. iv. 10. 'The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat upon the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne.' The saints fall down, to signify by that humble posture, that they are not worthy to sit in God's presence. They fall down and they worship him that liveth for ever and ever; they do as it were kiss his feet, and they cast their crowns before the throne, they lay all their honour at his feet: thus they shew humble adoration to the eternal essence. Study God's eternity, it will make us adore where we cannot fathom. 2. Think of the soul's eternity. As God is eternal, so he hath made us eternal. We are never-dying creatures; we are shortly entering upon an eternal state, either of happiness or misery. Have serious thoughts of this: say, O my soul, which of these two eternities, is like to be thy portion? I must shortly depart hence, and whether then shall I go, to which of these eternities, either of glory or misery? The serious meditation of the eternal state we are to pass into, should work strongly with us.

1. Thoughts of eternal torments are a good antidote against sin, sin tempts with its pleasure; but, when we think of eternity, it may cool the intemperate heat of lust. Shall I, for the pleasure of sin for a season, endure eternal pain? Sin, like those locusts, Rev. ix. 7. seems to have on its head a crown like gold, but it hath in it a tail like a scorpion, ver. 10. and a sting in its tail, and this sting can never be plucked out. Shall I venture eternal wrath? Is sin committed so sweet, as lying in hell for

ever is bitter? This would make us flee from sin, as Moses from the serpent.

2. The serious thoughts of eternal happiness would very much take us off from these worldly things; we should not esteem much of them: what are these sublunary things to eternity? they are quickly gone, they salute us, and take their farewell. But I am to enter upon an everlasting estate; I hope to live with him who is eternal: what is the world to me? They who stand upon the top of the Alps, the great cities of Campania seem as small things in their eyes; so he who hath his thoughts fixed on his eternal state after this life, all these things seem as nothing in his eye. What is the glory of this world? how poor and contemptible, compared with an eternal weight of glory?

3. To conclude; The serious thoughts of an eternal state, either of happiness or misery, should have a powerful influence upon whatsoever we take in hand: every work we do, promotes either a blessed or cursed eternity; every good action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of happiness; every bad action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of misery. O what influence would the thoughts of eternity have upon our religious duties? It would make us do them with all our might: a duty well performed, lifts a Christian higher towards heaven, and sets a Christian a step nearer to a blessed eternity.



GOD'S UNCHANGEABLENESS.

THE next attribute is God's unchangeableness, Mal. iii. 6. 'I am Jehovah, I change not.' 1. God is unchangeable in his nature. 2. In his decree.

1st, Unchangeable in his nature: 1. There is no eclipse of his brightness. 2. No period put to his being.

1. No eclipse of his brightness: his essence shines with a fixed lustre, James i. 17. 'With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' Psal. cii. 27. 'Thou art the same.' All created things are full of vicissitudes: 1. Princes and emperors are subject to mutation. Sesostris, an Egyptian prince, having subdued divers kings in war, made them draw like horses in his chariot, as if he intended to turn them to eat grass, as God did King Nebuchadnezzar. The crown hath many successors. 2. Kingdoms have their eclipses and convulsions: what is become of the glory of Athens? The pomp of Troy? *Jam reges est ubi Troja fuit.* Kingdoms, though they have a head of gold, yet feet of clay. 3. The heavens change, Psal. cii. 26. 'As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.'