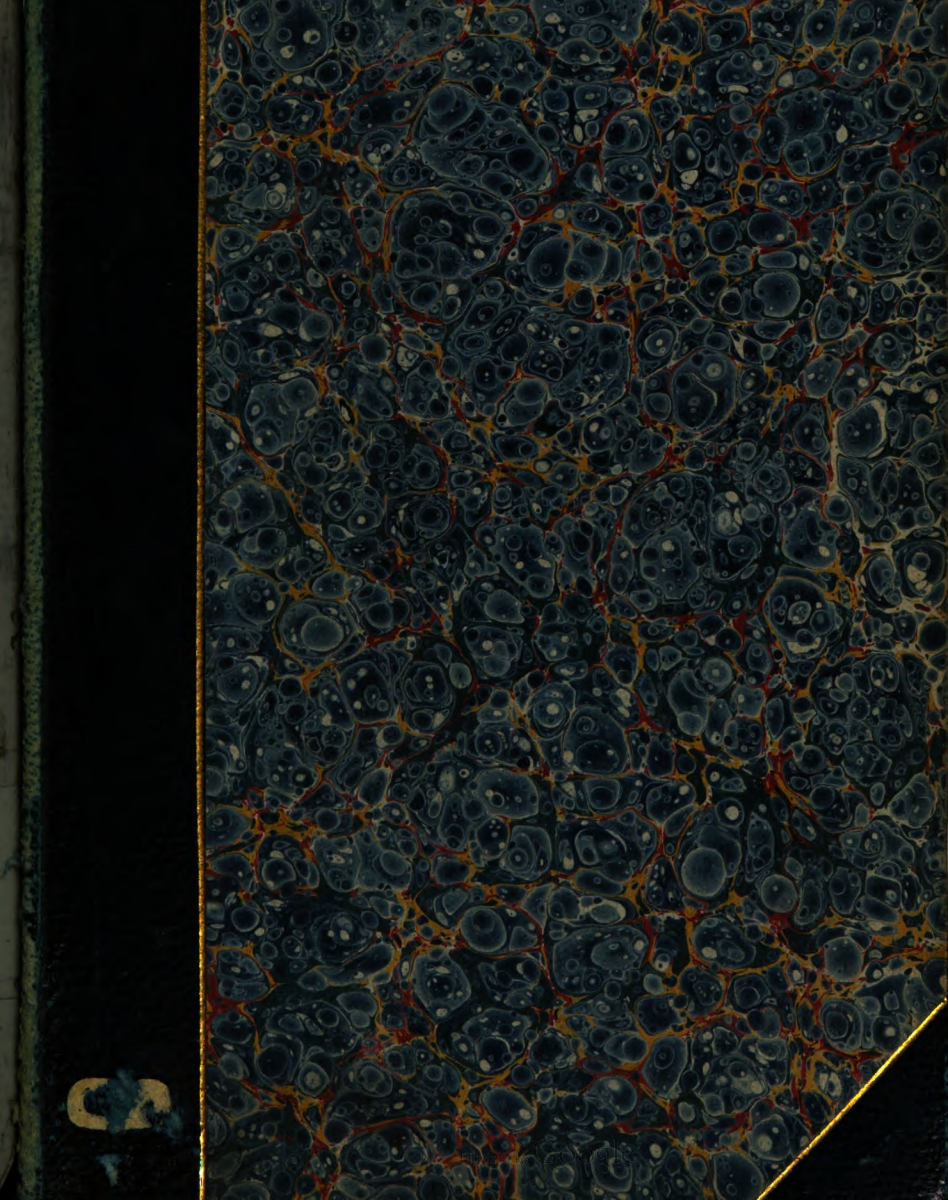

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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

CONFLAGRATION

AND

Renovation of the WORLD.

By the late Reverend and Learned
Dr. *JAMES KNIGHT*,
Senior Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford,
And Vicar of St. Sepulchre, London.

2 PET. III. 10, 13.

But the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth also and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up.

Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness.

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A
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CONFLAGRATION, &c.

WAS (*a*) the Fashion of this World never to pass away ; were our (*b*) Houses and our Lands to continue for ever, and ourselves in Possession of them to all Ages ; had (*c*) no Changes happened already to induce us to believe, that greater may follow in Heaven and Earth ; was there no Evidence that the State of this World is suffered to continue through the (*d*) Goodness and Patience of the Son of God, that none may complain of a Want of Time for Repentance and Amendment ; or in parting with our Bodies at the Hour of Death, had we no Hope of receiving them again, or of living and acting in another State ; the Doctrines relating to a Judgment to come, the Suddenness of it, and the Changes following in Heaven and Earth, might be treated as the Fancies of the fearful and superstitious, or the Artifice of cunning and ambitious Men, to awe the Simple, and secure their Obedience, by working on their Fears. But the Life

A 2 of

(*a*) 1 Cor. vii. 31.

(*b*) Psal. xlix. 11.

(*c*) 2 Pet. iii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

(*d*) 2 Pet. iii. 9, 15.

of Man being short and uncertain, and the Earth having suffered already from a Flood, and Scripture assuring us (for I speak to those who believe the Scripture) that a worse Evil will again distress it, when the World shall be burnt and purified by Fire; and the same Scripture teaching us farther, that howsoever Things may proceed at present in their wonted Course through the Patience of Christ, yet the Time will come, and that on a sudden, when the Son shall appear in the Terrors of Justice, and the Sweetness of Mercy, to punish the Wicked, and reward the Righteous, and deliver the Creature from the Effects of the Curse, to which it is subjected by the Sin of Man; and Death being certain and near all Men, though Judgment is far; and Judgment finding us according to the State of Virtue or Vice, of Mercy or Wrath in which we depart; it highly concerns us to consider the Effects of the Coming of Christ, that being timely prepared by Faith and Obedience, we may escape the Evils of the terrible Burning mentioned in the Text, and be Heirs of the Blessings of the World to come. In treating of the Text I shall consider,

First, The Extent and Cause, the End and Time of the general Burning, or Dissolution of all Things, which is thus expressed in the Words of the Text, The Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up.

Secondly, The Extent and Cause, the End and Time of the Renovation following; Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness.

First,

First, I shall consider the Extent and Cause, the End and Time of the general Burning. The Extent of the Burning is to Heaven and Earth; for says the Apostle, *The Heavens shall pass away, the Elements shall melt, and the Earth be burnt up. The Heavens shall pass away*; that is, the first Symptom of Nature's expiring in this great Fever, is the Darkeness of the Heavens: For as Light was the Beginning of the Creation of the World, being the first Work of the first Day: So withdrawing the Light will fore-run its Dissolution or returning to Chaos. For according to St. *John*, (e) *The Sun shall become black as Sackcloth of Hair, and the Moon become as Blood; and the Stars of Heaven fall unto the Earth, even as a Fig-tree casteth her untimely Figs, when she is shaken of a mighty Wind.* Which Scene of Horror is thus introduced, *Lo, there was a great Earthquake*, or rather, *a great Shaking*, that is, of Heaven and (f) Earth. For the Lights are (g) *set in the Firmament of Heaven*, and when that shall vanish, they cannot but suffer a notable Change. It shall *perish* and be *changed*, says (h) the *Psalmist*: *It shall vanish like Smoke*, says (i) the *Prophet Isaiah*: *And its Powers shall be shaken*, says (k) the *Son of God*. Which St. *John* represents after this Manner, (l) *The Heaven departed as a Scroll, when it is rolled together.*

The Curtain (m) of Heaven will be first drawn (n) back ere the Son will appear as Judge of the World in Power and Glory. And the visible Light, which the Scripture represents as the *Garment* (o) of God, will first be put off, that the Sun
(p) of

(e) Rev. vi. 12, 13. compared with Matth. xxiv. 29.

(f) Ver. 14.

(g) Gen. i. 16, 17.

(h) Psal. ch. 25, 26.

(i) Isa. li. 6.

(k) Matth. xxiv. 29.

(l) Rev. iv. 14.

(m) Psal. civ. 2.

(n) Rev. vi. 14, 16. chap. xx. 11. Matth. xxiv. 29, 30.

(o) Psal. civ. 2.

(p) of *Righteousness* may rise in the East, (q) and shine unto the West. For the Moon shall be confounded (r) and the Sun ashamed at the glorious Presence of the Son of God, as the Stars grow dim at the approaching Brightness of the rising Sun. St. Peter tells us, *that the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved*. By which it appears, that the Burning of the Heavens shall accompany or follow the great Concussion, as Shakings of the Earth are frequently followed with fiery Eruptions. An Idea of which you may probably form from the frightful Appearance some Years ago observed in the Sky ; when Shoots of Light rising to a Point from the several Parts of the visible *Horizon*, presented to the Mind the terrifying Figure of an Arch of Fire compassing the Earth, and threatening Ruin to the Inhabitants of it. The Apostle adds, *that the Elements shall melt*, that is, as watry Vapours falling from above in impetuous Showers, (s) met with the Waters of the *great Deep* rising from beneath, and covered the Earth with a swelling Deluge in the Days of *Noah* ; so fiery Meteors and burning Exhalations shot and discharged from the Regions of the Air, and strengthened with the Influence of the labouring Heavens, will descend on the Earth like the Brimstone and Fire from God upon *Sodom*, and together with the central, or subterraneous Fires bursting from beneath, will lay waste its Surface, and convert the whole into a glowing Monument of God's Indignation. For the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up, that is, the Works of the Pride and Wantonness of Man, their lofty Buildings, curious Gardens, and Retirements of Pleasure ; their populous Cities filled with Oppression, Riot, and Wealth ;

(p) Mal. iv. 2.

(q) Matth. xxiv. 27.

(r) Isa. xxiv. 23.

(s) Gen. vii. 11, 12,

Wealth; their Castles and Fortresses, the Marks of Servitude, and Supports of Violence; their pompous Navies, the Supply of Luxury; with other Effects of Vanity and Power, will all be consumed and vanish into Smoke in this dreadful Burning. *The Day of the Lord of Hosts, says Isaiah, (t) shall be upon every high Tower, and upon every fenced Wall, and upon all the Ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant Pictures.*

Secondly, The efficient Cause of this great Dissolution is the Power of God. *I saw, says St. John, (u) a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no Place for them.* But the moral Cause is the Sin of Mankind. If we search the Records of holy Scripture, it will every where appear that Changes in the Elements from better to worse are owing to Sin, as I shall endeavour to shew from particular Instances. The Earth which abounded with wholesome Herbs and delicious Fruits, the Subsistence of Man, of Beasts, and of Birds, was cursed with Barrenness for *Adam's* Transgression, and shews its Fertility in bringing forth Thorns to increase the Labour and Sorrow of Man. In Process of Time, when Wickedness increased and spread with Posterity, and the Measure of their Sin was equal to their (x) Numbers, the Earth was over-flown with a Deluge (x) of Waters, to purge it from the Filth of a People immersed in the Pleasures of Sense. And in after Ages (y) Droughts, Barrenness, (z) Earthquakes, and Devastations were alike owing to the Wickedness of Man. *He turneth a fruitful Land into Barrenness,*

(t) Isa. il. 12, 15, 16.

(u) Rev. xx. 11.

(x) Gen. vi. 11, 13.

(y) Jer. ix. 12, 13,

(z) Isa. xxiv. 19, 20. Jer. iv. 23, 24, &c.

renness, says the Psalmist, (a) for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein. And Isaiah, (b) The Earth shall reel to and fro like a Drunkard, and shall be removed like a Cottage. And why? The Transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again.

If we pass to the Waters, it will no less appear (c) that Springs are dried up, Rivers fail, or (d) are turned into Blood, and (e) the Sea rages, to distress Sinners, and afflict them in a Way that points out their Sin. *He turneth Rivers into a Wilderness, says the Psalmist, (f) and the Water-Springs into dry Ground. (g) Thou art righteous, O Lord, says the Angel of the Waters, because thou hast judged thus, that is, in turning into Blood the Ocean, the Rivers, and Fountains of Waters, for they have shed the Blood of Saints, and Prophets; and thou hast given them Blood to drink, for they are worthy.* If we look into the Air; (h) Thunder, Lightning, Hail-stones, and Rain, in uncommon Measure, Form, and Degree; noxious Qualities spreading Infection wheresoever they go; and violent Tempests lifting up the Sea, and ravaging the Earth, are the Weapons and Instruments of God's Indignation, with which he restrains and punishes Sin. (i) *Take me up, says Jonah, and cast me forth into the Sea; so shall the Sea be calm unto you: For I know that for my sake this great Tempest is upon you.* And lastly, if we ascend to the Stars and Luminaries of Heaven, we find them at Variance with the Wicked and Impenitent, or suffering Changes on Account of their Sin. *The Stars in their Courses fought against*

(a) Psal. cvii. 33, 34.

(b) Psal. xxiv. 20.

(c) 1 Kings xvii. 7. and xviii. 5, 18.

(d) Exod vii. 20, 21.

(e) Jonah i. 4, 12.

(f) Psal. cvii. 33.

(g) Rev. xvi. 5, 6.

(h) Rev. xvi. 17, 18, 21. Job xxxviii. 22, 23. chap. xxxvii. 11, 13. Rev. vii. 1, &c.

(i) Jonah i. 12.

gainst Sifera, (k) or shot down baleful and destructive Influences. The *Sun was darkened* in a wonderful Manner (l) at the Noon-Day, while the Sun of God, the *Light of the World*, was dying on the Cross. And its Heat will increase by the Vial of Wrath to such an Excess, (m) as to scorch and torment the Bodies of Men, it was made to cherish. And it is not improbable that *Job's Words*, (n) *The Heavens are not clean in his sight*, or (o) *the Stars are not pure in his sight*, may be spoken of those Bodies with relation to the Changes, which they suffer through Sin; for Sin is represented as *reaching unto* (p) *Heaven*.

These are the Effects which are wrought in the World through the Wickedness of Man. For how can it be expected that the Fruits of the Earth, the Blessing of God, should spring in their Seasons to support a People living to themselves, and not unto God; and renewing their Wickedness together with their Strength? How can it be expected that a calm, healthy, and temperate Air should be breathed by those, whose Passions are tempestuous, who serve *the Prince of the Power of the Air*, and the Venom of whose Tongues is daily polluting it with Lyes? Can the Lights of Heaven shine upon Men with propitious Rays, whose Souls are overcast with the Darkness of Sin, and whom God vouchsafes not to cheer and refresh with the Light of his Countenance? And if Sin be the Occasion of all the Disorders in Heaven and Earth from the Beginning of the World to the Age we live in, we may well infer that the greatest of all, the Dissolution of the World, will be alike owing to the same

B

Evil,

(k) Judges v. 30.

(l) Luke xxiii. 44, 45.

(m) Rev. xvi. 8, 9.

(n) Job xv. 5.

(o) Chap. xxv. 5.

(p) Rev. xviii. 5.

Evil. For says God, (q) *A Fire is kindled in my Anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell, and shall consume the Earth with her Increase, and set on Fire the Foundation of the Mountains.*

Thirdly, The End of the Dissolution, or general Burning, is to abolish the Memory of past Sin, by destroying the Works and Monuments of it. To take away from Sinners the Fewel of their Lusts, and the Means of offending, the Goods of this Life. To change the Scene of their wicked Actions, where they have long gone on in Blasphemy against God, and their Insults upon Men; and to punish the Wicked for the Sins they have obstinately and habitually committed.

First, The End of the Dissolution is to abolish the Memory of past Sin, by destroying the Works and Monuments of it. The Wickedness of Man frequently discovers itself in lasting Effects; and Memorials remain to this very Day of the Cruelty, Pride, and gross Superstition of former Ages, and People renowned for their Riches and Power. The Surface of the Earth is scarred with the Effects of military Rage. And the Nakedness of Countries formerly rich in the Product of their Soil and Number of Inhabitants, and the Ruins of ancient and flourishing Cities, proclaim the Violence and Ambition of the Powerful. In other Places, where Plenty and Power have a long Time flourished, Cities begun in Industry and Justice, but increased with the Gain of Avarice and Fraud, become the Seats of Luxury, Pride, and all Sorts of Wickedness. Edifices arise for effeminate Pleasure, and splendid Seats to transmit to Posterity the Names of Men, who attribute their Greatness to their own Prudence, Courage, and Foresight. Delightful Gardens, cool Grotts, and refreshing Streams,
which

(q) Deut. xxxii. 22.

which alike proclaim the Labourer's Toil and the Artist's Skill, are frequent Instances of the Vanity of the Rich, and serve for Retirements to Wantonness and Sloth. To which may be added the Disorders in the Elements introduced by the Curse, the Punishment of Sin. All which being Marks and Memorials of Man's Disobedience, an End will be put to this ruinous State and Condition of Things by the Justice of God, when the Time of his Patience and Forbearance is fulfilled, and the Righteousness of the Saints and their Number is completed.

Secondly, The End of the Dissolution is to take away from Sinners the Fewel of their Lusts, and the Means of offending, the Goods of this Life. Experience teaches us that the Unjust will oppress so long as they have Power ; that the Drunkards will revel, while the Vineyards are fruitful ; and that the Riches of the Earth, the Waters, and the Air, will ever be the Spoil of the Glutton and Sensualist. If some are reclaimed by the Word of God, the Reproofs of Conscience, and the Counsel of a Friend, by Losses in Fortune, bodily Sickness, or other Methods of divine Goodness, yet others go on so long as they have Power and Opportunity to Sin. If some are cut off, and removed from the Comforts of this present Life, which they constantly abuse to their own Shame, and the Dishonour of God ; yet others arise and come in their stead, Riot in the Pleasures which corrupted their Ancestors, and promise a Succession of like Sinners in the next Age from the bad Example left to Posterity. When Vice is propagated after this Manner, and revives in the Youth who rise in the Place of their fading Ancestors, when no Calls nor Forbearance of God can recover them from Sin, no Promises of greater Happiness divert their Pursuit

after sensual Entertainments, the Objects they are fond of and will not depart from, God will remove by his just Judgments, and leave them naked and destitute of Good. *I will return, says God, (r) and take away my Corn in the Time thereof, and my Wine in the Season thereof, and will recover my Wool and my Flax given to cover her Nakedness,—and none shall deliver her out of my Hand.*

Thirdly, The End of the Dissolution is to change the Scene of the Wickedness of Men, where they have long gone on in their Blasphemies against God, and their Insults upon their Neighbour. The Mystery of Iniquity, which began in this World, will here be compleated, and the Actors of it receive their Reward. For we learn from the Methods of divine Justice, that Places suffer for the Wickedness of the Inhabitants. Thus populous Cities, the Scenes of Avarice, Fraud, and Uncleaness, have been turned into Ruins by the Rage of Man, or the immediate Vengeance of Almighty God, as *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, *Adma* and *Zeboim*, (s) whose Plains are Witnesses to this very Day of the Fire of his Wrath, which burnt up a People already enflamed with unnatural Lust. And the sad Fate, which has happened successively to the Parts of the Earth, like a deadly Disease which cannot be cured, will at last prevail and ruin the whole. There will no Dens be left for the Robbers to lurk and observe in, no secret and retired Chambers for the Adulterers and Unclean, nor any Repositories for the Fruits of Unrighteousness, and the Instruments of Sin. The Seat of the Scorn and the Throne of Violence will be both overturned, and nothing remain but a Place of Torment, where he who flies from the present Distress can have no Relief, but that which arises from the sad

(r) Hof. ii. 9, 10.

(s)

sad Experience of Variety of Evil. As it is written, (t) *He who fleeth from the Noise of the Fear, shall fall into the Pit ; and he that cometh up out of the Pit, shall be taken in the Snare : For the Windows from on high are open, and the Foundations of the Earth do shake.*

Lastly, The End of the Dissolution is to punish the Wicked for their past Sins. *The Heavens and the Earth which are now*, says St. Peter, (u) *by the same Word are kept in Store, reserved unto Fire against the Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men.* It has pleased God in dispensing Punishments to correct Sinners sometimes in the Place where the Sin was committed. (x) *Thus saith the Lord, says Elijah to Abab, in the Place where Dogs licked the Blood of Naboth, shall Dogs lick thy Blood, even thine ;* which was afterwards fulfilled in the (y) Death of his Son. And in the Prophet Jeremiah, (z) *Because they have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have estranged this Place, (that is Temple) and have burnt Incense in it unto other Gods, — and have filled this Place with the Blood of Innocents ; — (a) therefore behold the Day is come, saith the Lord, that — (b) I will make void the Counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this Place, and I will cause them to fall by the Sword before their Enemies.* And in like Manner Sinners shall be punished in the Earth they have corrupted. The Judge of the World shall raise them from the Dust, to be Witnesses of the Issue and Conclusion of Sin ; to experience Sorrows greater than those they have created others ; to feel the Want of the Corn, and the Wine,

(t) Isa. xxiv. 18.

(z) Jer. xix. 4.

(u) 2 Pet. iii. 7.

(a) Ver. 6.

(x) 1 Kings xxi. 19.

(b) Ver. 7.

(y) 2 Kings ix. 24, 25, 26.

Wine, and the Blessings of Nature they have grossly abused ; and fully to learn, that the World is the Workmanship of Almighty God, subject to his Power, and changed at his Will for a Curse to the Wicked, and a Blessing to the Just ; and not of Necessity, as they foolishly imagined, or by blind Chance. The wicked Prince may perhaps be tormented in the very Territory where he has exercised Cruelty, and oppressed the People committed to his Care. And the Voluptuary punished in his Garden of Delight, to the End that the Memory of past Joys may add to the Weight of his present Afflictions, and accumulated Evils may be felt there, where Pleasures were crowded to give Entertainment to every Sense : In short, the Windows of Heaven will be open from above to discharge Destruction on the Heads of Sinners, and the Earth from beneath will vomit out Streams of overflowing Fire ; and the Wicked shall be enclosed by the burning Elements, the Furnace they have heated with the Briars and Thorns of their former Iniquities.

Fourthly, The Time of the Dissolution is the Day of Judgment, or the second Coming of the Son of God. For St. Peter says, (c) *The Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, &c.* The merciful Saviour bears with the Wicked, that none may complain (d) that he wanted Time to repent and be saved. He continues to bear, if they will not repent, till the Measure of their Sin (e) be full and overflow ; till the Mystery of Iniquity, or Methods of Error be discovered and known, that God may be justified, and Sinners confounded ; that his Goodness may be acknowledged in forbidding

(c) 2 Eph. iii. 10.

(d) 2 Pet. iii. 9.

(e) Matth. xxiii. 32. Joel

iii. 13.

ding Wickedness, and his Justice in the Punishments inflicted upon it. He bears with Sinners, till the Righteousness of the Just, and the (f) Number of the Sufferers be finished and compleat; till Virtue and Truth have attained to the Maturity of Beauty and Strength. When this is done, Christ will appear to reward the Righteous, and to punish the Wicked. He will then appear, not in Weakness, not with the humble and despised Attendance of a few Fishermen, not surrounded with false and insidious Pharisees, but incircled with Saints, attended with Angels, and invested with Power and great Glory. He will then appear, not as a Lamb appointed to be slain for the Sins of the World; but in Character of Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*, to protect his Friends and devour his Enemies; with the Government on his Shoulder instead of the Cross, and with his Arms stretched out, not as a Sufferer, but to embrace the Righteous and bring down the Wicked. He will then come, not to propose the Covenant of Grace, but to make Enquiry how it has been observed; Who have maintained, or corrupted the Truth; Who have confessed, or denied him in publick; What Sin has been covered with the Cloke of Hypocrisy and Guile; What committed without Signs of Shame in the Eyes of the World, and with no Remorse in the Secret of the Soul. What avowed, defended, and applauded by profligate Sinners: And what Duties omitted or despised as Hindrances of the Happiness of this present Life, and the Badges of a servile and degenerate Spirit. (g) *Because the Cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, says God, and because their Sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the Cry of it, which is come unto me.* And in like Manner when the Cry of the Sins of

(f) Rev. vi. 11.

(g) Gen. xviii. 20, 21.

of the Inhabitants of the Earth shall reach unto Heaven, the Son of God, the Judge of the World, will descend to enquire, and utterly destroy it as he did *Sodom*.

The Coming of the Lord to perform this great and wonderful Work will be sudden and unexpected, like that of a (*b*) Thief, who surprizes a careless and secure Family in the Silence of the Night. He will visit the World in the Midnight of its Wickedness, when the Nations sleep in the Darkness of Error, and the Shadow of Death, forgetful of God, and drunk with the Pleasures of a sensual Conversation. He will then come, and waken the World, as he did *Egypt*, with the Terrors of his Judgments, and deliver his Church afflicted and distressed, by destroying the Oppressor. His Coming will be sudden as (*i*) the swift Lightning, not to the Righteous (*k*) who watch and pray, and are ever preparing themselves by good Works; but to (*l*) careless Sinners, fixed on the Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of this present World; who satisfied or amused with sensible Good, have no Desire to heavenly Enjoyments; and who leading a Life which Conscience condemns, cast off the Thoughts of the Judge of the World, whose Coming is dreadful to unrepenting Sinners.

Since then Christ will appear when Sinners are secure; since he comes as a Judge to condemn Sinners; since the Heavens will be dissolved, and the Earth burnt, and the Wicked perish in this general Ruin; how does it concern us to prepare for his Coming by Repentance and Faith? If Christ
be

(*b*) 1 Theff. v. 2.

(*i*) Matth. xxiv. 27.

(*k*) 1 Theff. v. 4.

(*l*) Ver. 3. Matth. xxiv.

38, 39.

be our Judge, let nothing remain that may make us afraid of his future Appearance. If Heaven will be dissolved and the Earth burnt, why should we pursue the Things of this World with Solitude and Fear? To what Purpose should we amass Riches, which are out of Proportion to the Comforts of Life? Build pompous and extensive Seats, which we cannot fill, or but seldom visit? And multiply Lands, whose Cares encrease together with their Fruits, but with this Difference, the Fruits for others, and the Cares for ourselves? Why should we wear out the few Days of a temporary Life in this fruitless Labour, which is little more than heaping up Fewel for the dreadful Fire of the last Day? And if this Change is the Effect of Sin and the Punishment of it, why do we defer to part with our Sins, which end in so certain and frightful a Ruin? Let none deceive himself that *the Day of the Lord is afar off*, that Ages will go on in a long Succession, as Ages are past, before his Appearance; but rather consider that for ought he knows the Time may be short; or should it be otherwise, that Death is near though it seems to lag, and come in the Rear of Multitude of Days, or threescore and ten. And that *Solomon* tells us, (m) *Where the Tree falleth, there it shall lie*; or, that he who descends a Sinner to the Grave, can have little Hope of rising a Saint. *Ye therefore, beloved,* (n) *seeing ye know these Things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Steadfastness, But grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To him be Glory both now, and for ever. Amen.*

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(m) Eccl. ix. 3.

(n) 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

I shall now proceed to the second Article proposed to be considered, namely, the Extent and Cause, the End and Time of the Renovation following; *Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness.* It cannot be supposed that this visible World, which the Fire shall consume, will always continue a desolate Heap, or perpetual Monument of God's Indignation. For how can we believe that the Goodness of God, which raised this beauteous System of Beings from the watry Chaos, will not restore it in the like Characters of Wisdom and Power, from the Rubbish and Dishonour to which it is reduced by the Fire of his Wrath? If he raises the Bodies of deceased Saints, notwithstanding they are blended with common Dust, to Immortality and Glory; How can we believe, that this visible World, the Dwelling of Man, which his Sin has corrupted, shall not be restored through the Righteousness of Man, to a (o) new State of Perfection and Beauty? Can we possibly think, that the Things which were made for (p) *the Pleasure of God*, and have no Will to resist and offend him, will be suffered to continue in such a Condition, as discovers the Marks of the highest Displeasure? Or, that Almighty God, whom none can contend with in Counsel and Might, will suffer the Devil to triumph over his Work, and persuade Sinners that he is stronger to destroy, than the Author of Nature to preserve or renew it? No; the happy State which all Things shall be placed in by a second Act of divine Goodness, will convince the Wicked and their proud Leader, that the Counsel of God cannot be frustrated; that Opposition tends to illustrate his Power and Goodness the more, and to finish the Scheme

(o) Rom. viii. 19, 20, 21, 22.

(p) Rev. iv. 11.

Scheme which his Wisdom has contrived, with the greatest Joy to the Creature renewed, and Tribute of Praise and Honour to himself. Since then Scripture assures us that all Things shall be restored, and Reasons are suggested by the Mind of Man to second Revelation, I shall enter upon the Particulars I promised to consider.

First then, the Renovation of the World, which the Text speaks of, is of equal Extent with the Ruin of it: That is, as the Heavens shall be dissolved, the Elements melt, and the Earth be burnt up: So the Power of God will display itself again, in reforming and improving them with fresh Accessions of Perfection and Beauty, which will never give Way to a second Change. Whether God will proceed by the same Steps in renewing the World, as he did in creating it, none can determine without Revelation; but this we are sure of, there will be *new Heavens and a new Earth*. The Moon that appeared in the Likeness of Blood, will put on the Splendor of the mid-day Sun; and the Sun that was black as Sack-cloth of Hair, will shed forth his Light with vigorous Rays of surprising Brightness. As it is written, (q) *The Light of the Moon shall be as the Light of the Sun; and the Light of the Sun shall be seven-fold, as the Light of seven Days, in the Day that the Lord bindeth up the Breach of his People, and healeth the Stroke of their Wound*. The Earth will pour forth its richest Stores from its inmost Bosom; and the Air inspire Immortality and Joy into every Creature, the fittest Medium for the Mouths of Saints continually employed in singing the Praises of their great Creator. Every Thing will share according to its Rank in the Blessings

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(q) Isa. xxxi. 26.

sings derived on redeemed Man. As it is written; (r) *The Creature itself shall be delivered from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God.* That is, nothing will be left of the noxious Qualities of the old World, which Sin had corrupted. The Beams of the Sun will torment none with Excess of Heat, (s) whose mild Influence suffers no Change from the Vial of Wrath; nor the pale Light of the Moon chill, where the Shadows of Night can never prevail, nor succeed the Brightness of eternal Day. The Terrors of Thunder will reprove none, whom God speaks to in the still Voice of Tenderness and Love; nor the Storm and Whirlwind harrass the Earth, where Peace reigns, and adjusts and composes the Passions of Men. And lastly, the Pillars of the Earth will never be moved, the Hearts of whose Inhabitants are unchangeably fixed on the Rock of Ages. For it is reasonable to believe that *the new Heavens and the new Earth* will be every Way perfect in proportion to the Dignity and Glory of Man, its appointed Inhabitant.

Secondly, The Cause of the Renovation of the Heaven and the Earth, is the Son of God, and that in Respect,

First, Of his Merit.

Secondly, Of his Power.

First, The Son of God is the meritorious Cause of the Restitution of all Things. That is, all Things shall be restored by the Power of God, for the Sake of the Righteousness of the *second Adam*, as all Things were cursed, and consequently undone, by the Sin of the *First*. For it cannot be supposed, that

(r) Rom. viii. 21.

(s) Rev. xvi. 8, 9.

that the Sin of the one should prevail more to provoke the Justice of Almighty God, than the Righteousness of the other to move his Compassion. And if God created the Heaven and the Earth, a World of Perfection, Beauty, and Delight, and furnished it with Variety of natural Good for the Happiness of Man, who had no Being till every Thing was prepared to receive and entertain him, and in Consequence of it had merited nothing at the Hand of God : How can we conceive, that a new World will not be framed by the same Power, and be stored and enriched with the greatest Blessings which the Nature of Man is capable of enjoying, for the Son of his Love, who fulfilled Righteousness in a strict Observance of the Duties of the Law ? If we take a View of Events past, or of Changes to come, as recorded and foretold in the sacred Writings, it will evidently appear that natural Blessings are generally the Reward of national Righteousness. (t) *If ye walk in my Statutes, says God, and keep my Commandments, and do them : Then I will give you Rain in due Season, and the Land shall yield her Increase, and the Trees of the Field shall yield their Fruit, and your threshing shall reach unto the Vintage, and the Vintage shall reach unto the sowing Time : And ye shall eat your Bread to the full, and dwell in your Land safely.* And we do not find, that the Dews of Heaven, the Riches of the Earth, kind Seasons, and domestick Prosperity were wanting to the *Jews*, while their Righteousness was greater to bring down a Blessing, than their Sin to prevent it. Nay, the Faith of *One* has prevailed with God to remove the Defects introduced by Sin into natural Bodies. For *Elijah* prayed, (u) *And the Heaven that was as Iron poured down Rain, and the Earth which was as Brass gave forth*
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(t) Levit. xxvi. 3.

(u) James v. 18.

ber Fruit ; as he said to *Abab* ; (x) *As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be Dew nor Rain these Years, but according to my Word.* The Power of the Keys was committed to his Hand in a natural Sense, to (y) shut Heaven and open it again for the Reproof, Conviction, and Punishment of Sinners. In like Manner the barren Ground which *Jericho* stood in, was made fruitful by another Prophet (z) healing the Springs that watered the Soil. If we look forwards, and consider the Changes and Revolutions to come, the Perfection of the Church in the Fulness of the *Gentiles*, and the Conversion of the *Jews*, will be followed with Improvements in the State of Nature. *Ye shall go out with Joy, says the Prophet (a), and be led forth with Peace ; the Mountains and the Hills shall break before you into singing, and all the Trees of the Field shall clap their Hands. Instead of the Thorn shall come up the Fir Tree, and instead of the Briar shall come up the Myrtle Tree.* If then visible Things will receive such Improvement on Account of the Church, if the Blessings of Nature were dispensed to the *Jews* in Proportion to their Righteousness in observing the Law, and Prophets could prevail with Almighty God to renew the Blessing which Heaven and Earth were deprived of through Sin ; if the Righteousness of Man could prove an Occasion of reviving the World in the Manner I have mentioned, notwithstanding it must perish in the general Burning of the last Day ; what Perfection will it not recover, what Improvements will it not receive through the Righteousness of Christ, when the Church shall be united in one pure and undefiled Body to the Lord its Head, and become the

(x) 1 Kings xvii. 1.

(y) See Rev. xi. 6.

(z) 2 Kings ii. 19, &c.

(a) Isa. li. 12, 13.

the Object, together with Christ, of the Riches, of the Goodness, and Bounty of God.

Secondly, The Son of God is, together with the Father, the efficient Cause of *the new Heaven, and the new Earth*; for it is reasonable to believe that the World will be renewed by (b) the same Power which created it at first. *I have put my Words in thy Mouth, and have covered thee in the Shadow of my Hand*, says the Father to the Son, (c) *to plant the Heavens, and lay the Foundation of the Earth*. The Miracles he wrought in stilling the Winds and calming the Sea, shewed his Dominion both in Heaven and Earth, and the Cures he performed on the Bodies of Men, as healing the Sick, giving Feet to the Lame, and Eyes to the Blind, and raising the Dead, are undoubted Proofs that no Decay can reduce the World to such a Condition, that it cannot be renewed by the Power of Christ. For what can be impossible to the Son of God, (d) *the Resurrection and the Life*? Or what Creature cannot be restored by the Power of him, who will raise Man the most perfect of all at the last Day?

Thirdly, The End of the Renovation of Heaven and Earth is,

First, That the Goodness, Wisdom, and Power of God may be better discerned in his new Works than they were in the old. The Works of God are a kind of Mirrour that reflects his Perfections, which if sullied through Sin, conveys but a faint and imperfect Idea of his Power and Godhead. Hence it

(b) John i. 3. Heb. i. 2. according to the Original.
Isa. li. 16.

(d) John xi. 25.

(c) So it should be rendered

it has come to pass, that Men unacquainted with the Rise, Progress, and Consequences of Sin, observing the Defects and Disorders in the World, and inferring well that they could not proceed from a wise, good, and all-powerful Being, have denied his Efficiency in producing the World, and have rather assigned it to blind Chance, an evil God, or some other weak and insufficient Cause. But when all Things shall be renewed, and appear in the Brightness of unfulfilled Beauty with their Complement of Perfections, it is then that the Greatness and Goodness of God will shine in his Works; every Thing will strike and conduct the Eye to the Author of it; the Characters of his Godhead will be deeply ingraven in every Object, and nothing unworthy of so perfect a Cause will give an Occasion to Question the Truth of his making the whole.

Secondly, The End of the Renovation of Heaven and Earth is, that Righteousness may reign in the new Frame and System of Beings, which had little Respect and Interest in the first. The Apostle expresses it in the following Words, *(e) Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness.* The present World, through the Wickedness of Man, and the Malice of Satan, is the Theatre of Sin, and a constant Provocation of the Anger and Justice of Almighty God. The Weakness of the Flesh, the Mystery of Iniquity, and the Wrath of God have been partly displayed, and will fully be discovered in this Field of Battle between Light and Darkness, Heaven and Hell. Idols have been set up in the Place of God, and honoured with the Tribute of Prayer and Thanksgiving,

(e) 2 Pet. iii. 13.

giving, which is only due to infinite Power and infinite Goodness. Evil Concupiscence has been more complied with than the Dictates of Truth; the Love of God, and Obligations to Charity. And Authority and Power conferred upon some for the Benefit of the whole, have been chiefly employed by cruel, faithless, and ambitious Men, in Acts of Oppression, and building their Greatness on the Industry of others. And to sum up all, the reigning City, or prevailing State of the Governments of the World, is described in the Figure of *(f) Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth.* But the Case will be otherwise in *the new Heaven and the new Earth*, which will pour down Righteousness and bring forth Truth. The Spirit of God, which animates the Saints as the Soul the Body, will unite them together under Christ their Head in the same Knowledge of divine Truth, in the same Love and Obedience to God, in the same Affection one towards another, and in the same Endeavours to preserve and promote the Happiness of the Assembly which each is a Part of. The Being of God, his Perfection, and Authority will be fully acknowledged; his Laws obeyed with Diligence and Cheerfulness; his Mysteries understood, or received with Humility; his Justice revered; his Goodness admired; and himself worshipped in Spirit and Truth. The Economy of the Word in a Body of Flesh, the Series of Wonders ensuing thereupon, and the Dignity of his Nature will no longer be Matter of Contradiction and Strife, but confessed in a Manner becoming those, who enjoy the Redemption obtained by his Blood. And himself will be joined with the Father and Spirit, in the Worship and Praises of Angels and Men. Religion will be pure, and

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(f) Rev. xvii. 5.

without the Mixture of Hypocrisy and Deceit. Virtue without Presumption, Love without Diffimulation, Honour without Pride, Power without Oppression, and Knowledge without Conceit. No one's Abundance will create Envy where every one is full. No one's Distinction, where every one is satisfied with his own Lot. The Modesty of all will render it agreeable to prefer each in Honour to himself. And Selfishness will be lost in the Spirit of Love, which is publick, disinterested; and directs the Actions of every Part to the Good of the whole.

Thirdly, The End of the Renovation of Heaven and Earth is, that the Righteous may be comforted, and receive a Reward for the Troubles they have suffered, and the Good they have done in this present Life. According to Scripture (g) the Righteous are *Strangers and Pilgrims* in the World. The Manners, Language, and Prospects of Men are different from theirs. The God, they worship, is not *the Prince of the Power of the Air*; nor the City, they seek, *Babylon the Great*, the Seat of Pride, Confusion, and Injustice. For which Reason they are little regarded by worldly-minded Men, as unfit Instruments for the Purposes of Life; who for Want of complying with the secret Maxims which the World steers by, whatsoever Shew it may outwardly make of Justice and Truth; and who fixing their Thoughts on a future State instead of the present, are unqualified thereby to support the Grandeur and Interest of Government, and bear the Honours and Rewards of Merit. Nay, it is well for them if they escape so, and are not represented in the black Character of Enemies to the State, which was *Haman's* Artifice to destroy the *Jews*,

(g) 1 Pet. ii. 11.

Jews, who addressed himself thus to his abused Master. *(b) There is a certain People scattered Abroad, and dispersed among the People in all the Provinces of thy Kingdom, and their Laws are diverse from all People, neither keep they the King's Laws; therefore it is not for the King's Profit to suffer them. If it please the King, let it be written that they may be destroyed.* But howsoever they may fare in this present Life, the World to come is allotted to the Righteous, who will not be Pilgrims but Inheriters of it; to the Righteous and Despised, who have walked by Faith in a sensual Generation, been just with the Fraudulent, temperate and modest in Affluence and Riches, pure and unspotted in the midst of Temptations, and constant and true in Times of Defection. Who have fed the Hungry, comforted the Afflicted, and honoured Virtue in Poverty and Distress, and will therefore be justified by the Son of God with suitable Returns for their Confidence and Hope. The Countenance of these, whom the World treated as Madmen or Fools, will shine like the Sun with the Brightness of Wisdom; and their Hands be strengthened with the Rod of Power, whom the Proud crushed as weak and contemptible. The Sheep-skins and Goat-skins which covered their Nakedness, and the Dens and Caves which received them in their Distress, will be turned into Garments of Beauty and Joy, and everlasting Mansions of Pleasure and Peace. The blessed Angels which assisted them in their Troubles as ministering Spirits and concealed Friends, will converse with them now without any Reserve, as Companions in their Joy; and will join in Praises to Almighty God for the happy Issue of their Care and Fidelity. And the Spirit of God by presenting to their Mind the beautiful Vicissitudes of Justice and Pity, mutually

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(b) Est. iii. 8, 9.

contending in past Ages to punish or forgive the Inhabitants of the Earth, will enlarge their Souls with a vast Prospect of the Depths of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that will prove an Occasion of Increase of Joy, and of repeated Praises to Almighty God for their safe Passage to the Regions of Bliss, through such various Scenes of Trial and Danger. The Blessings of this State may partly be conceived by considering the Sorrows and Evils of the present. For if bodily Pains may prove so excessive as to drive the Patient into Fits of Distraction, what Extasies of divine Joy will not be raised from Impressions of Pleasure on glorified Bodies? If Contempt from their Brethren justly deserved becomes insupportable, and compels many for present Relief to deprive themselves of Life and Society together, what will be the Pleasure which the Soul will experience from Honours received in the Assembly of the Blessed? And if Loss of Fortune fills us with Anxiety, and the Sense of the Instability of human Affairs mixes our Enjoyments with the Fear of Changes, how will the Happiness of the Saints in Light be perfect and consummate, who abound with the Riches of divine Goodness, and have this added to their other Felicity, that the Comforts they enjoy will ever be the same, or suffer no Change but that of Improvement.

Fourthly and Lastly, The End of the Renovation of Heaven and Earth is, that God may rejoice and rest in his Works. The visible World is the Temple of God, which no sooner was made, than he shewed his Delight in the Work of his Hands by pronouncing it *Good*. But this pure State being soon corrupted by Man's Disobedience, the Symbols of his Presence began to withdraw, and the World was exposed to a long Train of multiform Evils, that in Process of Time will utterly dissolve it.

it. Since this fatal and unhappy Divorce, the World is in Bondage to a new Lord, whom the Scripture stiles the God of this World, an impotent Being empty of Good, whose best Returns for the Honours he receives are Disappointment and Sorrow in the highest Degree. But the Mystery of Iniquity being once finished, the Case will be otherwise *in the new Heaven, and the new Earth*, which Righteousness dwells in. The Glory of God will return to his Work, which is perfect in Goodness, and cannot be defiled with a second Offence. That is, as the Tabernacle and Temple finished and prepared for the Service of God, were both overshadowed with the Symbol of his Presence : So God's Delight in his new Works, will be publicly declared by his visible Presence shining through the whole, and dwelling with his Church for ever and ever. This glorious State is described thus in Figures adapted to our present Conceptions, (i) *Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain: For the former Things are passed away.* And again, (k) *There shall be no more Curse: But the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his Servants shall serve him. (l) — And there shall be no Night there, and they need no Candle, neither Light of the Sun: And they shall reign for ever and ever.* For if all the Evils we can possibly suffer, principally arise from the Want of the Favour of Almighty God, or from the Power of his Wrath, how will the Pleasure of Life be complete, and

(i) Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

(l) Ver. 5.

(k) Rev. xxii. 3.

and with what Joys will the Soul swell, when the Light of his Countenance shines on the Church with perpetual Smiles, and it is cherished and embraced in the Arms of his Love?

The last Particular, I shall now speak to, is the Time of the Renovation of Heaven and Earth. It cannot be expected that the new should appear till the old vanish. It will fare with the World as it does with Man, the Body must perish before it can rise, and the World be dissolved before it can appear in the new Dress of Immortality and Glory. *(m)* *I saw, says St. John, a new Heaven and a new Earth; for the first Heaven and the first Earth were passed away, and there was no more Sea.* This is the End of the Oeconomy of Christ in the Nature of Man, to exalt all Things to a fixed State of Perfection and Glory; which cannot be attained to, till his Triumphs are compleated in the Conquest of Death the last Enemy. But Death being destroyed by the Power of God which raiseth up the Dead, and the Earth with the Wicked consigned to the Fury of devouring Fire, a new World will arise for the Rest and Habitation of the Just, where their past Sorrows will no more be felt, than the Pleasures of the Wicked in their Place of Torment. For the Period of Judgment being now finished, the Season of Love will immediately commence; and the Son of God, like a great Conqueror, who has nothing to do but enjoy the Peace he has purchased with his Sword, will put off his *Vesture dypt in Blood, his Garments of Vengeance, and his Cloke of Zeal*, and converse with his Church in the pleasing Dress of Meekness and Love; both receiving the Honours of a grateful People, whose Hearts overflow with a Sense of the Wonders he
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(m) Rev, xxi. 1.

has done for them, and filling their Souls again in Return with the sweet Variety of divine Good, the Treasures opened to his great Merit, which no Enjoyment can ever exhaust.

But here I must stop, being lost in a State, whose Excess of Light puts out the Eyes of our weak Minds, and whose Excess of Good inebriates the Soul surpasses Expression, and renders the Tongue of him who attempts to describe his Happiness, like the Tongue of a Man astonished with Wine. All that I can do, having thus conducted you to this Prospect of Bliss, is earnestly to wish, and seriously to entreat you so to demean yourselves in this Life of Trouble, that your Labours being ended you may rest for ever with the Son of God, in the World of Peace, in the Land of Plenty, in the joyful City, and the Bosom of his Love.

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