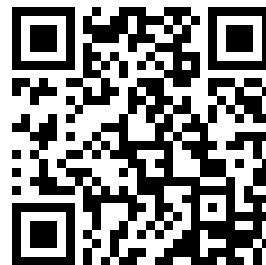


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# S E R M O N S,

## DISCOURSES and ESSAYS,

O N

### V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S,

V I Z.

**EVANGELICAL DISCOURSES.**

Death and Heaven.

Strength and Weakness of human Reason.

Humility represented in the Character of St. PAUL.

A Defence against Self-murder.

Holiness of Times, Places and People.

A Caveat against Infidelity.

The Harmony of all Religions which GOD ever prescribed.

The Doctrine of the Passions explained and improved.

The Love of GOD, and it's Influence on the Passions.

An ESSAY on Charity-Schools.

SERMONS on Reformation of Manners, and religious Improvement of public Events.

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By the late Reverend and Learned

I S A A C W A T T S, D. D.

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V O L. II.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for T. LONGMAN at the Ship, and J. BUCKLAND at the Buck, in Paternoster Row; J. OSWALD at the Rose and Crown in the Poultry; J. WAUGH at the Turk's Head in Lombard-Street; and J. HARRIS at the King's Arms in Cornhill. M DCC LIII,



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T H E  
D E D I C A T I O N.

To the Church of CHRIST assembling in *Berry-Street*, LONDON.

Dear christian friends, beloved in our Lord,

**H**AVING dedicated to you my first volume of sermons, printed twenty-six years ago, I thought it proper to address this to you, being the last I am ever like to publish, that I might testify to the world the continuance of my sincere affection for you; and signify to you my ardent desire to do what I can, in my present weak state of health, to promote the welfare of your souls.

The "essay on the powers and contests of flesh and spirit," which is added at the end of these discourses, has been written many years ago, and I hope it may be made useful, through the blessing of God, to lead private christians to form a right judgment in many things relating to their spiritual concerns.

As I trust all these papers contain the truths of God, which I have thus recommended to you, so I am persuaded you will find them to be exactly conformable to the new testament, in all your reviews and studies of that blessed book. It is there my hopes of eternal life are fixed; and in this hope, I trust all of you will be found walking steadfastly in the same faith, by the same rule, till you are at length made happy partakers of the same salvation.

The

The great harmony which has subsisted betwixt me and my dear and worthy brother and colleague, the reverend Mr. *Samuel Price*, for more than forty-three years, without any interruption, has been very comfortable to us, and a considerable blessing to you. May the Spirit of God render his continued labours amongst you, in the gospel, very serviceable, for your further establishment and growth in Grace! With this design, I commit these discourses to the providence of *Christ*, and commit him and you also into his hands, to whom, I doubt not, you have often surrendered yourselves.

And let me intreat you, as a church of *Christ*, not only to suffer, but to regard the word of exhortation, which, as your aged pastor, whose voice you may probably hear no more, I would now, in a solemn manner leave with you, viz.

Continue to be of one mind, live in peace, be careful to practise all the duties of holiness and righteousness, keep close to God by humble fervent prayer and dependence, seek his face for direction, and a blessing in all your affairs.

To the God of almighty power, and infinite wisdom and grace, I commend you; who is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Finally, my beloved friends, farewell. May the love of God, the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the communion of the holy Spirit, be ever with you. Amen.

I am, with much respect, under very declining circumstances of life,

Your affectionate friend,

and faithful servant in the gospel,

*Stoke-Newington,*  
Jan. 13, 1746 7.

ISAAC WATTS.

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T H E

**EVANGELICAL DISCOURSES**

O N

**SEVERAL SUBJECTS.**

To which is added, An

**E S S A Y**

O N T H E

**Powers and Contests of FLESH and SPIRIT.**

VOL. II.

B.

EVANGELICAL DISCIPLINE

OF

THE CHURCH

BY

W. G. LADD

REV.

OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

## EVANGELICAL DISCOURSES

ON

*Several Subjects, &c.*

## DISCOURSE I.

The Divine Commission of *St. Paul* examined and established.

IN A

SERMON preached on EASTER-DAY, 1731.

In opposition to all the *Deists* who have appeared in the world since *Christianity* began: Being a full Confirmation of the blessed Gospel.

The First Part of this SERMON:

ACTS xxv. 18, 19.

*Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.***T**HE history which introduces these verses may be represented in short in this manner.

The *Jews* were highly enraged against *St. Paul* for preaching the gospel of *Christ* with such freedom and boldness in several places; and when they found him at *Jerusalem*, they took occasion to seize him, and bring him before the magistrate, with heavy accusations; but when he had defended himself so well, the magistrates saw no cause to punish him. The *Jews* lay in wait to assassinate him, or murder him privately; which being known, he was sent by night to *Cesarea*, to be judged by *Felix* the governor; and there he lay in prison two years, till a new governor, *Festus*, came into the province.

The *Jews* still pursued their malice against *Paul*, and what they could not obtain of *Felix*, they hoped to persuade *Festus* to grant them: And when *Festus* had heard what charges the *Jews* brought against him, and when *Paul* appealed unto *Cesar*,  
 VOL. II. B fearing

fearing that *Festus* would comply with the unjust desire of the *Jews*, *Festus* had a mind to hear the whole cause, that he might send *Cesar* a more particular account. Now king *Agrippa* being there upon a visit, *Festus* tells *Agrippa* the story in this speech of which my text is a part, *Ver. 17 &c.*

And from these words we may take occasion to make these three Observations.

- I. Civil governors among the *beathens*, before they were taught to persecute the christians, thought it strange to have matters of pure religion brought before them, where the state and the peace of it was not concerned.
- II. The resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead is the grand question in our debates about christianity, and which we are solicitous to maintain, in vindication of our religion.
- III. *Paul* would not have affirmed *Jesus Christ*, a dead man, to be alive, without very good proof of it; knowing that the whole religion which he taught the world depended on the truth of it.

[ First observation, Civil governors among the *beathens* usually; in ancient times, thought it strange to have matters of pure religion brought before them.

*Festus* imagined some dreadful accusation of sedition or murder was brought against *Paul*, or some high crime against the state, when he was with such fury brought before him; but there was nothing of this kind appeared. *St. Paul* expressly says, he had walked uprightly before God and man, and exercised himself to keep a good conscience toward God and men; a conscience void of offence; and after many years, he came to bring arms to his own nation, to do his country a kindness, and the *Jews* seized him, upon pretence of his opinions being contrary to the religion of their nation.

The great design of civil government, and the institution of magistracy among men, is to keep the peace, to secure the persons and properties of mankind who were innocent, from all manner of injury; and there is nothing more of religion comes within their province, than is absolutely necessary to secure the publick peace. Now, upon this account, and that with some appearance of reason, it hath been supposed that atheists, or those who deny God, or his providence, or his government of the world, may be justly punished by magistrates, so far at least as to be banished from their dominions; because they who deny the knowledge and justice of a God, a superior governor, can give no security by oaths, of their allegiance or loyalty to any government whatsoever; and will break all manner of bonds when they can do it safely. But where some divine power is owned and acknowledged, who knows and will punish perjury and falshood, the civil governor hath no farther power in affairs of pure religion, where the peace of mankind, the property of man, and the safety of the state are not concerned: Now these privileges and powers are not impaired by any article of the religion of nature.

This was the notion of the wiser and better *beathens* by the light of nature, and therefore you do not find them usually quarrelling about their Gods, and bringing one another before courts of justice, because of their contentions and differences in matters of their religion: Nor would the magistrates bear it. This appears in the case of *St. Paul*, at *Corinth*, *Acts xviii. 12---16.* And when *Gallio* was the deputy of *Achaia*, the *Jews* made insurrection with one accord against *Paul*, and brought him to the judgment-seat, saying, this fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when *Paul* was now about to open his mouth, *Gallio* said unto the *Jews*, if it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye *Jews*, reason would that I should bear with you; but if

DISC. I. *St. Paul's divine commission examined and established.* ¶

*it be a question of words and names and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters: and he drove them from the judgment-seat.*

But then *Gallio* was much to blame in the 17th verse, where he took no cognizance of the *Greeks* beating *Softbenes*, an innocent man, being the ruler of the synagogue; which was a crime against the peace of the city, and an offence against the government, which *Gallio* ought to have resent-ed.

But however the civil magistrates among the *beatbens* had nothing to do in matters of pure religion, yet the *Jews* were continually running to the civil magistrate with their charges against those who opposed their religion, or any part of it. And this is the plain and apparent reason of it: The government of the *Jews* was a theocracy; God was their king as well as their God; the law that he gave them by the hand of *Moses* was the law of their secular affairs as well as the rule of their religion; and therefore the high-priest was made a judge in many civil affairs as well as religious. Their religion and their civil government were so interwoven, by God's being their king as well as their God, that there were many crimes in religion to be punished, by the civil magistrate, by the appointment of God himself; which makes the case of the *Jews* different from the case of all other nations under heaven: For no people ever had God for their civil and political governor and lawgiver, but the *Jews* alone.

Christianity does not claim, or assume, or pretend, to any such privilege or power; It does not alter this matter from what the light of nature hath determined; It introduces no new civil government, but leaves all these matters as it finds them; and since the *Judaic* state and government are abolished, there is no magistrate on earth hath power to inquire or command, to rule or punish, any further in matters of religion, than to see that the state suffer no damage, and the peace of mankind, and the government be secured.

But this hath been the unhappiness of christians almost in all ages since christianity began, they have been cited before magistrates, and punished even by their fellow-christians, as well as by the *Jews* and *beatbens*, for those notions and practices wherein the magistrate hath no power. This the *Jews* began you see very early, and the *roman* governors and *beatbens* have carried it on; and christian magistrates have carried this matter to the height, but it is in the antichristian church. They have done this by bloody persecutions, racks, torments, and murders of the best of their fellow-christians, where the very light of nature dictated to the best and wisest of *beatbens*, that they had no power or authority; and it is a plain confession of it, where *Festus* and *Gallio* were not willing to meddle; nor would *Pilate* himself, who crucified *Christ*, have done it, if the *Jews* had not almost constrained him; as sufficiently appears in the history of the death of *Christ*. Let us remember then, that the religion of *Christ* is not built on the wisdom or power of man, nor doth it need such a support. All that christianity wants, is to have the persons, and property, and peace of its professors, secured against the outrages of wicked men. Its own truth and excellency, and divine authority, will make its own way into the world by the assistances of the blessed Spirit, where human powers do but let it alone, and preserve it from the unrighteous violence of its neighbours.

Second observation. The resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead is the chief article, and the grand point, which private christians and ministers are solicitous to maintain, in the vindication of their religion.

This was the point that stood forth to view, and shewed itself with such evidence in the debate between *St. Paul* and his accusers, when *Festus* gave them a hearing, that

he makes a special remark on that, as though it were the most conspicuous and remarkable article of their contention. Peter and Paul were the two chief preachers among the christians, who are recorded in scripture, and you find them continually insisting on the resurrection of Christ. It was chiefly the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that was the matter of Paul's supposed heresy and crime, as Festus understood the matter. This was the great point of contest.

I. Reason. Because this article of the resurrection of Christ is a most effectual proof of his divine commission. This point, whether Jesus Christ, who was dead, is now alive, or no, is a question of such importance, that the christian religion stands or falls with it. It is certain Jesus Christ was once dead; this the Jews allow, this Festus takes for granted: Jesus was certainly crucified, a spear run into his side, his heart's blood was let out, he was buried, and Pilate the governor, and the priests, sealed up the sepulchre, to guard it against all possible fraud of stealing away the body.

Now if he be not risen again, his religion is not true, his pretences are vain; he he was not sent from heaven, nor is he a prophet or messenger of God. St. Paul grants, if Jesus be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins, and we who preach a risen Jesus are false witnesses. 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15. But on the other hand, if Jesus be alive, then his religion is divine. Let me just mention these two reasons for what I say.

(1.) It is an undeniable proof of his divine commission, because the prophets foretold this resurrection concerning the Messiah, though in more obscure language, and darker expressions. Now if he had not risen from the dead, then Jesus had not been the Messiah whom the prophets foretold. See Acts xxvi. 6, 8. for thus St. Paul pleads; *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: --- Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* 1 Cor. xv. 4. Paul owns that he was dead, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Acts xiii. 32, &c. *The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus from the dead.* Isa. liii. 9--12. *He poured out his soul unto death. He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days.* Psal. xvi. 10, 11. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption: Thou wilt shew me the path of life.*

But on the other hand, if he did rise from the dead, this is a thing which a mere man could not do by his own power, nor would the holy and all-wise, and true and faithful God, suffer any evil powers to do it for the vindication of an impostor; and therefore he must be the true Messiah.

(2.) It is also a most effectual proof of his commission from God, because Jesus Christ foretold this concerning himself, John ii. 18, 19, 21, 22. viz. that he should rise from the dead. Mat. xvi. 21. The miracles which Christ performed were very great, and sufficient to prove his divine authority: But since he gave forth such a prophecy concerning himself, if this prophecy had never been fulfilled, it would have weakened the force of his miracles, and given us reason to suspect what power they came from. This his rising from the dead was the great and crowning miracle that gave confirmation to all the rest.

Now considering this resurrection from the dead, to be foretold by the prophets, and by himself in his life-time, this was as great a testimony as could be given of God's approving him as a prophet sent from heaven: For it is the peculiar property and work of God to raise the dead. See Rom. iv. 17. This is God's eminent prerogative. Surely he must be no common favourite of heaven, on whom the great and almighty God



God bestows such a privilege. Acts iii. 13, 15. *Ye have killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised up from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.*

II. Reason. Because as his rising from the dead is the great proof of his mission, so the resurrection of *Christ* is the great foundation of the christian's hope; which will appear in several particulars, viz.

1. This was a testimony of his having answered the end for which he died, having made full atonement for sin, and his being released from the hands of punishing justice. Acts ii. 24. Rom. iv. 25. Rom. viii. 34. He took our sins on him, he did bear the punishment of our iniquities; 1 Pet. ii. 24. *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, &c.* And death is the wages of sin. Now when he had taken our sins on him, unless he had made full atonement and expiation for sin, he would have lain under the power of death still; but being raised from the dead, it appears, that divine justice hath received full satisfaction for sin; and the way is open for the justice of God to receive sinners into favour.

2. This is the beginning of his exaltation and his power, to bestow all the blessings of the gospel, sanctification, salvation, and eternal life; as well as all the gifts of the spirit which confirmed his religion. See Acts ii. 32, 33, 36. *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses: therefore being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear: Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus—both Lord and Christ.* Acts v. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right-hand, to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

His government, his intercession, his coming to judgment, all depend on this; and his power to bestow heaven on his disciples, as well as his power to punish the wilful and obstinate and impenitent, who renounced or rejected his name, his gospel, and his salvation.

3. This *Jesus Christ*, risen from the dead, is the prime foundation of our most glorious expectations, it is the pattern and pledge of our final hope and blessedness: *because I live, ye shall live also*, saith our blessed Lord. John xiv. 19. xii. 26. *Where I am there shall also my servant be.* 1 Cor. xv. 20, 49. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: As we have born the image of the earthy, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly.* 2 Cor. iv. 14. *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.* See more. John xiv. 2, 3. *I go to prepare a place for you,—that where I am, there ye may be also.* Eph. ii. 5, 6. *Even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ,—and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

Occasional reflection. If you are furnished with convincing arguments that *Jesus Christ* is risen from the dead, then you may be assured your religion is true; though there may be twenty little cavils that you cannot easily answer: You may be assured also, that all the blessings of this religion are provided and ready for his faithful followers.

Is it certain that *Jesus* is risen from the dead? Then my sins are fully atoned for and forgiven, if I trust in him, and give myself up to him. Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us; i. e. as appears from the foregoing verses, for all those who believe or trust in Christ.*

Then

Then he hath all power to sanctify and save me, if I commit myself into his hands. Eph. i. 17, 18, 19. and ii. 1, 5, 8. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins: We are quickened together with Christ, and saved by his grace: i. e. We who have trusted in Christ. Eph. i. 12.*

Then I shall be raised from the dead, as sure as if it were done already; for he is the pledge and pattern of the resurrection of all his followers. Rom. viii. 11. *If the spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you.*

O happy souls, who have given up themselves sincerely to this all-sufficient saviour, and can apply these consolations to themselves, which are written in 1 Cor. xv. in many glorious and comfortable expressions.

Third observation. Paul would not have affirmed Jesus Christ, who was dead, to be alive again, without very good proof of it.

Here these two things are to be considered, or enquired :

1. Why Paul would not have affirmed it without just grounds.

2. What particular reasons Paul had to believe it; or what good proof he had of it.

Enquiry the first. Why Paul would not have affirmed it without just grounds : These are some of the considerations to make this evident ; viz.

1. He was a man of good natural parts, of great sagacity as well as good learning, and he could not so easily have been imposed upon in a thing of that importance, which was done in his own country, and the chief city of it, in his own day and time, and when he had abundant opportunities to have searched into the truth or falsehood thereof, and his whole nation was set upon the search and severest scrutiny into it.

Now that he was a man of parts and knowledge, the good sense and reasoning which appears in his writings, sufficiently testify this character.

He was a young man when he was converted, and he was brought up in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel: He must have great opportunities of enquiring concerning the history of the life, doctrine, and death of Christ, and of the report of his resurrection, among his own countrymen.

2. He seems to be a very sincere and faithful honest man: This his whole conduct shews, if we consider: He appears to have an honest zeal for his religion whilst he was a Pharisee, as well as afterward; diligently and openly pursuing what he professed: No flaw was found in his morals: No charge of hypocrisy. Acts xxiii. 1. *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* Nor are his morals impeached by his worst adversaries.

3. He was once a fierce and violent enemy to Jesus Christ, and his name, and his gospel, and his followers. Gal. i. 13. *I persecuted the church of God and wasted it.* Acts xxvi. 11. *And being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* 1 Tim. i. 13. *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.* This was sufficiently witnessed by his own countrymen the Jews.

It hath been sometimes said by unbelievers, that testimonies of the resurrection of Christ came only from his friends, and that you have none of the *beatbens*, or professed Jews, bear witness to it. Here is a professed Jew, and a violent enemy to christianity, who bears strong and constant witness to it. But it could never be supposed that he should continue an enemy and an unbeliever of christianity, after he believed that Christ was risen from the dead, and thereby so evidently proved that he was the true Messiah.

4. He

4 He spent his whole life afterwards with much zeal and fatigue, in publishing this truth, that *Jesus Christ* was risen from the dead, and the doctrines which depend on it. He preached this gospel to a multitude of towns and cities among the *heathens*; who were utter unbelievers, besides his vindicating this doctrine always among the unbelieving *Jews*.

5. He exposed himself to perpetual dangers and difficulties, and to many persecutions, by affirming it, and even to death itself; and that without any hope of riches, honours, or pleasures, in this world. Acts xx. 23, 24. *The holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Now put all these things together, and can it be supposed that any man, a wife, an ingenious, and learned man, faithful and sincere, an enemy to christianity, and of the name of *Christ*, should be so effectually convinced of the truth of the doctrine of *Christ*, and of the facts which support it, as to spend his life in preaching this gospel, and to die for it, if he had not abundant ground to believe it. And if *Paul* believed it with such evidence, we may venture to believe it too.

D I S-

## DISCOURSE II.

The Divine Commission of St. *Paul* examined and established,

## The Second Part of this SERMON.

ACTS xxv. 18, 19.

*Of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*

**S**Econdly : The next thing to be enquired is, what special and particular reasons *Paul* had to believe the resurrection of *Christ*, and thus constantly to preach it.

Here I shall not run through all the various proofs of the resurrection of *Christ*, which are often summed up together on this occasion : but only mention those which convinced St. *Paul*, and gave him this full assurance, that *Jesus* was risen from the dead.

1. He saw *Jesus Christ* after his resurrection, and spake with him more than once. Acts ix. 4, 5. *And a voice said unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? And he said, who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. And xxii. 17. While I prayed in the temple I saw him, saying unto me, make haste, &c. 1 Cor. xv. 4—8. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve ; after that, of above five hundred brethren at once ; after that, he was seen of James ; then of all the apostles ; and, last of all, he was seen of me also.* He appeals to this sight of *Christ*, for the truth of the resurrection of *Christ*.

It belongs to the character of an apostle, that he must be one who had seen the Lord ; therefore he partly proves his apostleship that way. 1 Cor. ix. 1. *Am not I an apostle ? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ?*

The first time he saw *Christ*, after his resurrection, was on the road to *Damascus*, when there were several with him accompanying him on the road, who were also surprized with the descending glory, though they were not permitted to hear the words. He saw him again, Acts xxii. 17, 18, 21. when *Christ* sent him to preach to the *Gentiles*.

2. He felt a wonderful change in himself, both in his body and soul, after he had the first vision of *Christ* : He was struck blind, and after three days had his sight restored, by the laying on of the hands of *Ananias*, a christian, according to the vision which was given him. Acts ix. 8, 18. He had a new scene of things set before his understanding, even the whole scheme of christianity. Some suppose that, in the three days of his blindness, he was taught the gospel. And accordingly it is said, Acts ix. 20, 22. *That he straightway preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the son of God. Gal. i. 1. Paul, an apostle, not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ.* He had a new heart given him, and was made a new man. *I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. God called me by his Grace, and revealed*

revealed his son in me, Gal. i. 15, 16. And of an enemy he became a friend, and preacher of the gospel. Gal. i. 11—16, 23.

3. He found strange powers communicated to him, and he could speak many unknown languages, and gave this gift of tongues to other men; he could heal the sick with a touch of his hand, or a word of his mouth: he could make the lame to walk, as at *Lystra*; *Acts* xiv. 8, 10. and strike men blind with a reproof, so *Elymas*, *Acts* xiii. 11, 12. and could raise the dead; so *Eutychus*, *Acts* xx. 10, 12. and besides all this, he had a power of communicating these miraculous and healing gifts to christians; which eminently appears among the *Corinthians*; to which he appeals in his disputes with them. *1 Cor.* xiv. 18.

Now was it possible for a man who felt such amazing changes wrought in him, and such amazing powers communicated to him by *Jesus Christ*, to doubt whether *Christ* was risen from the dead, whether *Jesus* were alive or no? Or would God have communicated such powers to a man, who went about to preach the resurrection of *Christ*, if *Christ* had never been raised from the grave? Would God have afforded such favours to a man who preached the christian religion, if it had not been true and approved of God?

Nor could St. *Paul* be deceived in his frequently exercising these powers, nor could he deceive others by pretending to them, nor could he appeal to men who enjoyed them, if he had not received them and bestowed them. He appeals, in his public epistles to the *Corinthians* and *Romans*, two large assemblies in two noted cities. *Rom.* xv. 18. *2 Cor.* xii. 11. These letters were to be read by the churches, and they published his vindication. And let it be observed too, that several among the *Corinthians* were his professed adversaries, and had set themselves up against him, and endeavoured to deny his apostleship. *1 Cor.* ix. 1, 2. *If I be not an apostle to others I am unto you; for ye are the seal, or proof, of my apostleship,* by receiving divine gifts from me.

4. Upon closer examination of the bible, St. *Paul* found, that *Christ's* rising from the dead was agreeable to the revelations that God had made to mankind in former ages, agreeable to the prophecies of the prophets his predecessors, and particularly agreeable to the explications of those scriptures by his forefathers, and the promises contained in his own native religion, and in the books which teach it; *Acts* xiii. 30—37. and eminently in that great type and figure of him, *Jonah* the prophet, who lived again after he had lain three days and nights in the belly of the whale, in the heart of the sea. *Mat.* xii. 39, 46. Which was fulfilled in the resurrection of *Christ*.

5. By conferring with others of his own nation, and his own religion, who were well acquainted with *Jesus Christ* in his life-time, he found the same truth confirmed by them; for they had seen *Jesus Christ*, and eat and drank with him after he rose from the dead: So *Peter* and *James*, as *Gal.* i. 18, 19. And they confirmed the same doctrine by their testimony to him, and by gifts and miracles, as well as by their own personal knowledge.

6. He saw the blessed and amazing effects of the resurrection of *Christ* among the *Gentiles*, who were once grossly ignorant idolaters, devoted to gross superstitions, slaves to every lust and given up to all abominations; as they are described *Rom.* i. 18, &c. *Gal.* iv. 8. *Eph.* iv. 17. *1 Cor.* vi. 11. But they were changed by this gospel, and made new creatures.

Before I proceed any further, I would make two or three Remarks.

Remark 1. Which of all the infidels of the *Jewish* or *heathen* nations, which of all the unbelievers and apostates in a christian land, ever could pretend to bring such powerful and convincing arguments against the resurrection of *Christ*, as St. *Paul* had for it? Who hath ever attempted or presumed to prove that *Jesus Christ* continues still among the dead, by such effectual arguments as *Paul* had to prove that he is alive? St. *Paul's*

own reason exercising itself on these arguments, could not resist the power of them, but he became a captive to the force of this reasoning, and a rational believer, and a zealous preacher of a risen *Jesus*.

Rem. 2. How necessary it is for christians, whose life and hopes depend on the new testament, to be well satisfied that St. *Paul* was in the right, and that St. *Paul's* doctrine is true. For it is evident, that a great part of our religion, at least in the clearness, and fulness, and glory of it, is derived from his writings. His writings make up near half the new testament.

Many of the articles of our religion would be less plain, and more doubtful, if we did not borrow light from *Paul's* writings. Many a comfortable expression which our souls rest upon would be lost and useless to us, if we are not satisfied of the truth of what St. *Paul* tells us, as one commissioned by our risen saviour. Many a sweet and powerful promise, on which christians have lived and died, would lose its sweetness and its force, if we doubt of the truth and authority of the epistles of St. *Paul*.

What would some of you have done without several chapters, and many verses in them? as *Rom.* iv. and v. 8, 12, 14. I mean particularly with regard to the doctrine of original sin, derived from *Adam*, and the salvation by Christ, his priesthood, his royalty, and the use and benefit of afflictions, *Heb.* xi. xii. &c. Our resurrection from the dead, and our eternal happiness, *1 Cor.* xv. and *1 Thess.* iv. and many others?

And of how great advantage is it to us, that St. *Paul* has foretold, in plain language, the rise and characters of *Antichrist*, *2 Thess.* ii. 3—12. and the destruction of that state, to forewarn us, and to give us comfortable hopes and expectations.

It is matter therefore of great and heavenly importance, for us Christians to be well established in the belief of St. *Paul's* conversion, his faith, and his apostleship, and for this end we shall do well to remember these proofs and arguments which convinced him that *Jesus* was risen from the dead. Other holy writers have told us more of the life, actions, death, and resurrection of *Christ*, in the particular circumstances thereof; but St. *Paul* has told us more of the blessed consequences of these transactions.

And let it be always kept in mind by us, that he was in a special manner the apostle to the *Gentile* nations, of which *Great-Britain* is a large province, and a remarkable part; so that, in his writings he speaks directly to us, and we are bound to attend to him.

Rem. 3. It is very reasonable to conclude, we may safely believe what St. *Paul* believed and taught about this subject of the resurrection of *Christ*. For if we have but reason to believe that this was *Paul's* character, faith, and practice, and these are the reasons of his belief, what should discourage or stagger us?

Let us sum up the force of this argument and put it together.

Here is a wise, learned, sincere, honest man, bred up a *Pharisee*, in a strong opposition to *Christ*, and the doctrine of his resurrection, zealous for another religion, even the religion of his fathers and his country, who yet saw reason to renounce all his ancient prejudices, and submit to receive this new and strange doctrine, who believed and professed this gospel, which he once grievously persecuted, and afterwards preached it, with much fatigue, danger and suffering, supported it with courage, and constant divine zeal and piety, and the practise of every virtue; through his whole life, gloried in his perpetual sufferings for it, lived upon the comforts derived from it, died in defence of it, and sealed it with his blood, and left it as a chief treasure to those whom he loved best in this world, even to the churches of *Christ*.

Now we have not this account of *Paul* from mere hearsay and tradition, but we have his own testimony to all this in his writings, which have been delivered down to

us

us through many ages: and no man of sense can reasonably doubt whether they are his writings or no, any more than we can doubt the writings of *Julius Caesar*, or *Senecca*, *Livy* or *Virgil*. I add this further: Concerning the vigor and spirit of his writings, and the force of argument contained in them, we have the testimony of some of his greatest adversaries, as he himself represents the case. His letters say they, are weighty and powerful; and he was not ashamed to appeal to themselves, and threaten them, that he would make it appear that his practice towards them should have as much force and power as his letters had, when he came the second time to visit them, *2 Cor.* x. 10, 11. And we have the testimony of two others, particularly *Luke* the physician, in his history of the acts of the apostles, who was a fellow traveller with him; and *Peter*, who was another of his countrymen, in his epistles, bears witness to him and to his writings; besides the testimony of all the christian writers from the beginning of christianity, *2 Pet.* iii. 15, 16. Which writings of *St. Paul* are dignified by *St. Peter* himself, with the name of the scriptures, *ver.* 16. they being both men inspired by God, and of chief repute among the apostles.

I proceed now to enquire, what were these blessed effects on men in the *beastly* world, whereby *Paul's* doctrine of the resurrection of *Christ* was further confirmed and established.

And here I might talk largely of the idolaters, that were turned from their superstitions to the worship and love of the true God, of their abandoning their former vices, and the superstitious and sinful customs of their nations, and the reformation of their lives and manners, to goodness and holiness, &c. but I shall confine myself only to those effects which bear a more apparent relation to the resurrection of *Christ*; and such are these that follow: (*viz.*)

1. How many dead sinners were made alive to God, and virtue, piety and universal holiness, by preaching this doctrine of the death and resurrection of *Jesus Christ*? What encouragement for hope of pardon for the worst of sinners, in this blessed doctrine of a dying and a rising saviour? What an assurance of full atonement made to the justice of God, in that *Jesus*, who, in death, took our sins upon him, is now discharged from the dead, and his dismissal from the grave is a full token and proof of it. *He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification.* *Rom.* iv. 25.

If *Christ* be yet under the pain of death, as the apostle argues, *1 Cor.* xv. 17. and be not risen, *then our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins*: But if he be risen, then our faith and hope are confirmed, and our sins are atoned for, and our souls are pardoned, if we trust in him.

O how many guilty consciences are made easy, and that upon solid grounds, by the resurrection of *Jesus* from the dead? He is a God of peace, and reconciled to sinners, who brought *Jesus Christ* from the dead, by virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant. *Heb.* xiii. 20. *Rom.* viii. 34.

Several of the dead saints arose after his resurrection, and that by the virtue of it. *Matt.* xxvii. 53. as an emblem of the many dead souls that should rise from a death in sins and trespasses by the same influence. *Eph.* ii. 5. 6.

A risen saviour hath, according to the apostle's preaching, given them *repentance and remission of sins.* *Luke* xxiv. 46, 47. They are raised from a death in sins, by virtue of the resurrection of *Christ*.

2. How many earthly, carnal and sensual souls, have been made heavenly-minded, by faith in a risen saviour? Many there are, who have felt the power of the word. *Col.* iii. 1. *If ye are risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God.*

A risen *Jesus* calls the soul upward, and heaven-ward.

What have we here on earth worth living for, since *Jesus* is risen from the dead, hath left the world, and gone to heaven? *Jesus*, our hope, our life, our eternal joy. Col. i. 27.

This gospel of a risen saviour hath done more to refine the heart from earth, and flesh, and sensuality, and the love of this world, and turn it to God, and things heavenly, than all the reasonings of philosophers through all ages, and in all nations. Compare the cities where they disputed, with the churches which *Paul* planted, and then judge.

3. How many captives of *Satan* have been released by the power of *Jesus*, since his release from the grave? The devil had no power to hold *Christ* in the fetters of death, *Acts* xii. 37, 38, and hath been forced to release thousands of his slaves by the authority of a risen *Jesus*. Col. ii. 15. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* Psalm lxxviii. 18. *Thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* And Eph. iv. 8, 9, 13, 15. *He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men,* whereby they were made prophets, teachers, ministers, &c.

4. How many fearful and feeble creatures have grown bold and victorious in sufferings, and have conquered death itself, by faith in a dying and rising saviour? *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. xv. 57. How many believers have laid down their bodies in the dust with sweet satisfaction and joy, through faith in the resurrection of *Christ*, and have triumphed over the grave? *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

*St. Paul* had seen abundance of this work performed, through the nations where he planted the christian churches, and these wonders of salvation wrought among the *Gentiles*, by his preaching of *Jesus*, and his resurrection; and every one of these wonders confirmed his belief, that *Jesus*, who was dead, is now, alive.

#### A general REMARK on this head.

It greatly confirms our holy religion, when we hear of these blessed effects of the resurrection of *Christ* in other persons; but our own personal hope must be established by feeling these effects in ourselves.

Enquire into your own state under these four particulars last-mentioned. Search into your own souls, what have every one of you felt of these blessed and divine effects; and let not this discourse only confirm your faith, but let it awaken and raise your hearts to a share of holy and perpetual joy.

#### SOME GENERAL MEDITATIONS, drawn from the text and discourse.

1. However it hath been, and however it is, a shameful matter of doubt and enquiry among infidels in a christian land, in our world, whether *Jesus*, who was put to death, be alive or no, yet it is no matter of doubt or enquiry in the world above, or the world beneath, in heaven or in hell. There his dominion and power are well known: Nor will it be any matter of doubt hereafter in our world, when he that was dead shall come in his father's name, vested with power, and enthroned in glory, to judge the unbelieving nations, and all the sons of infidelity. He was once unknown in this world, living and dying, but will not be so for ever, 1 *John* iii. 1. The great enquiry between *Paul* and his adversaries was about this strange person; it was of one *Jesus*, who is spoken of as an unknown man. And he was so for a time, but it will not be so for ever. The world once knew him not *John* i. 10. but he shall be most remarkably and illustriously manifested one day.

2. How



2. How little mention soever was made of the death and resurrection of *Christ*, and especially of the doctrines derived thence, in his own preaching in public while he lived; yet these are evidently and continually insisted on in the preaching of his apostles, as things of the greatest moment in christianity. Let not these things therefore be strange or unheard of in our ministrations of this gospel, since it is built upon them.

It was not proper that *Christ* should too freely publish these things to the world, when they had not been actually transacted among men; nor was it so fit that he should speak so particularly of the consequences and effects of them, when they were not actual facts; yet he gave sufficient notice to the world, and much more to his disciples by way of prophecy, that they might expect them. And as he did not talk of these events freely and publicly, so he could not so properly talk of the consequent blessings of them. This was left to be done by his apostles, after those events were come to pass. *I have yet many things to say unto you, (says our blessed Lord) but ye cannot bear them now.* John xvi. 12.

3. Let us remember, that whatsoever advantages or blessings we can derive from the death of *Christ*, they all depend on his resurrection. His being dead will be of no avail to our souls, either for pardon, or sanctification, or future happiness, unless he be risen again. 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17. *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain—ye are yet in your sins.* Rom. iv. 25. *Jesus who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* When we meditate on a dying saviour in any of his ordinances, let us remember, the lord is risen; he hath fulfilled that dreadful atonement for sin in his death; he is accepted of his father; and he has thereby manifested, that there is a way opened for the pardon of sin, and our salvation. He hath conquered death and the devil; he hath laid a foundation for our rising from the grave; he will fulfil in heaven what he hath begun on earth; his throne shall consummate the work of his cross. *If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son: much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Rom. v. 10.

4. If *Jesus* being dead, and alive again, is so momentous a point, so important an article in our religion, then we may remark, that some of the chief evidences of the truth of our religion, are nearly connected with some of the chief glories, benefits, and excellencies of it; for they are all built on this same foundation, even the resurrection of our blessed Lord. These are not merely strange pieces of history, but such doctrines are built on them, which are the life of our souls.

The resurrection of *Christ* confirms our religion: *First*, As it gives sufficient proof that God, whose prerogative it is to raise from the dead, approves what *Jesus* taught: And *Secondly*, As *Jesus Christ* himself foretold his own resurrection; as I said before.

And it lays a foundation for some of the chief doctrines, blessings, and duties of our religion, which *St. Paul* preaches without end; *viz.* our trust in this risen saviour our faith in his intercession in heaven, and coming to God by him: our dependance on his government; our resignation of ourselves to him; our expectations of the holy Spirit, and his graces, from him; our courage in death; and our joyful hope of a resurrection and eternal life.

5. What continual matter for holy meditation should these two things furnish us with, (*viz.*) the death and resurrection of *Christ*, especially in all our addresses to God? *Heb. x.* 19. and iv. 14. How delightful and how encouraging are these ideas, in all our sacred and religious transactions with God, in life and in death. We have boldness to enter into the most holy place by the blood of *Jesus*, and have such an high priest over the house

house of God to introduce us. How divinely agreeable in all our behaviour, in our conversation in this world. *Gal. vi. 14.* By the death of *Christ* we are dead to this world, by the death of *Christ* crucified to it, and the world crucified to us. *Col. iii. 1.* We should live as those who are above, whose hearts are on high, where *Christ* is at the right-hand of God.

Under our carnality and earthly-mindedness, let us govern ourselves by these meditations. Let us remember we are dead to sin.

Under all our temptations to sin, *Rom. vi. 2.* let us be upon our guard, remembering our being united to *Christ*, in his death and his life.

If at any time we fall under doubts of the truth of our religion, let us look up to a risen *Jesus*. What better supports can we have under all our afflictions, sorrows, fears, weaknesses? *Rev. i. 18.* He, who was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore. Amen. Under the apprehensions of death; *1 Cor. xv. 57.* Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory over death and the grave by a living *Christ*. O what a shame is it for professors of a dying and a risen saviour to be dead-hearted in religion, which is our sublimest hope; to be carnally minded, or to be afraid of death?

6. If *Jesus* being dead, and being alive again is so great and important an article of our religion, and as it were the foundation on which it stands, then how wisely hath he ordered it in his gospel, that we should have a constant memorial appointed us both of his death, and his resurrection? Of his death in the Lord's supper; *1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.* and of his resurrection in the Lord's day. *Rev. i. 10.* it is the rising of *Christ* that gives a blessed name to this day, *Acts xx. 7.* *John xx. 19, 20.* *1 Cor. xvi. 2.* On the first day of the week *Christ* appears in his holy ordinances, and saith, peace be unto you, as he did to the apostles.

The primitive christians celebrated both these institutions on every first day of every week; that is, the christian sabbath, and the Lord's supper.

We all agree to celebrate one of these, (*viz.*) his resurrection, every week on the first day; but how few are there that celebrate the memorial of his death in a constant attendance at the Lord's supper, in comparison of the multitudes who call themselves christians?

O let us take pleasure in these sacred memorials, and practise them both with steadiness and constancy, in remembrance of *Jesus*, who was dead, and is alive.

Let us remember at the Lord's supper a dying saviour, and call to mind the great designs of his death, as many as we can; (*viz.*) to witness the truth of his gospel; to fulfil ancient predictions of his death and his resurrection; to teach us to die as an example; but, above all, to make atonement for our sins, and lay a foundation for pardoning grace, and our hope of acceptance with God.

Let us remember every Lord's day to raise our thoughts to the heavenly world; where *Jesus* is at the father's right hand. *Col. iii. 1, 2.*

7. Let us reflect on this delightful circumstance of our own death, and the new life of *Christ*, that, in both these, he was our pattern and forerunner. *2 Tim. ii. 8, 10—13.* If we die with him we shall also live with him. *Heb. vi. 20.*

Must we lie down in death? *Jesus*, the son of God, went through the dark valley before us, and lay down in the grave, and sanctified it to us for a sleeping place. *1 Thess. iv. 13—18.* His death was attended with much more terror from God and man than ours is or can be. His death hath taken away the sting from ours.

Did *Jesus* rise again from the dead? So shall we, if we are his sincere followers. He is our head, the first-born from the dead; *Col. i. 15.* and our example. *Rom.*

viii. 11. The same spirit shall quicken us, whatsoever nation we lived in, *Rome*, or *Jerusalem*, *Asia*, or *Corinth*, or *Great-Britain*, or in what age soever! 1 *Cor.* xv. 20, 23, 49. 2 *Cor.* iv. 14- And it will be a divine joy to meet holy *Paul*, our great apostle and our teacher, among the holy faints, who has gone through so many deaths and dangers, to acquaint us with this gospel.

Was it so strange a thing to tell us, that one dead man, even *Jesus*, should be alive again after his death? How strange and glorious a sight will it be, when all the dead in *Christ*, thousands and ten thousands, shall be made alive, with their Lord *Jesus* at the head of them. Rejoice for ever in the Lord, and comfort yourselves with this divine consolation. *Amen.*

D I S-

## DISCOURSE III.

## The difference between the LAW and the GOSPEL:

In several SERMONS preached at *Bury-street*, December 1731.

GAL. iii. 21, 22.

*Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law: But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

I Have long had a design to explain this text to you, because it seems to be a key, whereby we are let into the sense and meaning of this apostle, in his long and laboured arguments about the Law and Gospel, in his epistles to the *Romans* and the *Galatians*, and in the constant distinction that he there observes between them.

These *Galatians*, who were converted to the faith of *Christ*, had been closely beset by some zealous judaizing christians, who would fain have had them circumcised, and engaged to keep the *Jewish* law. *chap. vi. 12, 13.* The apostle, who well understood the liberty of the gospel, would not suffer them to be thus imposed upon; and therefore he argues, he allures, he threatens, he denounces, he uses all the proper methods of an apostle, and a preacher of christianity, to establish them in the liberty wherewith *Christ* had made them free, and to guard them against yielding a tittle of compliance with the *Jewish* ceremonies and bondage.

He shews them, in this chapter, that the *promise* was given to *Abraham*, the great believer, with all the blessings of salvation contained in it, and to all those who imitate his faith, by trusting in the gospel of *Christ*; for they are the seed of *Abraham*. *ver. 8, 9.* And the law curses and condemns sinners; *Gal. iii. 10.* but it does not, it cannot save them. *ver. 11.* And that the law which came in four hundred years after the promise to *Abraham*, could not disannul the promise, or make it of none effect. The question arises then in the 19th verse; to what end then serveth the law? The answer is, to shew them their sins, and to keep alive a sense of sin among them, till *Christ* should come, who was to remove sin: Then comes in the objection of my text, *is not the law then against the promises?* Is not the promise to *Abraham* contradicted by the law given to the *Jews*? No; by no means; for they were designed for two different purposes. The law was given for special and peculiar reasons in this life, to the *Jews*: The promise was given to *Abraham*, and, through him, to all *Gentile*, as well as *Jewish* believers for eternal life. Whereas, *if there had been a law given which could have given life, i. e. eternal life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Let us first examine the meaning of the words and phrases in my text.

Quest. 1.

*Quest.* 1. What is meant by law in general, and the law here spoken of in particular?

*Ans.* A law is the will of a superior, signified to us, or laid within the reach of our knowledge; which, if we obey, we are pronounced righteous, and obtain a right to any blessings promised to the obedient; but if we disobey we are guilty, and are laid under a sentence of condemnation. I say, the will of a superior, signified to us, or laid within our reach, because the *Gentiles*, having not the revealed law of God, are a law to themselves; because the great and general rules of it, are so far written in their hearts and consciences, as that they might be found out by reason and diligence, and honest enquiry; and in this sense they are set within our reach.

A law of God requires that the obedience of the creature be perfect, without defect, persevering to the end of the time which God hath appointed; and it must be also personal, or performed by himself, not by a surety or substitute. A law of God is such a constitution of God, as pronounces righteous those who fully comply with all its requirements; but it accepts of no less than it requires, nor does it own any thing for righteousness which is not perfect. *Rom. ii. 7. Who by patient continuance in well doing (Greek, continuance in a good work, or in working good) seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life. Gal. iii. 10. The man that doth them shall live in them. Jam. ii. 10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

The *jewish* law given at *Sinai* is the particular law here meant in the first part of the verse: The law which was given four hundred years after the promise; even the whole law of *Moses*, given to the *jewish* nation.

*Quest.* 2. What is this promise?

*Ans.* The promise to *Abraham*, that all the nations should be blessed in him: that he and his seed should be heirs of an inheritance, and that God should be their God. It is, in short, the gospel of salvation contained in the promise given to *Abraham*. See *Gal. iii. 8. The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.* And it is called the promise, to distinguish it from the law of *Sinai*, and indeed from all proper laws: for as I shall shew, the gospel does not save us in the way of a law; and therefore is not a proper law.

*Quest.* 3. What is meant by the law's giving life?

*Ans.* The word is *ζωοποιεῖν*, which more naturally signifies quickening, or bringing a dead thing into life, by putting spirit or life into it, or by making it active in a vital manner: And so it might seem to imply giving new spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. But the whole context rather constrains us to construe it, the giving a title to eternal life and happiness to men in a judicial or legal manner. This no law of God can do, as the apostle here asserts.

*Quest.* 4. What is meant by righteousness?

*Ans.* A justifying righteousness, or a sentence of justification, a rectitude in the court of God, a freedom from punishment, and a right to life, which is the natural and proper effect of perfect obedience to any law of God given to men. But this blessing may be given also another way, *viz.* by the free grace of God, without any such obedience or righteousness of our own working.

*Quest.* 5. What are we to understand by the scripture concluding all under sin?

*Ans.* It signifies that the scripture, or the word of God, declares that all mankind are sinners, *there is none righteous, no, not one: Rom. iii. 10.* And, as sinners, they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law of God, whatsoever law they are under, whether

the law of nature, or any laws of revelation: Forasmuch as no man hath ever perfectly fulfilled any law that God had given him, and therefore all are come short of justification and life, all are fallen short of the glory of God, promised to obedience. See this at large, both declared, pronounced, and argued, *Rom. iii. 9—20. By the law shall no flesh living be justified, &c.*

*Quest. 6.* What is that promise given by the faith of *Christ* to them that believe?

*Ans.* The promise of salvation, and the inheritance of heaven, typified by the land of *Canaan*, given originally and eminently to *Abraham*, and his seed, and continued to those who are his spiritual seed, *viz.* who believe or trust in *Christ*, who is the *Messiah* promised to *Abraham*: For by faith in *Christ* we are made the children of *Abraham*. *Gal. iii. 29. i. e.* as we are imitators of his faith, so we are invested in his benefits; *i. e.* those who imitate *Abraham* by trusting in the mercy of God through the *Messiah*, now he is come in the flesh, as *Abraham* trusted in him before he came, are accounted in the sight of God, the children or posterity of *Abraham*, and are partakers of those blessings of the inheritance of eternal life, which was promised to *Abraham*, under types and figures of the land of *Canaan*: *Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9, 29.* And as *Abraham* was made a child of God by trusting in the ancient promise, so we are made the children of God by faith, or trusting in *Jesus Christ*, the *Messiah*, *Gal. iii. 26.*

Having explained the words so particularly, I come to lay down these observations.

**I. Observ.** There is a constant and happy harmony between the several revelations of God to men. The promise to *Abraham*, or the gospel proposed and preached to him, is not contrary to the law given by *Moses* to the *Jews*.

The law signifies the precepts of God revealed or discovered to men, more particularly to the *Jews*.

The gospel is the promise of the special blessings of God revealed or discovered to men, particularly to *Abraham* of old, and to us in a plainer manner, in these latter days.

Here I shall shew, in the first place, that the law and gospel, *i. e.* the precept and the promise, cannot contradict one another; for they both run through all the different dispensations that ever God gave to the children of men since the fall.

Secondly, The law and gospel do not contradict one another, for they are two different discoveries of the mind and will of God, made to men for very different purposes.

The law, since the fall of *Adam*, was given for the discovery or conviction of sin, and to shew men not only their duty, but also, how exceeding sinful their natures are, and how unable they are to fulfil their duties perfectly; and therefore to lay them under a sense of guilt and condemnation. The promise, or gospel, was given for the relief of guilty man, whom the law had condemned, and to provide a righteousness, or justification, and life, for them, who, according to the law, had a sentence of death passed upon them. Therefore the law is called the ministration of condemnation and death, and the gospel the ministration of the spirit and righteousness, or of justification and eternal life, *2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9.*

I confess, if the law had been given for the same end as the gospel, if the law had been given for man ruined and sinful, to obtain life and salvation by it as well as the gospel, then they might have been supposed to contradict one another, and the objection in my text had stood firm, and we could not have easily and fairly answered it; but since they are given for different purposes, they are but different revelations of God, which are made happily subordinate one to another, and their different ends  
and

and designs are both attained. The law convinces and condemns sinners, and the gospel relieves and pardons them, justifies and saves them. See *Rom. iii. 20—22, &c. Gal. iii. 10—14.*

Object. 1. But doth not St. Paul himself say, that the law was ordained for life? *Rom. vii. 10.*

Ans. 1. Perhaps St. Paul might mean only to shew his former opinion, that he thought it was ordained to give life, *Rom. vii. 10, 11, 13.* But supposing this to be the real design of the words, it signifies no more than that the law was designed or ordained to give life and happiness to every one that perfectly fulfilled it. *Rom. ii. 7. and x. 5.* But in *Gal. iii. 10. cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The law could have given life indeed to Adam, if he had continued to obey it; and the law could give life still, if men were perfectly innocent, and perfectly obedient; for the law is not weak in itself, or unable to give life, but only through the infirmity of our flesh, to fulfil the law ever since the fall of Adam, by whom sin entered into our natures, and death entered into the world by sin. *Rom. viii. 3, 4. What the law could not do, in that it was weak (not in itself, but) through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and (as a sacrifice) for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

Ans. 2. The Jewish law was brought in to shew how transgressions abounded. *Rom. v. 20. Gal. iii. 19. The law entered that sin might abound, or might appear to abound; for by the law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20.*

Object. 2. Were none of the Jews saved, to whom the law of Sinai was given, and who were under this law? Were not all of them condemned by it?

Ans. Yes, they were all condemned by this law in the sight of God, considered as the Lord of souls or consciences; for they had all broke it in several instances: Nor could the services there required purify their consciences, *Heb. ix. 9.* But several of them were saved by the promise to Abraham, *i. e.* by the gospel, which was contained in the five books of Moses, and was often intermingled with the declarations of the law: the promise to Abraham, or the gospel, was not annulled but continued, established and ratified by the revelations of Moses. *Gal. iii. 17. The law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul it, that it should make the promise of none effect.* And *Rom. iii. 21. The righteousness of faith, or justification of the gospel, as witnessed by the law and the prophets.* So Abraham was saved; so David, by the grace of God in the covenant of promise. *Rom. iv. 3, 6. But not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh (no man living was or could) be justified. Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16.*

Let us now recollect the explication of the words law, giving life, and righteousness, in short, that we may more easily apply the words in reading what follows, and so proceed to the next Observation.

Observ. II. God would have appointed the justification of fallen man to have been by some law of his giving, if any law could have given such a poor sinful perishing creature justification, or a title to eternal life.

And the reasons for it may be these.

1. Because God is not wont to change his methods of government, where he sees them effectual to attain the ends of that government. He is an unchangeable God, and doth not need second thoughts to mend his own first contrivances, or to change his conduct towards man, unless the case of his creatures and the nature of things require it. The law which was given at first to man in Paradise, and in innocency, had

continued the same instrument of the government of God, if the case of fallen man had not required an alteration. But God was not willing all mankind, who were condemned by the law, should be utterly ruined, and perish in their folly; and therefore he changed his dispensation. The law could not give life, because it required more than fallen man could perform; and therefore, through the weakness of man's fallen and corrupted nature, the law became incapable of justifying man; *i. e.* it was weak to justify man by reason of the flesh, and to pronounce a sentence of righteousness or justification on him, because he was a feeble, guilty, disobedient creature. He had sinned already, and his passions and fleshly appetites were too strong for his reason, and are rising up continually against the commands of the law, and therefore God brought in the gospel, and gave a promise to our first parents as soon as they fell, and made his gospel as well as his law, the instrument of governing his fallen creature man. *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared: Psal. cxxx. 4. i. e.* that there may be piety and religion maintained in the world.

2. If the law could have given life to fallen man, righteousness or justification should have been by the law, that God might magnify this original law, and make it honourable. This would have shewn it was not only a law fit to govern innocent man, but to recover fallen man too. The law hath a great glory in it, in that it is the transcript of the holy name of God; it is *holy, just, and good, Rom. vii. 12.* and it would have been a great honour put on the law, if it could have recovered a sinful ruined creation.

If fallen man could have performed this law, and answered the demands of it, here had been a glorious display of all the wisdom and majesty, goodness and holiness, which first made the law of God, exemplified in the recovery of a poor, fallen, perishing creature, by this law of his. But this could not be. The law was weak, and insufficient for this purpose, through the flesh; *i. e.* through the weakness of fallen man.

3. If the law could have given life, righteousness should have been appointed and obtained for fallen man by it; because God would never have been at the expence of a gospel, if there had been no need of it, to recover fallen man, and to do that which the law could do. God does not lay out his thoughts or counsels, nor his riches of grace, in needless things, or in useless contrivances. Now if the law would have attained this end, *viz.* the justification and salvation of man, then the gospel had been needless; then all these glorious riches of grace, and these counsels of wisdom, and mysteries of mercy, had been in vain.

Surely if the law could have done this work, the blessed God would never have sent his own son out of his bosom, upon such a long journey to this sinful province of his dominion, to this lower world, to take flesh and blood upon him, and to be exposed to sufferings and labours, reproaches and shame, pain and anguish, and death; if the law could have done the work of the salvation of man without it. God hath more value for the peace, and honour, and life of his son, than to expose it at this rate; but it is plain from scripture, that the son of God was sent into the world to do that which the law could not do. *Rom. viii. 3.* These treasures of wisdom and goodness, these riches of grace, which appear in the gospel, were all laid out to save a ruined creature, whom the law could not save; otherwise *Christ* died in vain, so the apostle saith expressly, *Gal. ii. 21.*

Observ. III. No law could give life and salvation to poor fallen man.

Here



Here let it be considered, that all laws are either moral, *i. e.* drawn from the nature of God and the creature; or they are positive, *i. e.* such as are appointed merely by the will of God, for particular purposes, and in particular seasons or circumstances. Again, moral laws are either such as belong to all mankind in general, whether innocent or sinful, or they are such as belong only to sinful and fallen man. Now none of all these sorts of laws can save sinful mankind. Let us prove it thus:

1. Moral laws, such as oblige all mankind in general, are contained in a due love to God and man; but fallen man can never be saved or justified by this law, because all these moral laws of God require perfect obedience, and cannot justify us without it. God is a most holy, a most wise, and righteous God, a most perfect being; and the relation between God and creatures, requires the creature should honour him, and obey him in perfection, and without any defect.

The moral law did require this perfection in the state of innocence; and, as it is taken into the constitution of the gospel, it does not diminish its requirements: It still requires perfection of obedience in all instances of thought, word and deed, and that without defect or intermission. The gospel doth not abate or lessen the requirements of the law, but it shews a way to relieve us when we have broken it, or cannot fulfil it, and the reasons are plain.

If the law did not now require perfection of obedience, but only sincere imperfect obedience, then the creature, if he were but sincere and honest, would have fulfilled the law, though he were not perfectly holy.

And then imperfection of obedience would have been, as it were, established by the law, if it could obtain salvation for fallen man.

Then also the imperfections of obedience to the law, would not have been sin; for if they were, they could not have made up a saving righteousness.

The gospel is a constitution of grace, which accepts of less obedience from man than the law requires, and pardons the imperfect obeyer for the sake of *Christ* the mediator; but still the law requires perfection, which mankind cannot pay. Now that man cannot pay it, is evident, not only from the conscience of every man in the world, for if it be awakened to see the extent of the law, it must condemn itself; but the scripture expressly asserts in many places: *Rom. iii. 10. There is none righteous, no, not one. Eccl. v. 20. There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. 2 Chron. vi. 36. There is no man who sinneth not.*

2. Moral laws, such as belong only to sinful man, and oblige him, can never justify a sinner or save him. Let us enter into particulars.

The requirements thereof are repentance for sin, sorrow and shame for past follies, and a displeas'dness with self for being guilty; trusting or hoping in the forgiving grace of God, praying to him for pardon and grace, and universal watchfulness against every temptation, under a sense of former failings. This the very light of nature and reason teaches a sinner, as well as the word of God requires it. But this law cannot justify any creature, and that for two plain reasons.

(1.) Because all our repentance, or new endeavours after obedience, cannot make atonement for our past sins. A righteous governor doth not suppose, that the tears, and sorrows, and repentance of criminals and malefactors, make any satisfaction to the public for his crimes, nor make due reparation to the government for his offences, nor are sufficient to procure pardon for criminals. A penitent criminal is often executed to fulfil the demands of the law, and to secure the authority of the government. And what trifling things are our sorrows, to answer for the dishonour done to the law of God our maker?

(2.) Be-

(2.) Because even our repentance itself, our hope or trust in grace, our prayer for mercy, our endeavours after new obedience, are all imperfect: whereas the law requires a perfection even of this sort of duties, a perfect hatred of sin, a perfect displeasure with self on account of it, perfect sincerity in every thought, word and action, and perfect watchfulness in guarding against temptation, and striving after new holiness. But how shamefully do we fail in these, and destroy our claims to justification and life, even if we were to be tried only by this part of the law which requires repentance at the hand of criminals? We see then that no moral law can justify us.

3. Let us come to positive laws, *i. e.* such rites, and forms, or ceremonies, as are appointed by the mere free will of God, for particular purposes; such as sacrifices, circumcision, washings, baptism, the Lord's supper, &c. These cannot justify us, because it is not in the power of any positive rites or ceremonies we can perform, to make up for the neglect of moral duties, or the violation of moral commands. They were never given for this end, nor appointed for this purpose. *Heb. x. 1, 2, 5. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.* Nor can circumcision cut off the vices of the heart. No, nor can baptism wash us from our spiritual defilements. Nor can the Lord's supper give us spiritual life and nourishment. It is not outward performances of any kind can stand instead of real holiness, much less can they answer for our past iniquities. No law of commandments, written in ordinances, can give righteousness and life to a sinful creature; for they were never ordained for that end.

Quest. What were they ordained for then?

Answ. 1. To shew us what sinful and defiled creatures we are, who have need of such washings, &c. and to give intimations that we are worthy of death, who need such sacrifices by the death of so many living creatures, to make atonement for our sins, and to die in our room.

Answ. 2. To give some typical hints that there is grace to be obtained of God, and there is a way for atonement for sin and salvation provided for sinful man.

4. The last reason why no laws can justify or save fallen man is this: *viz.* All laws, whether moral or positive, may command; but they give no power to obey, and therefore cannot give life. It is the promise that gives life. It is the gospel and grace of God that enables us to obey the law, even so far as the best of men do obey it in this life. The law commands, but it gives no strength to obey. *Rom. v. 6. When we were without strength Christ died for us, to obtain life and strength, to yield obedience to the law from principles of faith and love.* It is the gospel that brings spirit and life with it, to incline our hearts to obey the law. *Gal. iii. 2. Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Heb. viii. 10. This is the covenant that I will make—after those days,—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.*

Object. But is it a righteous thing with God to give man a law which cannot be fulfilled, or perfectly obeyed by him?

Answ. 1. It is righteous to give innocent man a law, which at first he was well able to fulfil; and this law continues in its force and demands, though man hath lost his innocency, and by his wilful crimes hath rendered himself unable to fulfil this law. The sin of the creature, and his own rendering himself unable to fulfil his maker's law, doth not make void the law of his maker, and abolish its commands.

Simile. Suppose a servant hath an order from his master to carry a message to his neighbour, if instead of going into the neighbour's house whither he was sent, he goes into an alehouse or tavern, there drowns his senses and his natural powers in liquor, that

that he hath so weakened himself, that he can neither walk nor speak; he can neither go to the place where he was sent, nor deliver his message: I would ask, doth his master's command cease, or is his command abolished? and is his authority at an end in this instance, because his servant hath rendered himself incapable of fulfilling it, either with his feet or his tongue? This would be an easy way to cancel a master's laws and commands, if the wickedness of a servant could have this effect.

Now apply this to the case between God and man, and see whether God may not be justified in continuing his law in its perfection of demands, though man hath lost or weakened his power to obey. Surely the moral law of God stands in force, requiring perfect obedience both of men and devils, and all intelligent beings, how feeble and impotent soever they have made themselves by their own crimes: For it is a law that arises from the nature of God and the creature, and from the relation that is between them; and therefore it is an everlasting law.

Answ. 2. But God is still farther to be justified in this matter; for though man hath weakened himself by his fall, he hath not utterly lost his natural powers, his natural ability of obeying the law. He has an understanding, he has a freedom of will, to choose good and refuse evil; but his will is so obstinately bent upon sin, vanity and folly; and his passions are grown so headstrong, that he will not give himself the trouble to subdue them: He willingly lets them bear him away from God: He is unwilling to obey; and this is called a moral inability. Now God may require such duties by his law, as through the weakness of the flesh, and the strength of appetite and passion in this frail state, man is morally or immediately unable to perform, though he hath a remote or natural power. An infinitely holy God cannot but command that we should never sin, never transgress the rule of righteousness, never break his pure and holy law; and yet, through the many infirmities of human nature, it is morally impossible we should perfectly keep this law, and live without sin. This Dr. *Whitby* himself (as much as he indulges the *Arminian* sentiments) confesses in his comment.

God doth not therefore lose his authority or right of commanding perfect obedience and perfect holiness, though man, by his folly and sin, hath rendered his will averse to God, and his evil appetites and passions strong and ungovernable: So that upon the whole, it is plain, the law is holy, and just, and good, and yet cannot pronounce any man righteous, nor adjudge him to eternal life.

DIS-

## DISCOURSE IV.

## The Difference between the LAW and the GOSPEL.

## The second Part of this SERMON.

GAL. iii. 21, 22.

*Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law: But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

**O**BSE RV. IV. Scripture hath concluded all mankind under sin, hath shut us all up as prisoners under condemnation. Here I have nothing to do, but to cite several texts of scripture, some of which have been before mentioned, to prove that no man hath perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law, and consequently, that all mankind lie under a sentence of condemnation, according to the law of God. *James iii. 2. For in many things we offend all. And chap. ii. 10. Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all, because he dishonours that authority which hath enacted all. Rom. ii. 9, 10. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil. And chap. iii. 9, 10, 19, 20, 23, Are we better than they? no, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Gal. iii. 10, 11. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith.*

## A REMARK.

Here by the way we may take notice, what is condemnation, and what is justification by the law of God. It is the sentence of God as it stands in the written law, or in the law of nature, pronouncing the creature, whether he be righteous or guilty, according to such different characters which are found upon him. It is not any new act put forth by God himself toward his creatures, but the constant sentence of his own law, declaring such a person righteous according to his performance of the law, or such a person guilty according to his non-performance of it. In like manner justification by the gospel is not a new act in God, but the sentence of his gospel, pronouncing humble penitents and believers in *Christ* pardoned, forgiven, and accepted unto eternal life.

Accord-

According to the different characters of men, the word of God, *i. e.* his law or his gospel, pronounces them guilty and condemned, or pardoned, justified, and accepted of God, unto eternal life. This is a very plain and easy doctrine to be apprehended by such weak creatures as we are.

Observ. V. Man who is condemned by the law, may be saved by the promise; *i. e.* by the promise of grace and reconciliation to God, which was given first to *Adam*, then to *Abraham*, and made further known to the people of God by *Moses* and *David*, and the prophets, according to the different revelations of God to man; but completed by the gospel of Christ, and the ministry of his apostles.

A promise to *Adam*, of the destruction of the works of the devil, by the seed of the woman; as it is explained 1 *John* iii. 8.

A promise that God would be our God, and give us an inheritance, made to *Abraham*, &c. *Gen.* xvii. 7, 8.

A promise confirmed by many types of the *jewish* law. A promise of all the blessings of the new covenant, expressed *Heb.* viii. 10, 12. cited from the several prophets *Jeremiah* and *Zechariah*. *This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.—For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* It is the same promise, more particularly and fully set before us, by *Jesus Christ* the son of God, in his gospel, and by his blessed apostles in their writings; which, in plain and express language, includes in it, not only pardon of sin and reconciliation to God, but the sanctification of our natures, and our preservation to eternal life, in a state of happiness, which shall never end.

Observ. VI. The way of obtaining an interest in these promised blessings, is through faith. It is to all that trust in the grace of the gospel, so far as it was manifested in the several ages of the world, *i. e.* to *Adam*, *Abraham*, and *David*; and as it is more fully manifested in and by *Jesus Christ*. It is obtained by a renouncing all claim by one's own works, and trusting in grace entirely.

If *Adam* was saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness through a mediator, which was promised under the title of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent; and which was typified by sacrifices, and intimated by God's favourable dealings with *Adam* after his fall, and which promise was accepted and received by *Adam's* trusting or hoping in this grace.

If *Abraham* is saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness, which was promised under the title of that seed of his, in whom all nations should be blessed; and in that language of mercy, that God would be his God, and would give him an inheritance; of which *Canaan* was a type and figure. And *Abraham* believed, or trusted in this, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; *Rom.* iv. 3. *i. e.* unto his justification and acceptance.

If *David* was saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness. *Psalms* xxxii. 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.* *Rom.* iv. 6, 7.

If christians are saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness still, which was promised to *Abraham*, which is revealed more particularly by *Jesus Christ*, the son of God; who came to confirm and to fulfil the former promises, and to obtain this pardon by the sacrifice of himself. And by his own perfect obedience and sufferings, he

laid a foundation for the justification of sinful creatures. If they are saved, it is not by their performing the law in any sense, but by trusting in forgiving grace, revealed and manifested through *Jesus Christ*. It is by trusting in another, and not in themselves; as *Rom. iv.* explains, from *ver. 17*, to the 22d.

It is not in a way of claim of righteousness and eternal life, but in a way of humble dependance on grace. The *Pharisees* boasted, that they were righteous, and despised others. *Luke xviii. 9.* The young ruler, in the gospel, speaking of the law of God, said, all this have I kept from my youth. *Mat. xix. 20.* The *Jews* sought for justification by the works of the law, and rejected *Christ*. *Rom. ix. 31.* But *St. Paul*, by the sight of the law is dead to the law; *i. e.* to all hopes of righteousness and life by it; *Gal. ii. 16, 19.* and seeks to be pardoned, accepted, and justified, by trusting in what *Christ* hath done and suffered on his account.

And so all christians. *Rom. iii. 22.* And in this sense the gospel justifieth the ungodly; *Rom. iv. 5. i. e.* those who have no righteousness of their own to plead, whose best obedience is all defective.

Quest. But doth this gospel save and justify a man that hath no regard to the law of God? How is his obedience to the law or holiness secured, if a man be justified, or pronounced righteous, and acquitted of sin, and accepted to eternal life, by believing or trusting in the promises of grace? Surely many wicked men will say, "I trust in the promise of pardon through *Jesus Christ*; and is this enough? is there no security that these believers shall be obedient to the law, as far as they can, though they cannot obey it perfectly."

Answ. Yes, there is abundant security for their diligence in duty to the law, though they can never work out a righteousness for themselves, to be justified by the law. Let these reasons be considered:

1. It is the great design of the gospel to restore us to holiness as well as to happiness; and therefore the law, in the commands of it, runs through all the gracious dispensations of God to fallen man, as I have shewn you: And God will have no regard to them in a way of grace, who have no regard to his law in a way of obedience. The law constantly requires and points out our duty, it shews us our sin, it lays us under condemnation, and makes us seek a refuge in the gospel of forgiveness. Now the gospel is not prepared, for such as knowingly and wilfully renounce the law of God, which is holy, and just and good, and who persist in this practice, and abandon the commandments of it.

Can it be ever expected, that the great God should pardon and save those rebels through *Jesus Christ*, who knowingly and wilfully persist in their rebellions? God forbid. The very light of nature will not suffer us to believe this. This would be to make *Christ* the minister of sin, and to build again the things which *Christ* came to destroy, *Gal. ii. 17, 18.* For it is the design of all the blessings of the gospel, to make us conformable to God, and to this law, which is the unchangeable image of his holiness. The great design of it is to make us practise love to God and our neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law, as far as our state of frailty permits. *Rom. xiii. 10.*

The design of the grace of God in *Christ Jesus*, is that we might be holy, and without blame before God, in love. Are we chosen in *Christ*? It is that we may be holy. *Eph. i. 2, 3.* Doth God forgive us? It is that we may fear, and love, and serve him. *Psal. cxxx. 4.* There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. Are we redeemed with the blood of *Christ*? It is that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works, *Tit. ii. 14.* Doth the grace of God bring salvation to us? It teaches us

to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live righteously, soberly and religiously, in this present evil world. *Tit. ii. 11, 12.*

We are under the law still unto Christ, as it is the rule whereby *Christ* governs his church, while he pardons their failures and imperfections : But we are not under the law, as it is the rule of judgment, and condemns all that have not fulfilled it. We are freed from the curse of the law, but not from the obligation to obedience. So the apostle, *1 Cor. ix. 21.* All believers have this freedom from the curse of the law, that from a new principle of holiness and love, they may fulfil the commands of the law, as far as our present circumstances will admit. *Rom. vii. 6.* But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ; that we should serve God, not in the spirit of terror and bondage, but in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, *i.e.* by a new principle of holiness, wrought in us by the spirit of God, as a principle of love and obedience.

2. The gospel gives us encouragement and strength to fulfil the duties of the law, and engages us to hope in God, that we may love him, please and serve him, as a forgiving and reconciling God, which the broken law, with all its commands, threatenings, and terrors, doth not, and could never do. The law speaks only condemnation and death. As many as labour for life under the law, and would be justified by the law, are under the curse, and may despair of life. *Gal. iii. 10.* Now despair is no spring of obedience, and hopeless labour is very feebly and negligently performed ; but hope is a powerful and lasting principle of holiness. *1 John iii. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure. 1 Tim. iv. 10. Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach ; i. e.* in doing the will of God ; *because we trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.* The devils go on in sinning, because they despair ; but man hath hope set before him, that he may be encouraged to obedience, and allured to pursue holiness, from a principle of love and gratitude. If we are made new creatures, how can we choose but love and honour the law of God, who hath saved us by his gospel, and changed our unhappy state from sin and death, to hope and joy.

Besides, it is the gospel that gives us the sanctifying spirit, as I said before. *Gal. iii. 2, 14. and Heb. viii. 10.* This is that new covenant, according to which he writes his law in our hearts.

3. No faith in the grace of God will justify men, but that which worketh by love ; *Gal. v. 6.* and produceth the good fruits of obedience. *Abraham* obeyed the call of God : *Jam. ii. 22, 26.* And in this sense his works wrought together with his faith, towards his justification. Not that his imperfect works in themselves, do any thing to justify him, but his sincere imperfect works were the effect of his faith, and proved his faith to be alive, and true, and saving. Things are said to be done in scripture, when they are declared or manifested to be done : So *Abraham* is said to be justified by works, when his works declared and manifested his faith, whereby he was justified. *Jam. ii. 25, 26. David's* faith in forgiveness was such, as was accompanied with sincerity and piety. *Psal. xxxii. 2. In whose spirit there is no guile.* It requires confession of sin, repentance, humiliation, and new watchfulness, *ver. 5, 6. Gal. v. 6.* It must be such a faith that purifieth the heart, and works obedience from a principle of love, *Acts xv. 9. Tit. ii. 5, 7, 8.* They who believe in *Christ Jesus* must be careful to maintain good works.

4. Without repentance and a change of heart, so as to love and to obey the law of God, we can never be fit for that happiness which God promises, and which the creature wants : Without holiness of heart we can never be prepared for heaven, which

consists in the blissful vision of God; nor indeed are we capable of it. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,* Matth. v. 8. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14. Indeed none can be truly happy but those who are sanctified and assimilated to the holy *Jesus*. A child of *Satan*, and an enemy of righteousness, and of the law of God, can never be happy in the midst of the children of God, who have his law written in their hearts, and are ever practising obedience to his law in perfection.

Holiness indeed is a part of salvation, which consists in a release from the bondage of sin, and the power of it in our own hearts, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it in our persons. And the man who professes to receive the gospel of *Christ*, and hope in God for salvation, he doth not know what he professes, if he does not hope for holiness, and long for it, and desire it. If he goes to trust in *Christ* as a saviour, merely from the wrath of God and hell, he doth not accept of *Jesus*, as such a saviour as the gospel represents him; *i. e.* a saviour from sin, *Mat.* i. 21. as well as from hell and wrath.

Lastly, **REMARKS** drawn from the whole text, thus opened, explained and proved.

1st Remark. See why *St. Paul* always denies justification to be obtained by the law, *i. e.* by any law whatsoever; (*viz.*) because none have fulfilled, or can fulfil, any moral law of God in perfection, and a law requires perfect obedience, in order to justification by it: Nor is it in the nature or power of it, to justify those who are under it, and yield not perfect obedience. *Cursed be every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* *Gal.* iii. 10. The epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians* are full of this doctrine. Whether it be the law of nature, *Rom.* ii. 14, 15. or whether the law under which the *Jews* were, which includes the moral, ceremonial, and political precepts of it; *Rom.* iii. 19, 20, 23. all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. By the works of the law, any law whatsoever, no flesh shall be justified. Man doth not, cannot, obtain life by any law; it cannot give life.

In this sense all laws are laws of works: Do this and live, is their language and sense. *The man that doth them shall live in them.* *Gal.* iii. 12.

2d Remark. See here to what a wretched and deplorable state of guilt and misery are we fallen, that no law, which God can make in our circumstances, can save us. God cannot make a law which doth not require perfect holiness, in thought, word, and deed: He cannot make a law which allows sin and imperfection: For this would be, as it were, to establish iniquity by a law, which the holy God cannot do. The holy nature of God, as governor of his creatures, cannot but command them to be perfectly holy, under whatsoever gracious dispensations he may place them, for the relief of their guilt, and weakness, and distress. His law still commands what fallen impotent creatures cannot fully obey; and therefore we are miserable.

What a hideous ruin hath the first man brought into human nature, and spread over all this lower creation? It hath weakened all our powers, hath turned our hearts away from God, hath debased our inclinations to sense, and flesh, and vanity, and made God's own rational creatures, incapable of being made happy, by any law that he should give them, when taken in the strict and proper sense of a law.

3d Remark. Even the gospel of *Christ*, considered as a mere law, as requiring duty, and promising a reward upon full performance, cannot give life to sinful man: For whether you take it in a large sense, and consider it as including the moral law, taken into the hand of *Christ* the mediator, still it diminishes not its commandments;

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it requires perfect holiness, and abates nothing in its demands. Or whether you take it in a more limited sense, as requiring faith and new obedience, sincere diligence and watchfulness, yet, considered as a law, it requires the practice of these duties in greater perfection, than the best of saints or christians ever practised them; otherwise they would not sin in coming short of what the gospel requires; and therefore they cannot give life, if God should strictly judge us, according to these gentle commands of the gospel. And therefore you find, when the apostle speaks of justification according to the gospel, he is positive, peremptory, and universal, in his exclusion of all works of the law, from justifying us; as in *Rom. iii.* and *Gal. iii.*

He calls the gospel therefore a promise, the grace of God, the new covenant, &c. that he may not be supposed, to speak of it as justifying us, under the notion of a law. He never calls the gospel a law, but in such a rhetorical or figurative sense, by way of *catachresis*, or a very strong metaphor, *the law of faith*; as in *Rom. iii. 27.* It is as if he should say, if we must call it a law, it is a mere law of faith, or trusting in the mercy of God.

Quest. 1. What is the gospel then? and how doth it justify us and give life?

Answ. Not as fulfillers of a law, and thereby obtaining a claim to life, but as depending upon mere mercy. The gospel is a constitution of the blessed God, whereby he accepts less obedience at our hands, than the law requires; and that, not to make up a righteousness for our acceptance, but that God may receive us through grace, for the sake of his son *Jesus Christ*, who wrought a perfect obedience, or complete righteousness, to answer that law; and died to make atonement for our sins, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, which we had deserved. This is the express language of the gospel taught us by *St. Paul*; *Rom. iii. 23, 24. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; i. e. of that glory which we should have obtained by a perfect obedience: But when we are justified, it is done freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in *Jesus Christ*. The law condemns us as sinners, and we must be sensible of this condemnation. The gospel shews us, that we must trust or depend merely on forgiving grace, and not pretend to any righteousness of our own, and to claim life by obeying the law ourselves. It is by our faith or dependance; not by our works, and any claim of merit. The whole strain of the apostle's writing to the *Romans*, hath this view in the five or six first chapters.

Quest. 2. Is it not therefore, matter of blame for us, to call the gospel a law? or the new law?

Answ. The word law, when taken in a strict sense, for the will of a sovereign prince revealed, and requiring perfect obedience of his subjects, and pronouncing a subject righteous only upon this obedience, is the true notion and idea of a law: In this sense the gospel is not a law, for it doth not pronounce any persons righteous, and accepted to the favour of God, on account of a perfect obedience, performed by them to any command, which was given them.

But if a law be taken in a large sense, for any constitution of a governor, whereby he graciously accepts at our hands, less than his law requires, and pardons those offenders who are, sincerely willing and desirous to obey his law, and who trust in his mercy; then the gospel may be called a law. *Torah*, in the *Hebrew*, is used in this large sense for the gospel; *Isa. ii. 3. Out of Zion shall go forth the law*, &c. and other places.

And *Νομοϛ*, in the *Greek*, may be enlarged to such an extensive sense also: But originally it signifies, that, which distributes to every one their due reward, according to their merit, or their services; and in this sense the gospel cannot be a law.

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St. *Paul* does not usually call it so ; nor can I think it the best way for ministers, to represent it thus.

Yet, after all, it is but a sort of difference in words, if we do but explain the things in the right manner, and guard against those errors, which we are liable to fall into on either side.

Nor would I be angry with any man, who considerately and sincerely thinks this the best way of representing and explaining the gospel, any further than to say, that St. *Paul* did not think it the best way ; and I am much of his mind.

4th Remark. How much should our souls bless God, for the introduction of the gospel into the world, at the first promise ; and even for all the promises of this new covenant, especially in this last, and best, and brightest edition, and the administration of it by *Jesus Christ*, and his Spirit ? As it is expressed and explained in *Heb.* viii. 10, 12.

Have we not sometimes had an awakening and painful sense of guilt ?

Have we never thought ourselves sinners, and feared the eternal anger of God, and cried out for salvation, from the condemning sentence of the broken law ?

And when we have resolved, and watched, and laboured again to fulfil the holy law of God, and failed in many instances, have we not bewailed ourselves as weak and impotent creatures, as well as under the guilt of so many offences, repeated and abounding ? O what abundant reason have we to bless God, for the gospel of his grace, through *Jesus Christ*, wherein our only hope lies, and all our salvation ! Even all our hopes of pardon and acceptance with God, as well as all our strength to do the will of God, and obey his law, so far as christians are enabled and expected to do in this life.

Let us fly from the law, and its curses and condemnation, to the refuge and hope which the gospel has set before us, and live there daily, by faith in the son of God the saviour ; for there only lies our safety from the wrath of God, and eternal destruction.

5th Remark. What a glorious harmony will appear in the review of all the dispensations of God at the last day, between the law and the gospel ? The law was the instrument of God's government of his creatures, and the rule of his justice, from the beginning of the world to the end : But the gospel is the instrument of his grace for our salvation.

The law is the rule, guiding and teaching all the saints in the ways of holiness, convincing of sin, and condemning all sinners, and driving them to seek refuge in grace : And the gospel is the noble and divine remedy, discovering that grace, whereby alone we can be saved.

And why may not these sentiments, be part of our transporting and beatifying contemplations, in the heavenly state ? It is generally agreed by our divines, that the various providences, of the life and state we have past through in this world, whether they have been painful or pleasant, shall be the matter of our delightful review and meditation ; especially so far as they have been, the happy means of our sanctification, and our preparation, for the final blessedness of the heavenly state.

I am well assured, there will be abundant matter of joy and thankfulness, found in these different dispensations of God, in his bringing many sons to glory ; and there will be ample instances of his providential care, and glorious examples of his righteousness and his grace, in a thousand particular transactions of the blessed God, and our Lord *Jesus Christ* his son, with the children of his grace : And perhaps there shall be such discoveries made to us, of the righteousness and the grace of God in his holy

holy law and his gospel, among these divine transactions, as will elevate our souls into higher raptures of gratitude and joy, and furnish our tongues with pleasant and everlasting *hallelujahs*.

The saints in that day, shall cheerfully and thankfully recount, the awful voice of God in the commands and terrors of his law, since these were the blessed means of awakening their stupid consciences, and of stirring them to a hasty flight to *Jesus* and his gospel, as the only and all-sufficient refuge of sinful and guilty souls. Happy creatures! who turned their eyes to his grace, when they were thus self-condemned, and trembling for fear of the immediate execution, of the divine threatenings of his law.

How glorious and delightful, will be the moments of these souls, when they shall review the first glimpses they had by divine grace, of the salvation and hope which was to be found for them, in the encouraging language of the gospel and the promises? What new songs will arise to the redeemer, in this review of those past events? What echoes of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb, while the inhabitants of the blessed world, are pursuing and tracing out backward, the ancient steps of the grace of God, towards their recovery from the sin and ruin of the first *Adam*, and their entering into the covenant of salvation, through *Jesus Christ* the second? He was the ever-blessed anti-type of the first *Adam*, the great head and lord of life and everlasting blessedness, to all who are sanctified and saved. Honour and glory, and power, be to his holy name, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

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# DISCOURSE V.

SERMONS preached at *Berry-street*, December 1744 and 1745.

In which the early appointment of the atonement  
of CHRIST is manifested.

The First Part of this SERMON.

REV. xiii. 8.

*The lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

IN order to make the sense of these words easy and plain, we must take into our counsel three other texts of the new testament: (*viz.*)

I. 1 Pet. i. 18—20. *Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot. Ver. 20. Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you.* This shews us, that this lamb was *Jesus Christ*, who was offered a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and thereby takes them away. *John* i. 29.

II. *Acts* xv. 18. *Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.* And therefore this great work, of redeeming sinners by the death of his son *Jesus*, (as 1 Pet. i. 20.) was also known to him.

III. *Rom.* iv. 17. *God quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were: i. e.* speaketh sometimes of things not yet done, as though they were done; therefore this lamb is said to be slain from the foundation of the world, because it was by virtue of his death, many other things were appointed.

God hath before the foundation of the world, ordained all things that regard the salvation and recovery of man, from the ruins of his fall. Sometimes the holy scripture speaks of those things, which were originally designed and decreed, as though they were actually done, though perhaps it was many ages afterwards, before these things had any actual being.

It is in this sense, that our Lord *Jesus Christ*, is said to be the lamb slain, before the foundation of the world; *i. e.* he was decreed and determined to be the saviour of mankind; and for this end he was appointed, to be a sacrifice of atonement for our sins, even before God laid the foundations of the world. *Eph.* i. 4, 5. He appeared as the lamb slain for this purpose, and with this design, in the eye of God, who sees all things in one single view, whether they be things past, present, or to come. God the Father, kept *Jesus Christ* his son ever in his eye, in this view, through all his transactions with the children of men.

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It is generally supposed that *Adam* stood in the state of innocence but a few days at most, or a very short time after his creation, though our Lord *Jesus Christ* came not into this world, nor took flesh and blood upon him, of the substance of the virgin *Mary*, till about four thousand years afterwards. Many ages ran out amongst the inhabitants of this world in that time, and even some of the transactions of God in his own eternity, before the foundation of the world, are reasonably supposed to be derived from this very idea, in the mind and appointment of the blessed God; because he had originally appointed, that *Jesus Christ* should in due time take flesh and blood, and be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

Here we shall first enquire, what are those early transactions of the blessed God in eternity, or in time, which may be supposed to have been any ways influenced by this view of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; and the answers are these:

1. It was in this view, that God at first decreed and designed, to save and recover any part of fallen man from their ruin, sin, and misery; and chose thousands of the race of sinful mankind to be restored to his favour and to his image, *Eph. i. 4, 5, 7. Bebold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; Isa. xlii. 1.* That so God might have a proper atonement made for all their sins, by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, in order to be reconciled to them, and to reconcile them to himself, that they might be holy and without blame.

It would be too long at present to enter into this enquiry, why God required an atonement for sin, or why his justice and his grace would not unite in the salvation of fallen man without it: The great God thought it unbecoming his supreme majesty, and his character, to deal thus in a way of absolute mercy with men; and as he has determined it so in his word, this is enough for us to acquiesce therein: As *Heb. ii. 10. It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect, through sufferings. Τηλευται, i. e.* as critics in the greek language expound it, to consecrate, sanctify, or finish this captain of salvation for this service, by an atoning sacrifice.

God was pleased to make his beloved Son, *Jesus Christ*, his first elect; *Isai. xlii. 1.* and he chose all the rest in him. *Eph. i. 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* He was resolved to set him up at the head of all the saved number, who was his own son, that he should be their forerunner into heaven, and have the honour of redeeming all the sons of God, and bringing them back unto the father: And he decreed him to be the great sacrifice, for the expiation of the sins, of all his chosen and favourite sons: He has redeemed them all with his blood.

2. It was in the view of *Jesus Christ*, as the great mediator and sacrifice, that God appointed any further communion, or any favourable communications, between himself and his fallen creature man. It was in this view that he appointed, there should be any approach of fallen man towards himself: It was in this view he gave him the first promise, and the first hope of mercy, even that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; *Gen. ii. 15.* by whom mankind was deceived to their ruin and destruction; and by appointing *Jesus Christ* to be a sacrifice for sin: It was prophesied that his heel, or the lower part of his nature, *i. e.* his body, should be bruised, in order to break the head of the serpent; as it is explained *1 John iii. 8. For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil; i. e.* his tyranny and dominion over man. This seed of the woman, was the appointed sacrifice for this purpose. *Gen. iii. 15.* It was with this view that God enquired after lost man in the garden of *Paradise*, in order to recover and save him by his son *Jesus*.

Gen. iii. 9. Adam, *where art thou?* And he gave him the promise of recovery by this means. And as God afterwards appointed it, that no man should come to the father but by the son; *John xiv. 6.* so he revealed himself as making his way towards fallen Adam, by this man *Jesus*; and it is by him that all that are brought back again to God, have been appointed to draw near to him ever since; for he is the only appointed way.

It is also very probable that God might make clearer discoveries to our first parents, in the midst of their ruined and dismal state, in and with this first promise, than *Moses*, the divine historian, has given us an account of, because this was to be the beginning and first pledge of their hope of any acceptance with God, and their expectation of life and salvation.

Let me here speak one awakening word to fallen sinners: Did you never give yourselves leave to think how great your guilt and destruction is, and how terrible your misery and danger? And do you never consider that it was in and by *Jesus Christ*, as the appointed sacrifice for our sins, that God made his first steps towards you in a way of restoration and recovery? This should not be utterly neglected and forgotten by sinners. See how early was the love of God to fallen man.

3. It was in this view of *Jesus Christ*, as a propitiatory sacrifice, that God instituted sacrifices to be offered up by *Adam*, immediately after his fall, as it is recorded by *Moses*. God forbid that ever we should imagine, that the great God left this important affair of offering sacrifices to reconcile and appease an angry God, to the mere invention of vain and foolish man! And how can we suppose that it should enter into the heart of man, that God should be pleased with such sacrifices as the cutting and burning of his living creatures in the fire, in order to please him after their first sin?

It is very evident that God appointed the skins of beasts to be their first covering, but these very beasts were not then appointed by God the creator to be slain for the food of man, till the days of *Noah*: and therefore, it must be out of the beasts slain for sacrifice, that the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed *Adam*, and his wife *Eve*. And it is highly probable that their cloathing was made out of the skins of the beasts that were sacrificed, to guard them from the cold winds, and storms, and from any of the inconveniencies of the air and sky that might befall them, for want of such covering. *Gen. iii. 21. And unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

It is further evident, that these sacrifices were not merely sacrifices of thanksgiving and acknowledgment to God for his mercies, as men are too often ready to suppose. When *Cain* brought to God the first fruits of the ground, *Gen. iv. 3.* if it was done merely as an offering of thankfulness, it is manifest that *Abel* also, *Gen. v. 4. brought of the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof*; and it is very plain that *Abel* found acceptance with God, but *Cain* did not. *ver. 5.* And as it is repeated, *Heb. xi. 4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.* And probably this was the difference, because by the sacrifice and death of the living creatures, there was an acknowledgment made of sin, and of sinful man's desert of death, by some intimation from heaven; and this was accepted of God as an atonement or substitute, in the room of the sinner, or a typical propitiation for sin. This seems to be implied in that question of *Balak* to *Balaam*, *Micah vi. 6, 7. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, &c. Or shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* It is very natural for man, under a sense of the guilt of sin, to enquire how he shall appear before

before a holy God with acceptance? And God, as it were in answer to such a supposed enquiry, directs *Adam* to the sacrifice of beasts, as an atonement for sin; *i. e.* as a sort of ransom for the forfeited life of man. And this is the most natural and most easy sense of things, and the best account of the original of sacrifices, and of the prevalence and continuance of that custom almost all over the world: And this is the fairest account of the original tradition, of *Adam's* first sacrifice after his fall from God, and the sense of his anger. \*

4. It was in the view of the atoning sacrifice of *Christ*, the lamb of God, that all the schemes of the *jewish* sacrifices, all the slaughter and burnt-offerings of the animals, and the pourings-out and sprinklings of blood, and the washings with water in the *jewish* sacrifices, were first appointed as figurative methods, to cleanse them from sinful defilements: And the Lord *Jesus Christ* at last appeared, or was set forth hereby, as the great deliverer from the wrath of God, and as typified under all these figures and shadows. *Heb. x. 1—12.* The law having a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things, those sacrifices were all imperfect as to the grand design; for they could not cleanse the consciences of men from guilt before God. *Heb. x. 1, 2.* In this respect *Christ* alone was the true sacrifice. *Heb. ix. 11, 12.*

And this was the reason of shedding of the blood of beasts according to the law. *Heb. ix. 14, 15, 22.* For there was no remission without blood. The blood of *Christ* by virtue of his union with the true God, had infinite and immortal value in it. *Christ*, the lamb of God, offered himself without spot unto God, to purge our consciences from dead works, (or from works that deserve death) that we might serve the living and true God with acceptance: Thus *Israe'l*, considered as a national church, derived this advantage from our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

And it was with this view that the national atonement, or the bullock that was offered every year for the sins of the whole nation, *Lev. xvi.* and *xvii.* chapters, attained its proper effect, and delivered the whole nation from national guilt, and that destruction which the justice of God might have brought upon it for sin.

5. It was in the view of this great sacrifice, slain from the foundation of the world, that God pardoned the personal guilt of men, and forgave thousands of sins under the old testament, and spared the guilty, each of them in their day and season, and took away the guilt of their iniquities. So *David* was forgiven his adultery and his murder, crimes of the deepest dye, for which *David* knew of no sacrifice, *Psal. li. 16.* and for which no man could be pardoned or justified by any ceremonies in the law of *Moses*. And therefore the apostle says, *Acts xiii. 38, 39.* By this man, even *Jesus Christ*, there was forgiveness appointed for those sins for which no sacrifices were ordered by the law of *Moses*, nor any sacrifices were offered, or accepted, according to the levitical law. *Rom. iii. 24, 25.* God has set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

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\* As it is generally supposed by our divines, that it was *Jesus* the son of God, who, in the name of his father, appeared to *Adam* in the garden after his sin, and had this conversation with him; so it is not unlikely that God, in the person of his son *Jesus*, taught *Adam* how to manage these sacrifices, by taking off the skins, and cutting the beasts into proper parts, and burning them; of which there is a hint given in the greek translation of the *Septuagint*, *Gen. iv. 7.* which is not found in the *hebrew* original at present, where God says to *Cain*, if thou hast rightly offered, but hast not rightly divided the sacrifice, thou hast sinned. And if this is supposed to be a true account of the matter, then *Jesus Christ* himself, in a prelude to his incarnation was the first high-priest, and he that taught *Adam* first to offer a sacrifice, and so, in the sight of God, it was accepted from the hands of him, whom God had constituted an everlasting high-priest; though, at the same time, the sacrifice of *Christ*, the lamb of God, might be typified by the slaughter and sacrifice of the beast itself.

through the forbearance of God †: But even at that time there was forgiveness with God in the view of *Christ*; for even *David* speaks with much freedom in the xxxii *Psalms*, and elsewhere, of the pardon of sin.

It was also through this blood of the lamb slain, that *Solomon* was pardoned his many heinous and grievous sins; *i. e.* the lamb of God slain in the view of the father, as an atoning sacrifice from the foundation of the world: And through the same blood God forgave the repeated crimes of *Manasseh* the king, who had filled *Jerusalem* with slaughter; and all the saints, and all the kings, who had ever been sinners, and were saved, it was in this view of the blood of the lamb; always supposing trust in the mercy of God, together with sincere repentance, and return to God, was found at the same time. Blessed *Jesus*, how early and how extensive was this salvation through thy blood, even before it was actually offered!

6. The gospel of the salvation of sinful man was contrived and appointed by the great God, in this view of *Jesus*, the lamb of God, the great expiatory sacrifice, slain from the foundation of the world: And it is for this reason that the doctrine of this atonement for sin by sacrifice, runs through all the parts and forms of religions which God early appointed in the world, and the several religions which man, under the divine appointment of God, ever practised. *Heb. x. 12—18.* Where there is a particular account given of the covenant of grace, from the language of the prophets. *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right-hand of God;—for by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; whereof the holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.* These are the blessings of the gospel of *Christ*; here is the sanctifying spirit included, as well as the blood of atonement; here is a purification of our natures, as well as justification of our persons, introduced in the view of this lamb that was slain: And therefore *John* the baptist might say, in more senses than one, *John i. 29. Behold the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.* He takes away the guilt of sin by his atoning sacrifice, and the power of sin in the soul, by the sanctification of his spirit. All the blessed promises of the gospel, in the old testament and in the new, are but the language of this new covenant, which arose from the view and foresight of the blood of this dying lamb; which was therefore called the blood of the everlasting covenant. *Heb. xiii. 20.*

Let me ask ye now, O sinners, whose consciences are exposed to agonies through the guilt of sin, and whose souls are danger of being captivated into new offences, by the power of sin within you: Do you not see how necessary these blessings are to your salvation? How can you have your sins pardoned, or your souls accepted with God unto eternal life, or renewed unto holiness, if you have not an interest in the salvation wrought by the blood of the lamb?

7. It was with this design, and in the view of this blood of *Jesus*, the great sacrifice, that all the ordinances of the new testament itself were instituted: Baptism itself had something of this signification; for so said *Ananias* the christian to *Paul*, when he was first struck down to the ground by the vision from heaven, *Why tarriest thou? Arise*

† We translate this word forgiveness, as though it were Ἀφεσις, remission, but the word is ἀποστεισις, which properly signifies the passing by of sin; that is, that God did not actually punish them: Though the *Cocceian* writers do not make a just inference from this, that therefore no sins were pardoned under the old testament, but merely the punishment of them delayed or neglected.



*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.* Acts xxii. 16. The water of baptism came to have a cleansing and sanctifying virtue from the foresight and eternal mercy of God, who appointed *Jesus Christ* to be slain for a sacrifice; which is also intimated *Heb: x. 22: Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed, i. e. in baptism, with pure water.*

There is no need of the particular description of the institution of the Lord's supper, *Mat. xxvi. 28. Rev. i. 5.* wherein the blood of *Jesus Christ* is said to wash us from our sins. *The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John i. 7.*

8. It was in the view of this lamb slain from the foundation of the world that there was a way made, provided, and prepared, for our Lord *Jesus Christ* to arise from the dead. The apostle to the *Hebrews*, in *chap. xiii. ver. 20.* is express in this sentiment. *The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant: i. e. the covenant of grace and pardon, which began as soon as man had sinned, and remains to this day, even to all everlasting, to speak peace and pardon to sinners. Every circumstance in this part of the history of our saviour was appointed in this view. He died, and lay in the grave for a short season, to prove the truth and reality of his death; and he arose again, to confirm the predictions of the antient prophets; for all the works of God, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and his transactions in life and in death, were known to him from the beginning of the world; and every step of his sufferings, and his rising from the grave, was all ordained with a view to this covenant, by which he was raised from the dead. Acts xi. 18. All the decrees of God and all the predictions of the prophets, all the types of the old Jewish law, and all the promises of God with regard to his son Jesus, were doubtless appointed, accomplished and fulfilled, with regard to this great sacrifice.*

The holy angels, who were to be employed in the resurrection and ascension of *Christ*, were doubtless acquainted with this glorious event before hand; every one of those holy ones had their orders to be ready at the proper post for these transactions; for his rising from the dead, and his glorious entrance, as the son of God, into his heavenly kingdom; thousands of angels were present there. *Psalms lxxviii. 17, 18. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, &c.*

9. Therefore was our Lord *Jesus Christ* represented to the apostle *John* as a lamb slain in the midst of the throne, after his resurrection, and his entrance into glory in heaven. *Rev. v. 6.* that there might be an everlasting emblem, and monument, or memorial of the lamb slain before the face of God, for all the blessed designs which God had in his view for the salvation of his people, through all the ages of mankind, ever since sin entered into the world, even to the end of time, and the consummation of all things: That by this vision there might be before the eyes of God a perpetual appearance of this foundation of our pardon of sin, the justification of our persons through the blood of *Christ*, and our acceptance with God in the heavenly world. And who can tell, or who can conceive, how many and how various were the blessed and glorious ends that God designed, and actually attained, by this representation?

## DISCOURSE VI.

## The atonement of CHRIST manifested.

## The Second Part of this SERMON.

REV. xiii. 8. and v. 6.

*---Of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In midst of the throne---  
stood a lamb as it had been slain.*

**T**HUS far have we considered what are the transactions of God, in which he might have a regard to the sacrifice of *Christ*, represented so early as before the foundation of the world.

In the next place, I proceed to consider what divine lessons of instruction, or consolation, may be derived from this vision of the lamb, as it had been slain, appearing in the midst of the throne, *Rev. xiii. 6.* And among these we may number such as follow.

1<sup>st</sup> lesson. There is hereby an information given to the inhabitants of the heavenly world, that *Jesus*, the son of God, who was made man, has redeemed many from among the children of men, to be a praise unto him, and his glory, in all ages to come. There is an enquiry, *Rev. vii. 13. What are these which are arrayed in white robes; and whence came they?* To this we answer, as in that text, *ver. 14. These are they which came out of great tribulation.* Or we may give the same answer as *Zeba* and *Zalmunna* answered to *Gideon*, when they were asked, *Judg. viii. 18, 19. What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?* And they answered, *As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, they were my brethren, even the sons of my mother.* Each of them are the brethren of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, born of women, and exposed to great tribulations; but they have all washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the lamb: And therefore they are like the angels of heaven, who stand round the throne, in the glorious services for which they are prepared, in the court of our blessed redeemer; each of them the image of the first-born son of God, and reconciled to God the father by his blood, and shall dwell there for ever with him. A glorious reconciler, and a divine atonement, and happy souls who are partakers of it!

2<sup>d</sup> Lesson. The lamb, as it had been slain, appears there as a divine mediator, and is a memorial of the everlasting virtue, and constant efficacy, of the atoning sacrifice of *Christ*; which was typified of old by the constant sacrifices morning and evening: The priests on earth stood daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices; which could never effectually take away sin: *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right-hand of God---For by one offering he has for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Heb. x. 12, 14.* These repeated sacrifices, were designed as a type to remove the continual guilt of returning sins amongst the saints; morning-sins, and evening-sins, sins in the beginning of life,  
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sins in the middle state of life, and sins of old age; sins of public life, and private sins, known and unknown, secret and public. The priests were daily employed in continuing these typical sacrifices, through all the levitical dispensation. And let it be observed, *Acts* iii. 1. this was called the hour of prayer; and that the people were appointed to offer up their prayers and praises unto God at these times of the morning and evening sacrifice, as the everlasting means of the acceptance of our morning and evening worship before God, making all our services acceptable to the great and blessed God in heaven hereby.

Therefore when we come to lift up our morning worship, or our evening addresses, to the throne, let us remember that *Jesus*, the lamb who was slain, is there for ever, making this new and living way to the throne plain, and keeping it always open by the virtue of his sacrifice. Let not a morning or evening pass, without an address to heaven in this blood.

3d. lesson. This gives sufficient and perpetual notice of the everlasting intercession which *Christ* makes for the saints. *Heb.* vii. 25. And therefore he is represented, as able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him. There is no need of other high-priests to offer up daily sacrifices, since the one sacrifice of *Jesus*, the great high priest, in the constant emblem of it, abides here before the face of God for ever. *John* i. 29. *1 John* i. 7. Behold the lamb of God, who, by his blood, cleanseth us from all sin. *Isa.* i. 18. Though our sins may be as scarlet, they shall all be washed away; and our garments be as white as snow, or made white as wool, and fit to appear before God continually, without blemishes and defilement, through this abounding fountain, which may be said to flow for ever from the wounds of *Jesus Christ*, as a sacrifice; since it is in and by this blood, our high priest may be supposed for ever to plead with the father for our pardon and acceptance: For the intercession of *Christ* is scarcely revealed unto us, as carried on by the actual voice or language of *Jesus* the son of God in heaven; but perhaps it rather means the everlasting virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice, as his blood, which has a voice in it, even as a fountain always open and flowing in the sight of God, for the forgiveness of sins, *Zech.* xiii. 1. for all the true *Israel* of God: And in this sense, the blood of *Jesus*, as is elsewhere said concerning the blood of *Abel*, has a voice in it, and pleads for ever for better things than the blood of *Abel* did. *Heb.* xii. 24. Glory be to God for providing this everlasting sacrifice, and for revealing such a vision in the midst of the throne, for our constant contemplation.

4th lesson. This vision appears on the throne as an everlasting encouragement for the vilest and most guilty sinners of all ages to trust in the sacrifice of the lamb that was slain. When we remember the scarlet and crimson sins of *David*, *Solomon*, and *Manasseh*, and of the *Corinthians*, which are reckoned up *1 Cor.* vi. 10, 11. the saints on earth may say, and such were we, drenched all over and defiled with iniquities, whose evil thoughts, evil words, and evil actions, are without bounds and without number; but they are all washed away in this divine laver, with all the infinite evil and guilt of them, against the majesty and the grace of God; for the virtue and the dignity of the united Godhead, which dwells in the man *Christ Jesus*, runs through the whole of his sacrifice, and makes it of infinite and everlasting value; whereby sins of all manner of aggravations are removed from those that believe in *Jesus*. *1 John* i. 7. *Matt.* xii. 31. No manner of crimes are sufficient to create despair, where this atonement is provided.

5th lesson. It may also be designed as an encouraging memorial to relieve old sinners under the guilt of sins, of long continuance, and laden with many aggravations; for

for as the yearly sacrifice of atonement, whose blood the high-priest carried into the holy place, and appeared there before God, cancelled the guilt of all the nation for all the days of that year; so *Christ*, being entered into the holy place, made without hands, and dwelling there for ever; with his own blood answers for the sins of those that believe in him, which they have been all their lives committing against God, if they are but deeply convinced of their long and repeated iniquities, and with humble faith fly to *Jesus*, the hope that is set before them.

Look up, therefore, look up, ye humble penitents: that have been guilty of many and repeated crimes, and are almost drowned in tears of repentance, and are ready to die under despair, because of your aggravated iniquities, look unto this blessed emblem on high, the lamb, as it had been slain: This sacrifice gives foundation for hope, not only that we shall be cleansed from all our secret faults, which are more than we can think, or reckon up, but even from presumptuous sins, which are of the deepest dye. *Mark* iii. 28. All manner of sins and blasphemies, says our saviour, shall be forgiven unto men. Look up to this blessed emblem, and you shall find this salvation complete and perfect, and your consciences pacified, under the agonies of your own guilty reflections, through the blood of *Jesus*, who died.

6th lesson. This emblem of a dying sacrifice is also a refuge, a support, and a hope for saints, under the continual workings of original sin, under their daily infirmities, under every new temptation, and the buffetings and charges of Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren, *Rev.* xii. 11. The armies of the saints have continually experienced the virtue of this sacrifice; for in all ages they cast down this accuser by the blood of the lamb; and here is their great refuge, under all the violent and repeated suggestions and accusations of the great enemy of God and souls: Here is indeed a sweet pillow for the souls of those who have been guilty of long iniquities, to rest their penitent and pained consciences, by faith upon, in a dying hour. *Heb.* xiii. 8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*: And the virtue of his atonement always fresh in the eye of God.

Is there any poor soul here, whose conscience is buffeted and sorely tormented with hurrying temptations, and doubts whether their repeated sins shall be pardoned or no? Go into the secret chambers of retirement and repentance, whither the saints before you have gone, and sighed, and wept bitterly before God, and mourned over their sins before the throne. Ask christians of long experience, whence came all their peace, and their hopes of freedom from the guilt of sin? And they will answer with one voice, it is from the blood of the lamb. It would overwhelm the conscience to have a full sight of these transgressions let in upon it, in all their terror and their dreadful condemnation, if they had not such a refuge as this to fly to. O blessed for ever be the name of *Jesus*, who has given us, in his word, such a sight, such a gracious vision of hope and comfort! And a blessed vision it is, for the poor humble sinner to take a look at daily, with an eye of faith.

7th lesson. This vision is appointed as an evidence and monument of the church's safety and security, hope and confidence, even to the end of the world; though their circumstances be never so low, though they are never so much sinking under their fears, this is a good security of that promise, *Matt.* xvi. 28. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church's interest, to bring it down to the ground; for the sacrifice of *Christ* is of everlasting value, and has purchased the security of the church to the end of the world. *Jesus* is represented as standing in the midst of the throne, and before the eyes of God the father; so that the church shall never be condemned, nor given up to destruction. All the living stones that God has designed to be brought into the building of the church, shall

shall be brought into it in their several seasons: All the dead sinners that are made alive by the blood of *Christ*, and by the work of his holy Spirit, shall be raised together in a glorious building, which God shall dwell in for ever: And when the top-stone is laid in heaven, the redeemed nations shall shout unto it, grace, grace. *Zech.* iv. 7.

8th lesson. This vision may be esteemed also as a monumental emblem, that the followers of *Christ*, who shall fill heaven with inhabitants, are sinners redeemed from the earth: They are brought into heaven as ransomed by the blood of the lamb, and as cleansed in this laver; they are not originally pure and holy in themselves, as the angels were, but they are guilty creatures, once shamefully defiled and corrupted, but rescued from hell and sin, and recovered from all their defilements and dangers by a blessed redeemer. Such were some of you, all ye pardoned and sanctified souls; such were all of you, as related to the first *Adam*, sinful and miserable; but ye are redeemed and saved by the second. This thought should ever keep us humble and self-abased, that such worthless creatures as we are, are not banished for ever from the presence of God. This should ever put us in mind of our low estate, that we were once fallen creatures, and are raised by the sovereign and condescending grace of God in *Christ Jesus*; and it is in *Christ* alone that we stand.

This should be a perpetual warning to each of us, not to indulge or endure the least defilement of sin; for sin is of so malignant a nature, that it will soon spread all over the soul, and taint it with guilt and shame, when once indulged. This is a lesson for redeemed creatures ever to remember, especially while we are within the reach of temptation, and should keep us ever watchful.

9th lesson. This vision may give the believers in *Christ* an everlasting assurance that they shall never be separated from the love of God, which is in *Christ Jesus* our Lord: For he stands in the midst of the throne, and will keep his place there for ever and ever. *Rom.* viii. 34, 35. He stands there, if I may so speak, in his priestly garments, with the remembrance of his bloody sacrifice, before the throne of God, and is never out of his sight. Faith may triumph with holy confidence in this view. Who shall condemn us now, since *Christ* has died, and lives for ever, to maintain and testify this atonement, which he has made for our sins by his death, and his rising again? He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore. *Amen.* *Rev.* i. 18. Who shall pretend therefore to separate us from the love of God, that is so secured to us in and by *Jesus Christ*? You see plainly in the last verse of this chapter, faith defies all creatures whatsoever to make any division between God and the justified and holy soul, while *Jesus* appears there in the eternal remembrance of his atoning sacrifice; the poor creature here on earth may sometimes be overtaken with sin, through the power of corruption, and blush, and fear to think of appearing before a God of perfect holiness; but this vision of our redeemer encourages his faith, restores his spirit, and supports his hope. And we observe it is placed in the last of the prophetic visions, even in the *Revelations* of *St. John*, that it may abide upon the soul, and live in the memory of saints, in this frail and imperfect state, where they are so often in danger of sinning against God.

#### INFERENCES OR REMARKS drawn from these discourses.

I. Rem. How large, how excellent, and how glorious is this salvation of *Jesus Christ*, the lamb of God, slain to take away the sins of the world? And this may be made to appear in many particulars.

1st instance of the extent of it. It is a salvation that reaches through all ages, from the beginning to the end of time, from the first sin of man, even to the end of all

things : Those glories of the salvation of *Jesus Christ* are beyond the reach of our present conception, and beyond all the powers of number to reckon up, and the force of eloquence to display.

2d instance of the extent of it. It reaches through all the tribes of mankind, through all countries and nations, through all families and persons, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, to the ends of the earth. Our saviour prophesies, that if he be lifted up from the earth, that is, crucified, and die as an atoning sacrifice, he shall draw all men unto him. *John* xii. 32. So in *Rev.* v. 10. and vii. 9. men of all nations, and of all languages, of all countries, and all ages, shall be found in this blessed number, who are redeemed by the blood of *Christ*, and join in the everlasting song of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne. and to the lamb for ever.

3d instance of the extent of it. This doctrine of the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, reaches through all the transactions of God with the children of men. It begins as high as creation itself ; thousands of mankind were at first created for this reason, that they might in time be joined to this blessed army, and rejoice and triumph in the lamb that was slain : It reaches through all the redemption of *Christ*, for sinful men were redeemed by the blood of *Christ* for this very purpose : For this purpose they were called and converted from the wicked of the earth ; and turned from sin to God, that they might for ever be made glorious in holiness. It is through this death of *Christ*, the son of God, that they are all justified and brought into the divine favour : They are all sanctified by his holy Spirit, under this influence, and adopted into the family of God, to become the younger brethren of *Jesus*, the first-begotten of the father. And when God fulfils this salvation in heaven, it will appear what multitudes of fallen ruined creatures are recovered and saved, by this atonement of the lamb.

4th instance of the extent of it. I may add further, all the mercies and blessings that are bestowed upon men through time and eternity : I might add, whether these blessings are national or personal, yet our Lord *Jesus Christ*, in our nature, dying on the cross, has some hand, by the exuberant merit of his sacrifice, in procuring and accomplishing all these purposes : The grace of *Christ*, while we keep our eye on the united Godhead, has some hand in all the temporal favours, and even the national mercies, even of those who refuse to receive the special and everlasting blessings of his grace ; besides all the consolations and the joys which the saints are partakers of here on earth. from their first calling to their glorification, must have some regard to this great sacrifice, ever fresh in the eye of God.

5th instance of the extent of it. This salvation spreads through and beyond all the sins that ever we committed, from the beginning of life to this day ; and beyond even all the miseries that mankind ever sustained by their original fall, and apostasy from God ; had they all received this grace, it is enough to balance them all. In the dignity of the divine nature. united to the man *Jesus*, there is provision enough to answer for all this abounding iniquity, and price sufficient to buy all the blessings that God ever bestowed upon his fallen creature man, and sufficient pardon and happiness for all the sinners that are willing to submit to the grace of God, and receive these blessings in his own appointed way. It is only impenitence, and rejection of the gospel, hinders the universal effect of it. O amazing and blessed extent of this salvation !

6th instance of the extent of it. I add, in the last place, the doctrine of the salvation of the lamb of God, slain from the beginning of the world, carries a glory through all the perfections and attributes of God himself, which might be discovered

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at large in a survey of the several glories of his nature, his justice, and wisdom, his power and his truth, his grace and goodness, in the salvation of fallen men: there is never a perfection of God that is honoured, but it is in and by this blessed medium, the death and mediation of *Jesus Christ*, the lamb of God.

II. Rem. How necessary, how solid, and important, is this doctrine of the salvation of Christ, by the atonement of the lamb? It is not a mere matter of speculation, amusement, and discourse; but it is of infinite concernment to men to be acquainted with it. *John* xii. 27. For the purposes and designs of this hour, even of the atonement and death of *Christ*, the Lord *Jesus*, the lamb of God, came into this world: This might be illustrated also in many particulars; as

1st Illustration of this remark. God would not deal thus with his beloved son *Jesus Christ*, to make him a bloody sacrifice, for mean and ignoble purposes: This work of his death and atonement is by no means to be esteemed as a cypher among the works of divine grace, or as a mere object of speculation and amusement. The blessed God has too much love for his son *Jesus*, his only begotten, and his first-beloved, to make him merely the talk of his church, or the matter of entertainment for their meditation, or their discourse; there must be something substantial, holy, divine and honourable, designed in and by the death of this lamb of God; whose sacrifice, in the view of it, is represented as beginning before the foundation of the world.

2d Illustration of this remark. God would not deal thus with the fallen and miserable race of mankind, to appoint such a sacrifice, which had little or no efficacy in it. Our saviour himself tells us, *John* vi. 33, 35. That he is the bread of life; and except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, except the fallen and perishing race of mankind apply themselves to this way of salvation by *Jesus Christ*. they have no life in them; that is, there is no salvation appointed any other way. *Acts* v. 12.

3d illustration of this remark. The blessed God would not deal thus with his chief favourites among mankind, even the wisest, the best, and the holiest of his creatures, to be a sacrifice merely to entertain their reasonings and their meditations; but it is designed as the food of their souls, as the life of their spirits, and their hope for eternity. *John* vi. 21.

4th Illustration of this remark. Again, God would never have dealt thus with his chosen and favourite people the *Jews*, through all their generations, to have fed them and pleased them only with types and figures, shadows and emblems, if they had no substantial blessings contained in them. There were indeed some happy uses appointed concerning these types and shadows, in the national church of the *Jews*, but this was not the chief design of their institution, but it was to figure out and represent the solid blessings of the gospel, the spiritual and everlasting privileges which God designed for all his chosen and saved ones.

5th Illustration of this remark. I might add in the last place, God would not deal thus with his holy prophets of the old testament, and his apostles in the new, whether *Jews* or christians, to make them the ministers of a shewy and shadowy dispensation, which had no substantial and everlasting blessings belonging to it.

III. Rem. What a divine and distinguishing blessing is it to us, in this age and this nation, that the doctrine of the pardon of sin, by the atoning blood of the lamb, has been preached to us from our infancy, and yet continues to be preached to us by the ministers of the gospel? O blessed be God, that we are not found in those popish nations, where the priests would teach us to trust in masses and penances, in long and

idle repetitions of formal prayers in *Latin*, and merits of the saints, and useless addresses to them, represented in figures of silver, or gold, wood or stone, or brass, in order to reconcile us to God; in sprinklings with holy water, and other fooleries, instead of the only appointed sacrifice of the son of God; whereby they make void the blessed gospel of *Christ*, and overwhelm it with their superstitious inventions? How sad a thing would it be for us, if we were left upon a dying pillow, and had no other hopes but these to rest our souls upon?

Here it may not be improper to give an answer to this objection: If this doctrine of the atoning blood of the lamb that was slain, be so glorious in itself, and so needful to our salvation, how comes it to pass that our saviour speaks so little of it in the whole of his ministry, while he was three years preaching among the towns of the *Jews*.

Answer. See a large and full answer to this objection in my sermon on the *Atonement of Christ*; (VOL. I.) and further answers are repeated in my treatise of *Orthodoxy and charity united*, in the three last pages of the *first essay of the substance and matter of the gospel*.

Another objection may be raised here: If this doctrine be so glorious, and so very needful, How comes it to pass, that it is so much neglected among men that profess christianity? And that men who believe it, are no more affected with it?

Answer 1. Though a thing be never so useful and necessary, yet the mere commonness of these things sometimes is an unhappy occasion of rendering them less regarded, and less attended to. These glories and wonders of the gospel of *Christ* have run over our thoughts and over our tongues so many thousand times, without that due solemnity as becomes them, and without those awful ideas which those things require, that our natures are not much moved by the importance of them. Though these truths are in themselves so divine, so awful and solemn, yet, alas! they are lost upon our passions, and they make no powerful impression there; they awaken no serious meditations, neither at the time present nor afterwards.

Answer 2. Mankind do not keep upon their minds a deep sense of sin; the impressions that the convincing spirit sometimes makes, vanish away from their consciences, and the necessity and the glory of this way of salvation too soon vanishes off from our thoughts, because we are not rightly and steadily apprehensive what an infinite evil is contained in the nature of sin; and therefore the methods of pardoning mercy and forgiving grace lie with so little weight upon our spirits. The sacrifice of *Christ*, how exceeding precious soever it is to an awakened and convinced sinner, yet it little affects the meditations of those who have not a lively sense of sin maintained upon their spirits: When sin lies with a weight upon the soul, it awakens many a bitter sigh and groan; and a review of the method of atonement appointed by the great God, in the blood of *Christ*, renders the remembrance of it very pleasant and affecting. Let us therefore endeavour with all diligence to preserve a deep sense of the evil of sin, as committed against the infinite majesty of heaven, always upon our consciences, that the blood of *Jesus* may be ever precious unto us: We soon forget the vile aggravations with which our sins are attended; and therefore the way of forgiveness makes so little impression upon our souls.

Answer 3. There are few christians who keep the love of *Christ* active and warm enough in their hearts, to give them any deep impressions of the invaluable price of his blood. It is true, there are many thousands in our land and nation, who love the Lord *Jesus Christ* sincerely, though they have not seen him; but still they are but few, in comparison of the unknown multitudes who have heard of his name, and yet know him not, and love him not: O blessed *Jesus*, awaken these thousands of stupid sinners

to



to see the wonders of thy love, the amazing condescension of thy death, and the glory of this thy salvation! This reconciliation to God by the blood of *Christ* is one of the chief glories, for which the saints in heaven ever praise him, and ever love him: This is the matter of their divine songs, worthy is the lamb to receive glory and honour; because we were enslaved and captivated to sin and *Satan*, and we are redeemed by his blood. *Rev. v. 6.*

Answer 4. Another unhappy cause why these things make so slight an impression upon our spirits, is because the most of us are so busily and deeply engaged in the things of this present life; though all these things, which affect our present passions, are but shadows and trifles, in comparison with this glorious and divine doctrine: A glorious subject indeed, which should at all times awaken our warmest joy, and our loudest praises.

IV. Rem. How divinely full of glory and pleasure shall that happy hour be, when all the millions of mankind, that have been redeemed by the blood of this lamb of God, shall meet together, and stand around him, with every tongue and every heart full of joy and praise! How astonishing will be the glory and the joy of that day, when all the saints shall join together in one common song or gratitude, and love, and everlasting thankfulness, to this redeemer? With what unknown delight, and inexpressible satisfaction, shall all that are saved from the ruins of sin and hell, address the lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, and rejoice in his presence?

Nor shall the angels be silent in this general and universal song of blessing and praise; for though they are not redeemed from sin and hell by the blood of the lamb, yet they are represented in *Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.* as assisting the saints, the redeemed of the Lord, in their triumphs of universal joy: And when they shall all at once, who, in the several ages of the world, have been taught to receive the grace and salvation of this redeemer, stand together, and praise the father of all things, who has given their souls into the hands of his son *Jesus Christ*, to redeem, sanctify, and save them: then God shall have fulfilled this blessed prayer of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, *John xvii. 24. Father I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.*

D I S-

# DISCOURSE VII.

God in Christ is the saviour of the ends of the Earth:

O R

Faith represented in its lowest degrees.

The First Part of this SERMON.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

*Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.*

**I**F these words were not written in the bible, and by that means grown old and familiar to us, but if they had come immediately into the midst of any assembly in *Great-Britain*, by a voice from heaven, how would they awaken our ears, and impress our souls! Surely every one amongst us, that sees himself in danger of perishing, would listen with eager attention to the word that calls and invites him to be saved. The *British islands* have been reckoned by the antients to be the ends of the earth; and we, the inhabitants thereof, should be strangely surprized and pleased at such language from the upper world.

Our thoughts would be crowded with hasty enquiries, “whence is this blessed voice? “Is it from heaven indeed? Who is it that invites perishing wretches to salvation? “Am not I within the reach and compass of this call? Is it not I that am invited? “And is not the blessing suited to my case and my danger? What must I do to partake of it? And what assurance can I have that it shall be conferred upon me?”

Such enquiries as these should be raised in us at this time, if we do but pay as just a deference to the voice of God when he spoke of old by a prophet, as we would if he spake now by a sudden miracle: And though all these queries would be very hard to answer, if we had nothing else but this miraculous sound, yet as the words lie in the old testament, since we enjoy the new, it is much easier to obtain a satisfying answer to them. Let us then try to find out.

- I. Who is the person that speaks.
- II. Who are the persons spoken to.
- III. What this salvation is.
- IV. How we are to come by it.
- V. What assurance we can have, that we shall possess it in the way proposed.

To answer these questions shall be the business of these discourses.

First,

First, Let us find out who is the person that speaks.

He asserts his own divinity in the words of my text. *I am God, and there is none else.* Whether the divine being speaks this in the person of the Father, or in the person of *Jesus Christ* the Son, is not of absolute necessity to be determined in this place.

Perhaps it could not be expounded under the old testament any otherwise than concerning the great God, considered as the father of all, the only true God, whose name is *Jehovah*, and who was then chiefly known to the *Jews* as the God of *Israel*. It is the God of the *Jews* calling the *Gentiles* to partake of his salvation. He is their strength and their saviour, and their righteousness is derived from him, as in the foregoing and following verses.

But when under the new testament we explain these words, we must rather consider God in *Christ* reconciling the world of *Jews* and *Gentiles* to himself: It is the same one Godhead which dwells bodily in the man *Christ Jesus*; for the Father and the Son are not two Gods. It is God, the only true God, manifest in the flesh: It is *Emmanuel*, or God with us, who speaks these words: It is *Christ Jesus* the Lord, who is one with the Father, and in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, who calls the ends of the earth to look unto him and be saved. And there are some special reasons that incline me to suppose these words of the prophet should chiefly be applied in the new testament to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who makes this blessed offer of grace.

(1.) It is the same person to whom the salvation of *Israel* is ascribed, and who is called a saviour so often in the context, ver. 15. 17. 21. which is the very meaning of the name *Jesus*, and the frequent appellation of *Christ* in the new testament, and his particular office is to be a saviour, and to bring salvation.

(2.) It is he who is appointed to be the righteousness and the strength of his people. Ver. 24, 25. *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.* Now this is the very name of the *Messiah*, Jer. xxiii. 6. *The Lord our righteousness:* And it is *Christ* who is made righteousness unto us. 1 Cor. i. 23. And by and in whom all the saints are to be justified in the language of the gospel. It is from him also that his people derive strength. St. Paul bids *Timothy* be strong in the grace which is in *Christ*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. The *Ephesian* converts must be strong in the Lord, Eph. vi. 10. And the apostle himself could do all things through *Christ*, who strengthened him, Phil. iv. 13. Now the new testament (to which times the words of my text chiefly refer) does not usually represent God, under the idea of the father, as the strength of believers, nor is he ever described there as their righteousness.

Again, (3.) This is the person that brings salvation to the ends of the earth, which is the very character of the *Messiah* in the writings of the same prophet. Isa. xlix. 6. *I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, (says God the father) that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

(4.) I add further, that part of this context, even the very next words, are applied to our Lord *Jesus Christ* by St. Paul. The prophet saith, *I am the Lord, and there is none else*, ver. 18. *Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear*, ver. 23. The apostle, citing the words of the prophet, speaks thus. Rom. xiv. 9, 10, 11. *Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living: All must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* Where the words *Christ*, *Lord*, and *God*, seem to be used promiscuously for the same person. Nor would the apostle's argument seem strong and cogent in that place, if the word *God* were applied only to the father; for it is his design there to shew that the advancement and

and glory of *Christ* was the aim and the effect of our saviour's death and resurrection, that he might be Lord and judge of all, and that every knee and tongue might own his lordship and sovereignty. The application of these words to *Christ*, is again evident in *Phil.* ii. 10, 11. *At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.* Though there the glory of the father is expressed also.

(5.) The last reason why this text may be properly applied to *Christ*, is because many other expressions of the prophets, that plainly belong to the great God, the God of *Israel*, as coming to bring salvation to the *Gentiles*, are plainly applied to *Christ* in the new testament *Psalms* cii. 22, 25. *When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord, &c. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth.* This is applied to *Christ*, *Heb.* i. 10. So *Psalms* xcvi. 1. 7. *The Lord reigneth—let the multitude of isles be glad thereof: Worship him all ye Gods.* Which is applied to *Christ*, *Heb.* i. 6. So *Isa.* xxxv. 4, 5, 6. compared with *Mark* ix. 27. So *Isa.* xl. 5. compared with *Matth.* iii. 3. So *Joel* v. 32. compared with *Rom.* x. 13. which would be too large now to rehearse.

It will be objected indeed, how can it be said, that *Christ* is God, and there is none else? Is not the father God also?

I answer, this does no more exclude the Godhead of the father, than our saviour's own words, *John* xvii. 3. exclude his own divinity, where he calls the father the only true God. I think it is sufficiently evident from many places of scripture, that the father and the son have an unconceivable communion, and that one and the same divine nature, which is in the father, dwells in the son: For since divine names and attributes, works and worship, are ascribed to both, therefore they must both be in some sense true God; and since there is but one true God, they must both have fellowship in the same Godhead; or else the son would be another God different from the father, which the bible neither knows nor allows.

These words therefore, I am God, and there is none else, if applied to *Christ* mean no more than this: There is no other Godhead but that which dwells in me; but that Godhead in which I partake, by intimate communion or one-ness with the father. I am in the father, and the father is in me. *John* xiv. 10, 11. In *Christ* dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. *Coloss.* ii. 9.

After all, if we should ascribe this speech entirely to God the father, yet it must be confessed, as I hinted before, it is God in *Christ*, God as reconciling the world to himself in and by *Jesus Christ*, and saving the *Gentiles* as his people, with an everlasting salvation; so that *Christ*, the son of God, the saviour of men, cannot be left out of my text.

The second enquiry is this, who are the persons to whom this gracious invitation is made?

The text tells us, that the call reaches to all the ends of the earth, which we are to understand in a literal or in a figurative sense.

Is't in a literal sense, and thus it signifies the *Gentile* nations, who dwell afar off from *Judea*, those that inhabit the distant corners of the world, and the islands that are afar off, that have not heard of the fame of the grace or glory of God. As *Isa.* lxvi. 19. For the *Jews* fancied themselves to be placed in the middle of the earth, by the peculiar favour of God; and indeed they were so in one respect, for the land of *Canaan* is near the borders of *Asia*, where it joins to *Africa*, and not very far off from the limits of *Europe*; which three were the only known parts of the world in that day.

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The *British* islands may, in a special manner, be included in this expression, for they were the very farthest parts of the earth, that could be known in the age of *Isaiab*. This voice of compassion is therefore eminently sent to us in *England*; the Lord says to every one of us, behold me, behold me, ye that were not called by my name. *Isa.* xlv. 1. Look unto me from these isles afar off, ye *Britons*, look unto me from the ends of the earth, and be saved. O sirs, if you and I could but imagine that *Jesus Christ* calls us, as it were by name, surely it would allure us to hearken to the voice of such divine compassion.

Idly. The words may be understood in a figurative sense, and so they may signify all those persons who are under the same sort of character and circumstance as the *Gentiles* were in that age.

1. Ye that are in the ends of the earth, that are afar off from the church of God, his knowledge and his worship. Ye that are at the greatest distance from the true *Jerusalem*. Ye who are the vilest of sinners, utterly unholy, and without God in the world. Ye that have nothing of grace or religion in you, look unto *Christ* and be saved; for he came to save the sinners of the *Gentiles*, and the vilest of mankind.

2. Ye that have not known the blessing of holy parents, but were bred like *beastens*, who know not God, and born in families that call not on his name: Ye that never were trained up in religious education, that were never brought near to God by a father that was in his covenant, or a mother that believed in his gospel: Ye that were never solemnly devoted to God, nor acknowledge any relation to him, he calls you this day to accept his salvation.

Or 3. Ye that have broke the bonds of a pious education, and ran away from God and his house, and his worship, as the *Gentiles* had done from the religion and instructions of *Noah* their ancestor. Ye that have wandered afar off from your father's house, even to the ends of the earth, and are perishing with the prodigal son, at a dreadful distance from God and heaven: Come, look unto *Christ* and be saved.

4. Ye that are mourning in darkness, as it were at the ends of the earth, and on the very borders of hell, without hope, as the *Gentiles* were, *Eph.* ii. 12. almost giving up all for lost, yielding to final despair, look to *Jesus* the saviour, lay hold on the hope that is set before you, and live.

And while I am preaching in this place\*, I may add also

5. You that dwell in dark corners of this our land, far from any place of religious worship: Ye who live by the sides of the forest, or on bare and solitary commons, in a poor ignorant village, or in lonesome cottages, where letters and reading are not known, and a bible is a strange thing, where books are seldom seen, and the word of God never sounds: Ye that have lived hitherto like wild heathens in the ends of the earth, if any such are present in this assembly, remember you are this day called as it were by the prophet from heaven, and by the word of the living God, from the lips of his ministers on earth, to look to God in *Christ*, as reconciling the world to himself; to look to *Jesus* the saviour, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells.

\* Note, This was delivered in a village in the country.

The third enquiry proceeds thus: What is this salvation to which we are invited?

It is the same salvation that *Israel* shall enjoy, the *Israel* of God, the people of his love: They shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, *ver.* 17. In general, it is a salvation from sin, and all the dismal consequences of it. This is the

reason of the name *Jesus*, or the saviour, *Matt. i. 21*. He shall save his people from their sins. And it is the same *Jesus*, who delivers us from the wrath to come. *1 Thess. i. 10*.

Particularly, (1.) It is a salvation from the guilt of past sins, which exposes us to divine vengeance, and a restoration of the person to the present love and favour of God, to peace of conscience, and to the hope of eternal life.

(2.) It is a salvation and recovery from the power of sin to the power of holiness. It is a deliverance from vile affections and sinful practices to the practice and the love of all piety and goodness: It is a recovery of our nature from the lusts of the flesh, and the life of a brute, to the reasonable and becoming life of a man or an angel. It is a rescue of the soul from the tyranny of its own lusts, and the foul image of *Satan*, to a sweet and sacred liberty, to a religious self-government, and to the image of God.

(3.) It is a deliverance from all the future punishments due to sin, from the everlasting misery of hell, together with the conveyance of a right and title to the everlasting happiness of heaven. It is a blessing that runs through this world and the world to come. It is a total and complete deliverance from all that you feel, and all that you fear. It is all-sufficient and eternal salvation.

Whatever your ruin, your distress, or your danger be, there is something in this salvation that is suited to relieve them all; there is relief and hope in *Christ*. Let us then awaken all the powers within us to attend to the invitations of divine mercy. Are we blind and ignorant of God, and heaven, and divine things? *Christ* is the light of this lower world; *John i. 9*. He has compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way; *Heb. v. 2*. Are we foolish? He is made of God wisdom to us; *1 Cor. i. 30*. Are we unclean and defiled with many iniquities? *The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin*; *1 John i. 7*. Are we guilty before God? He is our propitiation and atonement; *Rom. iii. 25*. and the Lord our righteousness; *Jer. xxiii. 6*. Have we lost the divine favour? He is the only mediator betwixt God and man; *1 Tim. ii. 5*. And the great reconciler to make our peace; *Eph. ii. 15*. Are we unholy? He can change our natures, and sanctify our souls; *Heb. ii. 11*. Are we hard-hearted and impenitent, so that we cannot mourn for our sins as we would do? He is exalted to bestow repentance, as well as forgiveness; *Acts v. 31*. Are we weak, and unable to resist temptation, or to perform our duty? He is our strength, *Isa. xlv. 24*. Are we sick and dying? He is our physician; *Mat. ix. 12*. Are we dead in trespasses and sins? He can quicken us to a divine life, and make us live to God; for the living spirit is with him. *Christ* himself is our life; and though the body of the saints must die, yet he shall raise it again to life everlasting. *John v. 21, 26, 29*.

Surely if we are awake, and in our right senses, there is not a soul of us in this assembly, but must feel itself under some of these unhappy circumstances. Come then, ye sinful and distressed souls, ye helpless creatures, ye perishing dying wretches of every kind: Come let me lead you to this heavenly favour; and may my own soul join with yours to partake of this full, this all-sufficient salvation. Blessed redeemer, make us all willing to be saved, and let us seek our help from thy hands!

I go on now to the fourth enquiry: And that is, what must we do in order to be partakers of this blessing?

The words of the invitation are, look unto me. Now when persons in distress are called to look to any one for help, it implies to trust in him, to depend upon him, to seek help from his power and goodness. See the history of the cripple, who seeing  
Peter

*Peter* and *John* going into the temple, asked an alms: And they said, look on us: Upon which he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something of them; *Acts* iii. 4, 5. So looking unto God signifies dependance on him, and expectation of mercy from him. We know not what to do, saith *Jehoshaphat*, *2 Chron.* xx. 12. but our eyes are upon thee. So *Psalms* xxiv. 5. They looked unto him and were lightened. When there was universal distress round about, saith the prophet, *Micah* vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation.*

It is evident from the sacred, as well as the common use of this word, that it signifies the same as believing or trusting in *Christ* in the new testament, which is the appointed means of our obtaining a share in his salvation. *Acts* xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Sinners of the *Gentiles* are required in my text to look to him. It is foretold by the same prophet, that to him shall the *Gentiles* seek, *Isa.* xi. 10. Which is cited and interpreted by *St. Paul*, *Rom.* xv. 12. *In him shall the Gentiles trust.*

The soul then, that is so far sensible of its past iniquities, its guilt and danger of hell, and that feels so much of its inward sinful nature, appetites, and passions, as to know its own inability to procure pardon of God for sins past, or to make itself holy for time to come, and sees also in *Christ* such a glorious all-sufficiency of help and relief, and upon this account commits itself by prayer and humble trust, or dependance, into the hands of *Jesus Christ*, as an all-sufficient saviour, sincerely and earnestly desirous of his complete salvation in all the parts of it, the holiness and the happiness; this soul is a believer in *Christ*; this soul has looked to *Christ*, in the sense of my text, and shall certainly be saved.

Because the duty of faith, trusting, or believing, is so necessary to salvation, therefore it has pleased God in his word to render the notion of it plain and easy, by many metaphors and figures of speech, to accommodate the capacities and understandings of the meanest. And these are borrowed also from the most useful and active powers of nature, and the most common actions of life.

When the metaphor is taken from the feet, believing is called a coming to *Christ*. *Matt.* xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* *John* vi. 37. *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* In another place it is described by fleeing for refuge, *Heb.* vi. 18. which is a figure borrowed from the feet also; but including danger, fear, and speed.

When it is borrowed from the hands, it is called receiving of *Christ*. *John* i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* And *Heb.* vi. 18. It is a laying hold on the hope set before us.

Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the tongue, and then faith is described by calling on *Christ*. *Rom.* x. 11, 12, 13. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed;—for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.*

In my text the figure of speech is taken from the eyes; and the direction is, look unto me and be saved. There is something in this way of speaking, that more exactly suits the words faith and believing; for as they imply both a belief of the all-sufficiency of *Christ* to save, and a trusting him for this salvation, so looking implies that the poor dying creature has seen the all-sufficiency that is in *Christ*, and thence is encouraged to hope and expect help from him.

It is such a look of hope and dependance as a helpless creature, just dying of the pestilence, or a mortal stab, would express toward some angel-physician that was

coming to him with a vital and all-healing balm: Such a look as a condemned criminal, at the place of execution, would cast toward some swift messenger afar off, who has a pardon in his hand: Or such a look as a child, just ready to be slaughtered by a spiteful enemy, would express towards his father, well-armed, and hastening to his deliverance.

We may suppose the saving act of faith in this place to be described by the word looking for these reasons.

Ist Because the persons who are called, are in the ends of the earth: And thus the propriety of expression is preserved, and the metaphor appears more beautiful. Those who are so far off from *Christ* might complain, "we are feeble dying creatures, we cannot come to him, as with our feet, nor lay hold of him as with our hands; but we can look toward him, though we are in the ends of the earth." As *Jonah* did when in the depths of the sea; *Jon. ii. 4. I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.* Now the temple was a type of the human nature of *Christ*, in which God was pleased to dwell; and the *Jews* in their prayers, even from the ends of the earth, and in heathen lands, turned their eyes towards this temple in humble hope of acceptance, *1 Kings viii. 29, 35, &c.* So may the poor perishing sinner say, "Though I am far from God and holiness, and all hope in myself, or in any creatures that are near me, yet I am within reach of the call of *Christ*; I hear the voice of his inviting grace; I will look towards him as my only hope; I will keep my eyes upon him and trust in him; I will by him draw near to God; and my soul shall live."

IIdly Believing in *Christ* may be described in this place by looking to him to express the lowest and the weakest degree of faith, for the encouragement of poor convinced trembling sinners. When persons are awakened to a lively apprehension of their guilt, and a quick sense of their danger, and see themselves every moment liable to perish under the wrath of an offended God, and at the same time feel their own utter inability to save themselves, it is proper that the act of faith whereby we are saved should be expressed in the easiest manner, that may allure them toward *Christ*, the only saviour, and may encourage them to hope. When they are, as it were, at the ends of the earth, at a wide distance from God and *Christ*, they may look towards him, and send a wish of desire and dependance that way; like dying drowning sailors in a storm that look towards the shore, to see if there be any hope: And such a look as this is ordained of God to derive all salvation from so almighty and complete a saviour as *Jesus Christ* is: For it contains in it the whole nature of saving faith, as the flower and the fruit are contained in a little green bud, though the several parts and the leaves of them are not yet unfolded, nor appear to sight.

Such a look of a convinced sinner to *Christ* implies in it a distressing sense of his sin and present danger, a belief that there is help for him in *Christ*, and an aversion of the eye from every thing else; a renouncing all other dependencies, an earnest readiness and desire to partake of this salvation, such as *Christ* offers it; that is, to make him holy as well as happy: And it includes also thus much of trust or confidence, that if the soul has any hope at all of its own salvation, *Christ* is the only ground of this hope. There is and will be some sort of expectation of relief from the hand to which we look, when we see ourselves perishing.

IIIdly Looking to *Christ* for salvation is a word that shews how little hand we have in our own deliverance from sin and death. *Israel* has destroyed himself, but in God alone is his help, *Hos. xiii. 9.* It is not possible that our looking should effect our salvation



vation of it itself, or do any thing toward it any other way, than as it is dependance on another to save us.

Faith itself is that grace that has the least shew of self-activity, self-sufficiency, or self-honour in it. *Rom.* iv. 16. Therefore our salvation is ordained to be of faith, that it might be of grace. It is the law or constitution of faith, as the means of our salvation, that it must exclude all boasting, *Rom.* iii. 27, That all that are saved might glory only in the Lord, *1 Cor.* i. 31, Now when faith itself is expressed in so low and feeble exercise of it as looking unto *Christ*, it does in a most emphatical manner exclude every thing of self; it utterly forbids all boasting, and renders all the honour to *Christ* alone. How can a dying wretch pretend to any glory or merit in his own salvation, who only looked and was saved?

IVthly There is in this way of expression a natural and easy reference to the command of looking to the brazen serpent, which was a type of *Christ*, and which was to confer health and life on the wounded and dying *Israelites*, by their looking up to it in the wilderness. See *John* iii. 14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* Compared with *Numb.* xxi. 8. *The Lord said unto Moses make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.* Happy people, for whom so divine a remedy was provided against a national mischief! So sovereign an antidote against spreading and mortal poison! Those that were stung and perishing, though they were at the utmost limits of the camp, might, as it were from the borders of the wilderness, look up to the brazen remedy, and find health and life: From the ends of the land they looked and were saved.

Physicians were useless in that day, and all medicines insignificant. The swift and fiery poison wrought powerfully in them that were bitten, and they were quickly brought to the borders of the grave. But before their eyes were closed in death, if they could but cast a look towards the appointed signal, the divine medium of salvation, behold they are miraculously healed, and live! And which of all the sons or daughters of *Israel* could boast of any thing of his own in this wondrous deliverance, when on the very confines of life and the brink of the grave they were healed by a look to the brazen image of a serpent? Such is the perishing sinner casting an eye toward *Christ* for salvation!

But some poor trembling sinner will be ready to say, " Surely this is so little and so low an act of faith, that I am ready to question whether this can save me or no: How shall I know whether my looking to *Christ* is of that kind as shall be effectual to my salvation?"

Now in answer to such an enquiry, let the fearful soul remember what I have said before under the second particular, concerning the several acts of the soul that are secretly included in this looking to *Jesus*; and ask itself whether it has put forth these acts or no? Besides this, I would mention also these two properties of saving faith, as it is described by looking.

1st. It must be such a look as immediately affects the heart with love and sorrow; sorrow for our own sins, and love to *Christ* our saviour. If we have ever seen him with sincere delight as a saviour from sin, we shall mourn heartily that ever we were sinners. We cannot but repent for sin, while we believe or hope for the forgiveness of it through such condescending grace. And we cannot but love so compassionate and almighty a friend, that has delivered us from eternal destruction. Having seen *Christ* we are weaned from sin, and we love the Lord. *Mary Magdalene*, that remarkable sinner,

finner, lying at the foot of *Christ*, wept much and loved much, *Luke* vii. 38, 47. You have never seen *Christ*, as your saviour, if your sins are not the objects of your shame and sorrow; or if *Jesus* be not the object of your desire and love.

2d. It must be such a look as changes the soul and temper into another image, even the image of *Christ*. *2 Cor.* iii. 18. *We,—beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.* In the glass of the gospel beholding the glorious holiness of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, our very tempers are changed into his holy likeness, from one degree of grace to another, till it advance to complete glory; and then we shall be made more perfectly like him, by seeing him as he is, or face to face, *1 John* iii. 2. There will be a shine of holiness on our conversation in this world, as reflected from the glory and holiness of *Christ*, whom we have seen, even as the face of *Moses* shone when he had seen God: *Exod.* xxxiv. 29, 30. That is, when he had seen the son of God conversing with him in a visible glory.

A saving look of faith to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, will happily influence all the powers of nature, and all the actions of life. This is seldom done indeed at once, but by slow degrees. The longer we behold him, and the oftener we look to him, the more we shall grow like him. We must look to *Jesus* as our example, as well as the author and finisher of our faith; that we may lay aside the sin that so easily besets us, and run with patience the race of holiness that is set before us. *Heb.* xii. 1, 2. In vain do we pretend to have seen *Christ*, if we do not find ourselves at all beginning to become new creatures.

Thus I have finished my answer to the fourth enquiry; (*viz.*) How we are to come by this salvation; and why the act of faith is expressed by looking to *Christ*.

D I S.

## DISCOURSE VIII.

God in Christ is the favour of the ends of the Earth:

O R

Faith represented in its lowest degrees.

The second Part of this SERMON.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

*Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.*

**T**HIS is an invitation of surprising and sovereign mercy to creatures in the utmost distress and misery. It is the great and blessed God himself, in the person of *Jesus Christ*, calling the *Gentile* world to salvation. It is God in *Christ* inviting sinners from the ends of the earth, and the borders of hell, to partake of heaven and happiness. It is *Emmanuel*, God with us, who calls us to look unto him and be saved. If we are sensible of our own misery, if we are weary of sin, and would be secured from the wrath to come, let us look to him as a favour, with an eye of faith and holy dependance.

This was the subject of the former discourse.

Let us now go on to the last question, and learn, what assurance we can have from the text, that we shall possess this salvation in the way proposed; or that faith in God our favour shall be attended with such success.

The reason is given by the prophet in almighty and convincing language; *For I am God; and there is none else.*

This sentence has two distinct parts in it, and each of them carries strong reasons for the support of our faith, and the encouragement of our hope.

The first part is the assertion of his own Godhead. *I am God*; which carries in it these two supports or assurances.

First *I am God*; therefore I am all-sufficient to save; and therefore, ye dying sinners, look unto me, and be saved. What is there that the most wretched of creatures can stand in need of, but there is a supply to be found among the treasures of a God? When a God undertakes to be a favour, the creature cannot perish. There is light and wisdom enough in him to make the fool wise for ever, and to scatter all our darkness: There is power enough in God, to make the weakest soul strong in grace, and active in every duty: There is love enough in him, to melt the most stubborn heart, and change an old enemy into an humble and willing subject. Ye may be assured

fured of this salvation if ye look to *Jesus*, who is God, and therefore mighty to save. *Isa.* lxiii. 1.

There is an all-sufficiency in his blood and righteousness to atone for infinite transgressions, and to procure the everlasting favour of God: For this high-priest or mediator himself is one with God, he is God, and his sacrifice on earth, and his intercession in heaven, are all over dignified with Godhead, and thereby become almighty for salvation.

2dly *I am God*, and therefore have a right to prescribe the means of obtaining my salvation. Look therefore unto me, ye sinners, and be saved. I will give it to every one that looks; he that believes on me shall be saved from sin and death; *Mark* xvi. 16. *John* iii. 15, 16. God is rich in grace; and if he will manifest the glory and freedom of it in the grant of his new covenant, and will promise salvation to faith, and not insist upon that personal perfect obedience which once was required, let the thankful sinner rejoice, and submit, and give God the honour of his abounding mercy. Let him pursue the highest measures of holiness, under the melting influences of gratitude, and the constraining power of divine love.

This is naturally implied in the first part of the words, *I am God*. But when he adds this glorious clause, *and there is none else*, he seems, in the second part of this sentence, to intimate these three things further to us.

1st There is none that can save besides me. The salvation of a sinner from the ends of the earth, from the borders of hell, is too great a work for any being that is less than God. What mere creature has worth enough to make compensation to the great God for the sins of men? Or what created power has influence enough to persuade God to be reconciled? Is there knowledge enough in a mere fellow-creature, intimately to acquaint himself with all the thoughts and wants of a perishing sinner? Is there power enough to new-mould his nature? To strike divine light into his conscience? To bend his stubborn will, and subdue all his powers to the obedience of the gospel? Has any mere creature power sufficient to change a dead sinner into a living saint? To secure him through every temptation? To fit him for the society of God and angels? And to bring him through death to eternal glory? All this must be done if a sinner be saved.

2dly These words also imply, there is none but God who has a right to prescribe the means of our salvation. If he says to sinners, *look, and be saved*; who shall dare forbid the blessing, or appoint a different way to obtain it? If the Lord of heaven has said to poor perishing creatures on earth, ye shall be saved if ye believe: Shall the *Jew* dare to impose circumcision as necessary to salvation? Or the papists command penances or pilgrimages? Or shall the conceited *Pharisee* require a perfection of holiness, and a righteousness made up of the works of the law, in order to obtain eternal life? The righteousness of the law saith, *do this, and live*: But the righteousness of faith says, *believe and be saved*. *Rom.* x. 5, 6, 9.

It is granted, that this saving faith must be a vital principle in the soul, that manifests itself in repentance, and endeavours after universal holiness; for a dead faith cannot save: But it is not our holiness that can provide acceptance with an offended God; it is faith in the sacrifice and righteousness of the redeemer, that is the means appointed for this end. The great God has appointed it, and who shall dare to forbid? His authority is sovereign, and his appointment a sufficient warrant for our hope.

3dly *I am God, and there is none else*, includes thus much also for the comfort and assurance of the believing sinner; that there is none can prevent your salvation, if you comply with the gracious proposals. Who shall condemn if God will justify? *Rom.*

viii. 33, 34. Who can pluck us out of the hand of *Christ*, or separate us from his love? *John* x. 28. Who shall destroy, if God will save? It is his property, and his divine prerogative, to kill and to make alive, to save and to destroy. *Deut.* xxxii. 39, 43. See now, that I, even I am he; and there is no God with me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. Rejoice therefore, O ye nations, ye Gentiles, together with his people Israel; for he will render vengeance to his adversaries, and be merciful to his land. *Isa.* xliii. 11, 13. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I will work; and who shall let it?

Thus it appears, that there is abundant ground from the words of my text, for a poor perishing sinner to raise his hope to assurance that he shall be saved, if he does but sincerely answer this gracious invitation from heaven, and trust in God, as he is revealed in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, for salvation, according to that description of true faith which is given us in the word of God.

All the improvements I shall make of this discourse at present, shall be contained in these four reflections.

1st reflection. We may learn from this scripture, how extensive and glorious is the salvation of *Christ*! How answerable is it in every respect to the weaknesses and the wants, to the miseries, dangers, and fears, of a convinced and awakened sinner! It reaches to those who are perishing in the ends of the earth. Let us survey them a little more particularly.

1. Is our guilt and distress exceeding great and dreadful? Behold here a salvation of rich fulness and divine all-sufficiency; for it is a God that provides it. The riches of grace, the depths of wisdom, and the efforts of almighty power are employed in this blessed work; and the mercy is expressed in the manner of a speaking God: He who said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, says also, *look, and be saved*: And the sinner looks, and receives salvation. It is a God who commands deliverances for *Jacob*, and salvation for his people. *Psalms* xlv. 4.

2. Are our enemies great and mighty? Are the flesh, and the world, and the powers of hell engaged against the safety of our souls? Yet our salvation is perfectly and eternally secure; for he that saves us is God: No creature can divest us of it, and there is no other God besides him. Neither height, nor depth, nor principalities, nor powers—nor life, nor death, nor any creature, shall separate us from the love of God, in *Christ Jesus*, our Lord. *Rom.* viii. 38, 39.

3. Are we at such a dreadful distance from God, that we seem to be on the utmost verge of all hope, at the ends of life and this world, at the borders of hell and despair? Yet we are within the reach of the call of mercy, within the sound of the voice of *Christ*, and his extensive grace. Look from the ends of the earth, and be saved.

4. Are we poor impotent creatures, that can do nothing to make satisfaction to God for our sins, and little or nothing towards the restoring our souls to the likeness of God, and the recovery of holiness? Do we stand in need of such a saviour, that must work all our works for us, and in us? Behold such a one in my text: He requires of you but to look to him, and trust in him, in the manner I have described, and the salvation is free and sure. *Christ* himself will bestow it on us.

There are some poor, melancholy, desponding creatures, who are even almost overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt, and of the power of sin in them, and are just giving up all hope, who have need to have the riches and amazing condescensions

of grace to be set before them, in such a manner as this. And blessed be God, that his gospel contains in it such abounding mercy to creatures so miserable.

We may therefore cry out with joy and thankfulness, and holy wonder; O the fulness and sufficiency of this salvation! It is God who provides it, who knows, and can supply all the vast variety of our wants! O the wide extent of it! It reaches to all nations, to all characters of persons, even to the ends of the earth. O the rich freedom of this grace, that requires us to look, and be saved! O what free and full, what large and extensive, what rich and sovereign salvation!

IIId reflection. What a blessed security of this salvation is given to all those who comply with the invitation of this grace! It is as safe as it is extensive. No creature can take away what a God resolves to bestow. No finite being can prevent what an infinite being resolves to do. If he that is God will save, none else can destroy, or frustrate the designed salvation? Who shall forbid the blessing that the almighty saviour will confer on those who look to him from the ends of the earth? The enemy, even the most malicious and powerful enemy, whose name is *Abaddon*, or the destroyer, is but a creature; but the friend, the mighty and merciful friend, whose name is *Jesus*, or the saviour, is God, even *Emmanuel*, God with us. When he stands upon the throne of his mercy, and cries out to perishing sinners, look to me from the ends of the earth, and be saved; not all the powers of hell shall be able to destroy the sinners that look to him, and accept of his salvation. What a glorious relief is found in my text against all temptations to despondency! Your saviour is God, and there is none besides him.

IIIId reflection. How much do those sinners deserve to perish for ever, who will not be saved upon such gracious terms? In vain do you turn your eyes around you, and look to one creature, and seek to another for help; your ruin is too great, and your misery too deep and dismal, for any power but that of God, to raise and recover you. If they who refused to hear the voice of *Moses*, who spake from earth, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall ye be thought worthy, who refuse to hearken to the voice of God speaking from heaven? *Heb. x. 28, 29.* Can you ever imagine it possible that you should escape the divine vengeance, who neglect so great, so divine a salvation?

Consider, ye sinners, that are this day under the call of grace, though now you seem to be as it were at the ends of the earth, afar off from God and *Christ*, from all that is holy, and all that is happy, yet you are not utterly abandoned to destruction, while the voice of mercy sounds in your ears. But take heed that ye hearken while ye are called to-day, lest ye perish before the morrow come. Remember this, that the silver trumpet of mercy will not always sound: *Christ Jesus* will not always say, look unto me, and be saved. Ye are now upon the confines of hell; if once death open its dark gates, and hell has shut her mouth upon you, you will then be far out of the sight of *Jesus* the saviour, and beyond the call of his mercy for ever.

Let me turn my voice now for a few minutes to the gospel *Israel*, to the children of the kingdom. While I have been inviting the ends of the earth to be saved, and have been calling sinners afar off from God and his church to receive *Jesus Christ* and his salvation, is there any dispensation for you to neglect it, who dwell in the midst of the visible church? You were born of holy parents, who have lived in religious families and are by this means brought near to the kingdom of heaven? Are you ready to flatter yourselves that you are out of danger of perishing? Have a care of vain presumption,

sumption, and foolish feeble hopes. The wounded *Israelites*, who lay just under the brazen serpent of old, might die and perish there in their own folly, if they refused to look up to the appointed remedy; while some from the distant borders of the camp looked and were saved: But such obstinate wretches must be unpitied in death.

Attend then, ye sinners in *Zion*, and hearken to the voice of God the saviour. *Christ* has been brought near to you in his gospel, his promises, and his holy ordinances; you have read of him in his word, you have heard him speak by his ministers, and you have learned much of him from the instructions of your pious parents: Ye have begun to see something of him in his glory and grace; and will you now turn your eyes away from him? Will you look upon the vanities of the present evil world, and fix the eye of your souls, your desires, hopes, and wishes, upon trifle and impertinence, and neglect the offer of heavenly treasures? Have you seen and heard so much of *Christ* already, that you have grown weary of him? Are the Lord and his salvation grown cheap and common things to you, of little value, not worth a look? Will you who are near to the kingdom of heaven, refuse to enter in, and let those that come from the ends of the earth obtain the inheritance, and seize the happiness before you? O how aggravated will your condemnation be? How dreadful the agonies of your torment, to see perishing sinners come from distant regions, from the east and the west, from poor wicked families, and houses of iniquity, and receive the salvation of *Christ*! while you are cast out into outer darkness? There shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Matt.* viii. 11, 12.

IVth reflection. The last use I shall make of this discourse, is to take a short survey of that salvation, of the happiness and the holiness thereof, that is derived to a soul by a sincere look of faith to *Jesus* the saviour.

O what a blessed change is made by our looking to *Christ*! A change, I say, in the very eye-sight of our souls, and in our view and survey of all things round about us, so far as we have any concern in them! What a blessed change in our judgment and esteem of them! We look upon things with another eye than before, and things put on a new face. Faith looking to *Christ* for salvation, sets all things in a different light before the eyes of the soul, and gives quite another view of them. It is like some heavenly glass applied to the organ of sense, that not only assists and improves our sight, but represents every thing to us in a divine light, even such as they appear to the blessed spirits above.

1. It alters the view and appearance of all the great and gay things of this life. All the treasures, and pomp, and entertainments of this world, were once the most tempting objects we could look upon; but now we look on the world, with all the gayest and the richest scenes of it, as a little mean and despicable thing; for we have seen *Christ* and heaven; and when the world begins to flatter us again, and to look great and tempting in our eyes, let us look again to *Jesus*, and his salvation; that the world may lose its splendor and allurements.

2. Once a poor christian in a cottage; or in a vile raiment, was contemptible in our sight, now we look on the saints, even in the meanest circumstance, as the excellent of the earth; for they are heirs of heaven, they are like to *Christ*, and formed after the blessed image of him, whom we have seen with an eye of faith and love. Holy saviour, and holy saints! They, the excellent of the earth, and he, the ornament of heaven.

3. The bible heretofore we looked on but little better than a common book; or perhaps, it was our aversion. The new testament gave us no pleasure. The true

glories of it were hidden from us. The gospel was a hidden gospel; but now we look upon it as our most valuable treasure and portion; and we often look into it; for we find *Jesus Christ* there, with all his salvation.

Every part of the bible carries quite another aspect than once it did. We look upon the promises as an inventory of our inheritance; and we read those words, all things are yours, with a relish of unknown delight, because of our own interest in them: And as they are repeated twice, to confirm our faith, so we can read them often, and dwell upon them with pleasure. *All are your's; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Then by virtue of this promise we can look to the heavens and the earth; to the sun, moon, and stars; to *Paul, Apollos, and Cephas*; to ministers, and to angels; to this world and the other; to life and death; to things present and to come; with a humble and pleasurable belief of our interest in them, so far as we have need of them to make us holy or happy.

And as we look on the promises of the bible with another eye than formerly, so we behold the precepts of it in a sweeter light: We read them now as the rules of our happiness, as the model of our new nature, as the holy transcript of the perfections of God, and the blessed advices of our dear redeemer. We look on his commandments, and behold they are no more grievous to us; for his law is our delight, 1 John v. 3. *Psalms cxix. 77.*

As for the threatenings of the book of God, we once beheld them, perhaps, with a regardless eye, and a stupid heart; or if we were awakened, we read them with utmost terror, as the messengers of our damnation: We beheld them as so many angels with flaming swords, to forbid our entrance into paradise. But since we have seen *Jesus* with an eye of saving faith, the threatenings of scripture have no more such a dreadful aspect. Since the sword has awoken against the man that was God's fellow, and all the necessary vengeance was executed on *Christ*, our surety, we behold the threatenings as disarmed of their terror, and no longer a bar to our salvation.

4. The face of God, shining in his terrible attributes of holiness and justice, was dreadful to our souls, so that we could not look upon him, and we turned our eyes away from God: As for his attributes of love and mercy, we had no relish of them; for we had no solid hope in them. We saw nothing in God desirable and delightful to us: We stood afar off; we neglected and forgot him; or else we hid ourselves from him, as *Adam* did, because we were afraid. But now, since we have beheld God in *Christ*, as reconciling sinners to himself, now we can look upon him in all his awful and his peaceful attributes without dismay; we can survey and dwell upon all his glories with a sacred pleasure; and lift up our eyes towards him with humble confidence, in prayer or in praise; for we behold him as God reconciled, and a father, since we have seen *Jesus* the mediator and trusted in his name.

5. With what surprize and overwhelming fear did we once behold approaching afflictions, when we were without God, without *Christ*, and without hope? But now we can look upon sufferings and sorrows without being overwhelmed by them; we can look upon the huge swelling waves without painful apprehensions, and see the floods rise high without fear of being drowned; for we have seen *Jesus* as it were walking on the water; and we have heard him saying, it is I, be not afraid. We can look to him when we are afar off from our friends, even in the ends of the earth, and find light in darkness, and relief in the midst of our distresses.

6. How formidable once was the face of death. No pencil can describe the monster so hideous to the sense, as he appeared constantly to our awakened souls, before we had seen *Christ*. What horror did our spirits feel, and our flesh shudder at the thought



thought of his approach! How frightfully, and yet how justly, did our guilty fancy paint him, and all his attendants, in their terrible array! But the faint looks on death now as an harmless thing, for he has seen *Jesus* disarm him; *Christ* has abolished sin, and taken away the sting from death. The lively christian can look on it as a friend, or rather as a slave subdued to the service of his Lord, sent on a glorious message, to fetch him to dwell where his blessed Lord is. They shall be where I am, to behold my glory. *John xvii. 24.*

7. The man who has seen *Jesus* with an eye of faith, can look to the last great tribunal without terror; for he knows and is acquainted with *Christ* the judge: He has seen him, and trusted all the important concerns of that day into his hands. *I know, saith the christian, whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep all that I have committed to him, unto that day, 2 Tim. i. 12.* Therefore he can see the judgment-seat, and the books opened, without dismay or fearful expectation; for he has seen *Jesus* cross out all his sins with the blood of his sacrifice: *Christ* has cancelled them for ever from the great register of heaven, the book of divine remembrance; and has shewn him his own name written in the lamb's book of life, from the foundation of the world.

8. Then he may turn his eyes to all that glorious assembly on high; he may look on the saints in their robes of light, as companions of his blessedness, and the troops of angels as ministers of fire, to execute vengeance on all his enemies; and heralds to prepare his way to the upper heavens. He may fix his eyes with most intense and transporting delight on *Christ* his sovereign Lord, and behold him hereafter with eyes of sense, amidst the honours of heaven, whom he had beheld here with an eye of faith, amidst the sufferings of the cross, and the agonies of the garden. "This is he, says the faint, whose voice of mercy I heard in yonder perishing world, and to whom I looked from the ends of the earth, that I might be saved. I believed him then to have all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily; and as God, manifest in the flesh, I worshipped him, and trusted in him. I behold him now as the brightness of his father's glory, and his divinest image: I find him to be a complete and all-sufficient saviour; for I stand possessed of his divine salvation. My knee bows, and my tongue confesses that *Jesus* is Lord. He is one with the Father. To him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb, be blessing and honour, and power and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." *Rev. v. 13.*

D I S.

## DISCOURSE IX.

Faith built on Knowledge. Preached 1711.

The First Part of this SERMON.

2 TIM. i. 12.

—*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day.*

WHEN this epistle was written to *Timothy*, *St. Paul*, the writer of it, was a prisoner at *Rome*; there he lay under a heavy chain, and was exposed to publick shame for the sake of the gospel: He had death in a near view, and was preparing for the bloody stroke. For in the sixth verse of the last chapter he says, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought the good fight, and my course is finished.*

But he seems to assure himself upon the words of my text, and grows bold upon this foundation of solid comfort: As though he should say, “None of these things move me, nor am I afraid to die; for I shall not be lost: I suffer; but I am not ashamed: I know whom I have trusted to take care of me in death, and all beyond it; even to the great day of retribution.”

It is pleasing and glorious to see this apostle, this little mean figure of a man, whose presence and whose speech were both contemptible; 2 *Cor.* x. 10. to see how he builds upon this hope, and assumes divine courage in the midst of pain and shame, in the very face of scandal and martyrdom. “Let me die out of this world, though with infamy, violence, and blood; but I have been told of life, and joys, and honours, in the world to come; and that with such evidence, as to constrain my belief: And I know whom I have believed. Let my barbarous executioner and the sword rob me of the short remains of this present life; but I have committed my soul, and all my infinite concerns, for a long hereafter, into the hands of an almighty and a sure friend, and I am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.”

This is the language of a lively hope, and these are the words that have administered constant support to many dying christians. Now that such a hope may appear to be rationally built upon this text, and that our present meditations and discourse may proceed with more regularity and profit, I must briefly explain the words.

The chief things that want any explication are these four.

- I. Who is this great friend of *St. Paul's* whom he has known and believed.
- II. What he means by believing.
- III. What it is he has committed into the hands of this friend.
- IV. What is that day, or period of time, when he expected to find all safe which he had thus intrusted him with.

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I. Who is this great friend of St. Paul's, whom he had believed, and of whose ability he was so well persuaded?

These words can be properly applied to none so well as to *Jesus Christ*, the son of God, the mediator; and that for these reasons.

It is he that is spoken of in the context, *ver. 10. Who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*: And it is this gospel of *Christ* for which *Paul* is not ashamed to suffer, in the words just before the text.

It is *Christ* who is recommended as the proper object of belief or trust in the new testament, as God the father was under the old: So our Lord himself declares. *John xiv. 1. Ye believe in God; believe also in me.* This was the great duty that all the first preachers of the gospel pressed upon their hearers, even a belief on *Jesus Christ*. This was the perpetual subject of St. Paul's exhortations, the matter of his practice, and the ground of his hope; the instances are so numerous, that it is needless and endless to collect them.

It is *Jesus Christ* into whose hands the father has put all his saints and children, and committed them to his care, that he may keep them. *John xvii. 6, 9, 12. Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me—out of the world; and I have kept them through thy Name.* And therefore into the same hands a child of God most naturally commits himself.

II. What does the word believe signify here?

By believing we are here to understand an assent to the revelation that *Jesus Christ* had made of himself, as sent from the father to save sinners, and a trust in him for this salvation: For the word *πιστευω*, in the *Greek*, naturally includes both, and the following part of the verse confirms this sense; which will be made more completely evident in the improvement of this discourse.

Here let it be remarked, from the bold and pathetic manner of speaking, that the apostle appears as a strong believer, as one that had much acquaintance with *Christ*, and long trusted in him, and every day gained further confirmation of his faith. Observe the expression, *I know whom I have believed*, and am come to a confident persuasion in myself, *that he is able*, &c. It is a faith rising to divine joy; for he mentions it as his support against shame and suffering.

III. When we enquire, what it is that the apostle committed to *Christ*? I think there is no need to limit or confine the trust; all that belongs to poor sinful man, which God the father had appointed *Christ* to take care of, may be included in this depositum, this important trust. I have committed my whole person, soul and body, with all my spiritual concerns in this world, and all my everlasting interest in the world to come, into the hands of *Christ*; my soul, and the affairs of my eternity. And this the apostle seems to have chiefly in his eye, because he was now ready to leave the body, and all things of this present life. So *Christ* on the cross commits his soul into the hands of his father. *Luke xxiii. 46. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* So *Stephen*, the first martyr, addresses himself to *Christ*. *Acts vii. 59. Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* So *David*, by a spirit of prophecy, in evangelick expressions, betrusts his soul with God his redeemer. *Psalms xxxi. 6. Into thy hands I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth.*

IV. What is that day, that great day, which the apostle means in the text? Without doubt, he refers to the last judgment, which is that day, by way of eminence,  
that

that day when the works of all other days shall be reviewed, when all mankind shall appear together upon the earth, that have lived in several successive days, and years, and ages, and a decisive sentence shall be passed upon all, without a possibility of reverse: The day on which the fate of their eternity shall depend, and be determined. It is the custom of the apostle to speak of this day in such a way of absolute eminence, without particular descriptions: So he does twice in this same epistle; *chap. i. 18.* and *iv. 8.* And it is expressly evident in *2 Thess. i. 10.* he means this last great day, when *Christ* shall appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey him not; — and shall come to be glorified in all them that believe.

Though believers in *Christ*, who have committed themselves to his charge, find their souls safe in the moment after death, and the beginning of their intellectual heaven, yet this is more insensible to other men, and unseen to the world: The day of judgment is a more remarkable and conspicuous day in the eyes of all the creation, angels and men; in this day shall *Christ* openly deliver up his great trust to the Father, who committed all elect sinners into his hands: In this day shall he make it appear, that he has been able and faithful to keep whatsoever God and the saints have committed to him.

Besides, till this day come, *Christ* has not fulfilled his commission, nor answered his trust for which he is engaged to his father, and to believers; for this is one part of it, that he would take care of their dying bodies, and raise them up at the last day, *John vi. 39.* The apostle, though he well knew the happiness of separate souls, that were absent from the body, and immediately present with the Lord, yet he more frequently points to this bright and distant day of the resurrection, when he invites our hope abroad beyond the limits of life and time, to give it the fairest and the longest prospect.

Thus having sufficiently unfolded whatsoever might seem doubtful in the text, let us proceed to a more particular improvement of it: And to this end we may comprize the sense in this one proposition or doctrine.

Doctrine. A christian lays a solid foundation for his faith and joyful hope in the knowledge of the person whom he trusts. He has some good acquaintance with that great friend of his, to whom he commits all his concerns from time to eternity; and upon this he builds his confidence and comfort; and from this he rises to joy and triumph. The words of my text are the language of an advanced and well-grown faith; and both my doctrine and discourse keep this in view; yet the nature and practice of a sinners first addresses to *Christ* by faith, may be easily learnt hereby; as I shall shew hereafter.

To confirm and improve this doctrine, let us consider

- I. What it is that a christian knows of *Christ*, that engages his trust and confidence?
- II. What sort of knowledge it is? And how he comes by it? And
- III. What useful remarks may be drawn from this subject?

First, What is it that a christian knows of *Christ*, that engages his trust in him?

The answer may be comprized under these two general heads; *viz.* The personal qualifications of *Christ*, and his special character, or commission, as one appointed to take care of souls.

If A believer knows the particular and personal qualifications of *Christ*, which render him able to take care of what is committed to him. Now these qualifications depend

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pend not only upon the constitution of his person, as one in whom God and man are united, but also upon the labours of his life, and the virtue of his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, and his exalted state. Let us descend a little into particulars upon this subject, and take a short and pleasurable survey how well our Lord is qualified to take the charge of souls, and of their eternal welfare.

1. He has almighty power, and can secure whatsoever is committed to him, against all oppositions and dangers; for it is by him that God the father created all things, and he hath sufficient influence over all the works of his hands; a divine ability to save his favourites, and destroy all that oppose: to ensafe them from every peril that arises from their own weakness, and defend them against every adversary that designs mischief. It was by him that our souls were formed at first in his own and his father's image; and he can new-mould them into the same form, though it be quite defaced. What iniquity is there in nature, which such almighty grace cannot subdue? What wild imagination, or rebellious thought, in man, which a God cannot reduce to obedience? Should all the wicked of the earth conspire to ruin a christian, what could the impotent malice of creatures avail, if the creator forbid their violence; or if he who made them encompass the saint round as with a wall of brass, and cover him as with a shield? And what can *Satan*, the tempter or the destroyer do, if *Jesus* hold him in his chain, and forbid him to come nigh the believer? The lion of the great deep cannot so much as roar, to affright the meanest lamb of the flock, without the permission of *Christ* their shepherd. He can neither tempt us from our duties, nor rife us of our comforts, if the son of God command him to silence. And what are all the angels in heaven but the servants of *Christ*, all *ministering spirits, sent forth to secure them that are heirs of salvation?* *Heb. i. 14.* What is there within us, or without us, in heaven, earth, or hell, that can endanger our happiness, if he that is one with God, and almighty, undertake to save us? To him therefore we commit this great undertaking.

2. He has unconceivable treasures of knowledge, and wisdom unsearchable. He takes notice of the most secret and distant dangers to which his favourites can be exposed: Hell is naked before him, and the dark counsels of destruction have no covering: He confounds all the policies of darkness, and knows how to infatuate *Satan*, the most subtle spirit, when he contrives mischief against the saints. And when our own hearts, for want of foresight, run giddily, and wander into snares, he can surround us with divine light for the recovery of our wanderings, and guide us in a safe path homewards. The hidden workings of sin in the inmost chambers of the soul are open to his eyes. *Heb. iv. 12, 13.* And he knows how to prevent it from bringing forth fruit unto death.

But on the other hand, his own counsels are laid unsearchably deep; nor can all hell fathom or undermine them. He is supposed to be represented under the character of wisdom, shewing her power. *Prov. viii. 14. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding; I have strength.* He knows how to deliver the godly out of every temptation, and to preserve them to his own kingdom. This glorious person is fit to be trusted with the infinite concerns of weak and ignorant creatures.

3. His love, and compassion, and willingness to take the charge of souls, is equal to his wisdom and power. Though this be not expressed in the text, yet it is necessarily included; for how could the apostle say with joy, *I know whom I have trusted;* if he knew only that he was able to save, without believing him willing? Or why should *St. Paul* trust him with so valuable a thing as his eternal welfare, if he did not know him compassionate as well as mighty? But his willingness is abundantly evident by all

that he did, and all that he suffered, to procure salvation for us; for he tells us, it was the very design of his coming, to *seek and save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. And he must be willing to keep that which he undertakes to seek and to save.

It was his love and willingness to take care of sinners, that brought him down from heaven to an incarnation, and veiled the dignity of his divine glory in the lowly and debased figure of a man, in the likeness of sinful flesh. A believer reads his willingness in the very features of his manhood; and every poor and painful circumstance of his life writes his love still in fairer characters. What mean all his labours and wearisome travels? His preachings and pleadings with obstinate men all the day, in towns and villages? And his midnight wrestlings with God upon the cold mountains? What mean his kind invitations, and his melting language, *ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me, and drink? Come unto me all ye that—are weary, and I will give you rest?* Matt. xi. 28. Come to the physician, ye that are sick, and I will heal you. *Come ye that are heavy laden, and I will release you.* He that cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast out, Job vi. 37. What can be the design of all these tender expressions, but to acquaint us with his willingness to take care of those sinners that commit their souls to him? What means his submission to cruel sufferings, and to bitter reproaches? his agonies in the garden? The convulsions of his nature, and the tortures of his soul? Tortures that drew cries and tears from the son of God? And his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to astonishment and death. What do all those speak, if not love and willingness to save? What is the language of his arms, when spread naked on the cross, but “*come unto me, sinners, and I will embrace you?*” This is the voice of every wound of his body, while his breath expired amidst blood and groans. Nor can we understand any thing by all these scenes of woe, if we cannot read love in them, and a hearty willingness to secure believing sinners from the wrath to come.

4. He hath perfect righteousness, and atoning blood. So that the most guilty soul may trust him safely; for he has obeyed, and he has suffered: He has procured pardon for sin, and justification unto eternal life: He has made satisfaction for the vilest of crimes, and for the chief of sinners. He had a human nature that could die, and the in-dwelling divinity, that could put infinite dignity into his death, and render it a full atonement for the heaviest guilt: He has paid our immense debts, and justice acknowledges the receipt in full: He has fulfilled the commands of God's perfect law, which we could never fulfil: And he has born the curse which would have made us forever miserable: And all this not for himself, but in our stead; and that with this design, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, and present us before God in his own righteousness, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and be for ever accepted in the beloved. Gal. iii. 13. and iv. 5. Eph. i. 6. Here is an all-sufficient righteousness, in which the severe eye of the holiness of God can find no flaw or defect, which is the foundation of our hope; whereas our righteousnesses are mingled with many defilements. Here is a righteousness that shall not be abolished, though the heavens wear away, and the earth wax old. Therefore the isles where sinners dwell shall wait upon him, and on his arm shall they trust, Isa. li. 5, 9. It was the great business of the *Messiah* to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness. Dan. ix. 24. And this is of such necessity to our salvation, because of the perpetual frailties of our nature, that a poor trembling believer could not venture his soul safely into any hands but where such a glorious righteousness was found; and from this character our saviour is pleased to take one of his honourable titles, Jer. xxiii. 6. *The Lord our righteousness.* Surely therefore, saith a humble, convinced, and guilty wretch, in such a one will I trust, for I have no merit in me

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to obtain pardon, I have no righteousness of my own to render me accepted with God, and I must for ever perish without it. Surely in the Lord I shall find righteousness, as well as wisdom and strength, *Isa. xlv. 24.* And to him I commit my soul.

5. He has great interest with God the father, and always prevails when he pleads. *Father, I know that thou bearest me always, John xi. 42.* He never prays in vain, for he is ever worthy of the father's ear. He appears in all the virtue of his original sonship, even when he appears in the name of sinful worms; and when he pleads their cause before the throne, he does it in all the power of his meritorious righteousness, and with the cries of his dying blood. We might doubt of audience when we address ourselves to the great and dreadful God; for we are but his creatures, who have sinned against him, but he is the only begotten son. We may well stand at a distance, and tremble, for we are rebels; but he is perfect in his loyalty and obedience. We are defiled, but he is pure and unspotted; we might expect thunder and destruction from the almighty, for the Lord abhors all sin. For such guilty wretches to come before the face of God, though with groans and tears, would but set our rebellion and guilt before his eyes, awaken his wrath, and put him in mind of deserved vengeance; but when *Christ* appears as a petitioner, he is approved and heard: For he is the son of his love, he is all holiness: No man can come to the Father but by him, *John xiv. 6.* Therefore we dare not trust ourselves in meaner hands. *He is able to keep what is committed to him unto the great day, and to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him; seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them; and is such an high-priest as the son of God, holy, harmless, and undefiled, Heb. vii. 25, 26.* He pleads for aliens and strangers, in the virtue of his sonship; for criminals, in the efficacy of his obedience; and we joyfully commit ourselves poor sinful and perishing strangers and criminals, to him, to be introduced into the Father's presence, because he has the most powerful influence, and the strongest interest in heaven.

6. He lives for ever. *Rev. i. 18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I live for evermore, Amen.* He therefore that hath known death by experience, and now stands firmly possessed of eternal life, is the most proper person that I can trust with all my concerns, my flesh and spirit, for life and death, for time and eternity. Should I presume to make myself my own keeper, yet my utmost care could pretend to reach no further than the term of this life; for whither I go in death is all darkness to me, if I had not known *Christ* and his gospel, who has brought life and immortality to light. *2 Tim. i. 10.*

And notwithstanding all those discoveries of the future state, I am still incapable of providing for myself in the invisible world. My soul and body are then separated, and I cannot keep them together, nor take care of them apart. Where this world of souls is I know not, nor can I tell how to secure my best interest there, or direct myself in the right way to the region of sanctified spirits in that world, where I am so much a stranger; all the land of death is in a great measure the region of darkness still; it is a vast unknown country, and far the biggest part of it is a burning climate, a land of torment, sorrow, and despair; and there are a thousand roads that lead down to this gulph of wretchedness; and how shall my poor wandering soul, when dismissed from this flesh, find the way to the land of light, since I know not the paths, nor the dangers of the way, and there is no companion in death to guide me through the dark valley? How shall I dare to plunge into eternity, except some mighty friend be there to take care of me, and conduct me to the seat of the blessed?

But my Lord *Jesus* lives in that unseen world; he has passed through the region of death, and knows it well: he has the keys of death, and the separate state, and is

acquainted with all the avenues of it; he is governor of the land of blessedness, and the fittest guardian to whom I can commit my departing spirit. I leave also my poor remains of flesh to his care: These limbs I leave to moulder into dust, under the wakeful eye of his providence; for he is Lord of this lower world too, and he will raise my flesh to immortality, and rejoin it to my soul at the great day.

7. In the last place, I might add, the faithfulness of *Christ* to fulfill all that he undertakes, is another qualification that encourages our trust. His name is the *Amen, the faithful and the true*: *Rev. iii. 14.* The Lord is faithful who shall establish you, and keep you from evil; therefore, saith the apostle to the saints at *Thessalonica*, *We have confidence in the Lord touching you*, *2 Thess. iii. 3, 4.* His sincerity is above all possibility of being corrupted, and what he once designs he will accomplish: Whom he loves, he loves to the end, *John. xiii. 1.* He is unchangeable in his compassion from the very truth of his nature; his zeal and watchfulness can never admit him to be forgetful one moment, of all the infinite concerns that a believer has intrusted with him. His faithfulness adds force and strength to all the encouragements that our faith receives from all the other qualifications of *Christ*; and, if I know all these excellencies are found in him, I am persuaded he is able and willing to save to the uttermost; and I leave my all with him till the last day.

Thus we have briefly run through the personal qualifications of *Christ*. But,

II. Besides these his personal qualifications, which are the objects of a believer's knowledge, and the motives of his faith, there is another thing that engages his confidence in him; and that is, his special character and commission as a mediator, which he has received from the father, and which he has voluntarily undertaken to fulfil. Hereby he stands obliged to use all his personal abilities to take care of sinners that are committed to his charge. He often speaks of his being sent from the Father, to do his will. See *John vi. 39.* *And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

By this commission *Christ* has a right and authority to exercise all his natural powers and capacities to secure the souls of believers. The justice, and wisdom, and holiness, as well as the grace and mercy of God the father, joined to commit this authority into his hands. And it is in this sense that *all power in heaven and earth is given him*, *Matt. xxviii. 13.* *And he is head over all things for the church*, *Eph. i. 22, 23.* When we say, that all gifts and all graces are treasured up in the hands of *Christ*, to be communicated to his people, we mean, that as a commissioned mediator, he has a rightful authority to exert all his natural and divine powers in the communication of gifts and graces, and holy influences of the spirit; which power neither he nor his Father did think proper to be exerted without satisfaction made for sin as mediator.

Behold then our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the son of *Mary*, and the son of God; behold him in all the sufficiency of the united Godhead, and in all the glory and authority of his mediatorial commission, fully capacitated to keep whatsoever is committed to him! The believer sees this and rejoices; he beholds all the souls of sinners designed for salvation given into the hands of *Christ*, by the Father, to keep; which *Christ* himself often speaks of, in xvth and xvii chapters of the gospel of *St. John*. And he reads those words of his Lord with abundant joy, *And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* *John x. 28, 29, 30.*

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“ Now, says the believer, shall I not venture my eternal state in those hands where God himself has laid it? Shall I not chuse him to be my guardian in this my weak and helpless state, whom the Father has appointed for this very purpose, and trusted with the care of all his children? Who is so fit to be my shepherd as that glorious person to whom the Father has committed the charge of all his sheep? God the father knows him well, that he is equal to the great undertaking, or else he would never have intrusted him with the souls of his chosen ones; and I through his grace have beheld such abilities, such love, and such faithfulness in him, that he is sufficient to answer the weighty charge; therefore I have intrusted him with my all, and *I know whom I have trusted.*”

Besides, says the christian, this is the person whom God has ordained to take care of his own infinite honours, as well as of the immortal concerns of men; and where can I trust my soul better than where the all-wise God has trusted all his own glory? The government of heaven and earth, of angels and men, is laid upon his shoulders, and of his dominion there is no bound, there is no end. *Isa. ix. 6.* The biggest affairs of kingdoms and nations, all the revolutions and concerns of the worlds of nature, grace, and glory, are committed to *Christ* the mediator; all things are delivered into his hands by the Father, *John iii. 35.* And surely, saith the christian, there is none like him to take care of my soul; since God himself, upon a survey of all the creation, found none like him; none so fit to be intrusted with all his own infinite concerns, in all the worlds which he hath made. *I know therefore whom I have believed,* when I believed in *Jesus*, and *I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*

Secondly. After having discovered what it is that a christian knows of *Christ* that engages his belief, and firm confidence; we proceed to enquire, What sort of knowledge this is, or how he comes to know him so as to trust in him, and rejoice in his faith?

The answer may be reduced to these two heads: A believer that is arrived at such a knowledge of *Christ*, has obtained it partly by the testimony of others, and partly by his own experience.

I. It is a knowledge that arises from the testimony of others. And this sort of knowledge is generally called faith; that is, the believing of any proposition upon the authority of those that relate it; and according as the witnesses that make the report are more credible, and more numerous, so we give the firmer assent to their testimony; our faith grows so much the stronger, and our knowledge is the more certain. Now the witnesses that give evidence to the power and faithfulness of *Christ* our saviour, are so gloriously credible in themselves, and so many in number, that a believer has the most rational and solid ground for his faith. Let us take a short survey of these witnesses, and humbly examine their testimony.

God himself, the all-wise, the true, and the eternal God, in the person of the Father, has born witness from heaven to his son *Christ Jesus* in all ages. This he did in old time by visions and voices, by prophecies and holy institutions. It is of him that *God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began, Acts iii. 21.* What is the seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, *Gen. iii. 15.* but a promise of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the saviour, given to *Adam*, to prevent his despair; and a testimony of his power to destroy the works of the devil, and to save fallen man? What is the seed of *Abraham*, in whom all nations should be blessed,

blessed, *Gen. xxii. 18.* but a prophecy of the blessings of life and salvation to the nations of the earth, by *Jesus* the son of *Abraham*? Who was *Sbilob*, of whom *Jacob* prophesied, to him shall be the gathering of the people, but *Cbrist*, who was sent of God, that the *Gentiles* might commit their souls into his hands, and join themselves to him as their head and governor? *Gen. xlix. 10.*

It would be endless to run through all the messages from God, which the inspired prophets of old delivered to men, and which gave divine testimony to the saviour that should be born. Who was the angel of the covenant, that was sent to conduct the *Jews* through the wilderness, and to keep that nation, and to bring them safe to *Canaan*? Who was the captain of the Lord's host, that was sent and appeared to *Joshua*, engaging for the protection of him and his army? What was the vision that appeared to *Isaiab*, the Lord sitting upon a throne in much glory and power, but so many prefigurations of the Son of God, that was to take our nature upon him, and become a saviour? What were all these appearances of God in the form of man, but signs and pledges, and, as it were, essays towards his incarnation? What were the types of the old testament, but emblems of deliverance, atonement and salvation, that were to be conferred by *Cbrist*, upon those sinners that would trust him with their souls? What was the ark wherein *Noah* was saved, when he committed his life to the keeping of God, in that floating house, amidst a flood of waters, but an assurance of safety to those sinners who make *Cbrist* their refuge, when the floods of divine wrath rise high? What was the design of the bloody sacrifices, the sacrifices of expiation, but hold forth the method whereby *Cbrist* should secure guilty souls from death.

Time would fail me to speak of the brazen and the golden altar; of burning the flesh of beasts, and the smoking incense; of the ark of the covenant where the law was kept, and the cover of it, which was called the mercy-seat, where the God of glory dwelt under the form of a bright cloud: Time would fail me to speak of the tabernacle of *Moses*, and the temple of *Solomon*; of the cities of refuge, appointed for the safety of casual murderers; of the high-priest, of his garments, and of his offices, who was to keep the names of the tribes of *Israel* upon his breast and upon his shoulder. These were all the institutions and appointments of God himself, to assure us by various carnal emblems of the fulness of that salvation by *Jesus Cbrist*; for which no single emblem was sufficient.

Let us descend to later times, and behold God the father giving testimony to his son, by kindling a new star in the heavens at his birth, and sending it as a guide to lead the wisemen from the east, and from the rising sun, to a greater and sweeter light, the morning star, and the sun of righteousness. He sent a voice from heaven at his baptism, and pronounced in distinct language, *This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Mat. iii. 17.* Twice more did he speak from heaven, and with an audible voice, in the time of the life of *Cbrist* attest this mission: A believer knows many of these things, and receives the testimony of God. And *this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his son, that eternal life is in him. 1 John v. 9, 11.*

*Cbrist* himself is another witness that testifies his own ability to save sinners, and keep what is committed to him. *John viii. 18. I am one that bear witness of myself; and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.* And though he bear record of himself, yet his record is true and credible; for he came from heaven, and was made man in an extraordinary way; and he rose again after death, and ascended to heaven; which seems to be the meaning of those words, *For I know whence I came,*  
and

and whither I go; which are brought as a reason of the truth of his testimony, *Job* viii. 14. He appeared amongst men with all the undisputed signs of the *Messiah* upon him; and the doctrines that he preached, and the miracles that he wrought, and the convulsions of nature at his death, and the wonders of his resurrection, all agree to confirm the mission of *Christ*, and his ability to save. A christian beholds the son of God coming from the dead, with this message to him: "I am able to deliver from death those that believe in me; to keep their souls safe in my hand, and to raise their bodies up to life everlasting: For, behold, *I was dead, and am alive; and live for evermore.*" *Rev.* i. 18.

Or shall I rather say, that the miracles of *Christ* were the testimonies which the holy Spirit gave to the mission of *Christ*, the son of God? For they are sometimes in scripture ascribed to the spirit, *Matth.* xii. 28. *I cast out devils by the Spirit of God.* And one of the three witnesses in heaven to the gospel of *Christ*, is the Spirit of God. *1 John* v. 6, 7. *It is the spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* That spirit and power by which he opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame to walk, and the dead to rise, does effectually attest his power to take care of those that are intrusted with him: For these wonders were wrought with a design to confirm this doctrine; and upon this account *Christ* is said to be justified in, or by the Spirit, *1 Tim.* iii. 16. His commission was sealed, and his authority attested by these mighty works of the blessed Spirit.

Thus the believer has a threefold witness from heaven, to give him the knowledge of *Christ*, and to confirm his faith; and this is abundantly sufficient to justify his trust in *Christ Jesus*.

But he has many other witnesses also to the same truth: He can call all the holy prophets and saints since the world began, to bring in their witness, who told of the power of *Christ* to save, in dark speeches, when they lived in this world, and now find themselves safe in his hands in the world of light. A believer can call the noble company of apostles, the holy army of martyrs and confessors, to attest the same doctrine; who, through terrible temptations of *Satan*, and the wrath of man; who, through fires and waters, and many deaths, have committed their souls to his divine keeping, and found them in safety beyond the grave.

The believer can add the testimony of all his fellow-saints now living, who, by venturing their eternal concerns into the hands of *Christ*, have found safety and rest, strength against sin, and peace of conscience; divine joy, courage against sufferings, and triumphs in the midst of dangers. They all with one voice cry out, "Not unto ourselves, but to thy name be all the glory; for thy grace has kept us since we committed ourselves unto thee; and not one of us is lost; and we continue to trust our all with thee till the great day; and we are assured of safety, though our dangers are infinite."

You see here what a rational and solid foundation a christian has for his knowledge of *Christ*, and his faith in him. It is built upon testimonies so numerous, so credible, and so divine; well might the apostle say, I know whom I have trusted: And he becomes a witness to us even to the end of the world, to direct souls to the same refuge. When a sinner is awakened to see his dreadful guilt, and danger for eternity, and is making earnest enquiry, what shall I do for my soul? Where shall I trust it, that it may be kept safe for ever? Let his eye be directed to this able and all-sufficient saviour, by so long a train of witnesses, and the holy Spirit with them,

them, and he can no longer doubt whither to apply himself, or to whose hands he should betrust his eternal concerns.

II. The knowledge that a believer has of *Christ's* ability to save, arises not only from the witness of others, but from his own inward and sensible experience. The apostle speaks here not as a young believer; but as one that had known *Christ* long, had long trusted him, and gained daily confirmations of his faith, as was hinted before. Though a sinner at first is drawn to *Christ* by the report that is made of him by others, either by his education, by reading or hearing the word, or by holy conference; yet afterwards he grows up to an establishment and assurance of faith by the sweet experience he has had of what *Christ* has done for him; and he saith to the minister, and to his fellow christian, and to the apostles, and the prophets, as all the neighbours said to the woman of *Samaria*, *John iv. 42. Now we believe, not merely because of this saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know indeed that this is the Christ, the saviour of the world.*

I am well satisfied that it is from this sort of knowledge, as well as the former, it is from experience as well as faith, that so many saints have been able to assume the words of my text, and to triumph in the approaches of death. For though they may have learned the knowledge of *Christ*, and his ability to save, and that from their earliest youth, by the pious instructions of their parents, by the ministry of their teachers, and much converse with the holy scriptures, yet they have a more large and confirmed knowledge of *Christ*, from the many sensible effects of his love and power upon their souls, and from their constant converse with him by meditation and prayer, both in their secret retirement, and in their daily walk with God. They can say from a sweet and rich experience, perhaps from their youngest years, and downwards, to maturer age, I know whom I have believed.

“I know my conscience was burdened with guilt, and I could find no relief till I saw the cross of *Christ*, and carried my guilty conscience thither; the man that hung upon the tree took my burden off, sprinkled me with his own blood, and undertook to secure me from the wrath of God for ever. I know who it was that relieved me from these terrors, and I rejoice in his atonement.”

“I had no righteousness to appear in before a pure and a holy God, and I had just reason to dread his presence as a consuming fire; but the same glorious person put a complete righteousness upon me, through faith, whereby I can stand before a just God, with humble confidence; and I know and adore the Lord my righteousness.”

“My nature was all corrupted, my sins were strong; I had no power to think or to do that which was good; and I know whose grace it was that renewed all my nature, that formed my soul to religious thoughts, that set me upon the work of mortification, and assisted me in those divine labours. I remember what powerful seeds of vanity were found in my heart; and if I had not given up the garden to *Christ's* keeping, it had been all over-run with weeds, and neither fruit nor flower had ever appeared there.”

“When I met with temptations I found myself a very unequal match for them; for I was by nature all weakness; but by the knowledge of *Christ* I have obtained strength: I have often found his grace sufficient for me, and his strength made perfect in my infirmity: I know by whose power it is, that I stand; and I am persuaded that he that has kept me hitherto, is still able to save me from falling: I have tried his grace so often, and found it sufficient hitherto, that I will trust him for what remains.

mains. I have committed my soul therefore to his keeping till the day of my death, till the great day of my resurrection. And we who are alive believe concerning those that are gone, that our blessed Lord has fulfilled a great part of his trust; has introduced their spirits into the presence of the father, with exceeding joy; and will fulfil the design of his love, when the dead shall arise to complete glory.

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear, that a believer knows so much of the person of *Christ*, of his qualifications for a saviour, and his divine commission for this purpose, as to engage his trust and confidence in him: And he obtains this knowledge by testimonies of sufficient evidence; and by his own experience he confirms his faith. The reflections that attend this subject will compose the next discourse.

## DISCOURSE X.

Faith built on Knowledge. Preached 1711.

The Second Part of this SERMON.

2 TIM. i. 12.

*--I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day.*

**T**HOUGH the redeemer was gone to the invisible world, and St. *Paul* never knew him while he was on earth, yet he was no stranger to him when he wrote this epistle. *Christ* is unseen to men, but not unknown to the believer. The apostle was so well acquainted with the person and the commission of *Christ*, that he could venture all into his hands to the day of judgment: he could look forward to that day with divine pleasure, and rejoice in the midst of present sufferings, upon the assurance of his future safety.

From the example of this great and holy man in my text, I have drawn this observation.

Doct. A christian lays a solid foundation for his faith and joyful hope in the knowledge of *Christ Jesus*, in whom he trusts.

Here I have shewn at large what it is of *Christ* that a christian is acquainted with, in order to trust him. Besides the wondrous constitution of this person, as a man, in whom dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily, many glorious and all-sufficient qualifications of a mediator are found in him. Ye have heard how great and how good, how wise and how faithful, he is; how well fitted to undertake the salvation of the guilty, because he hath provided an atonement and complete righteousness; how well furnished to take the charge of bringing sinners to a state of grace and holiness, because he hath the fulness of the spirit in him, to communicate to men, in order to renew their natures, and fit them for heaven. I have shewn what a commission he received from the Father, to undertake the great work of the salvation of men; and thereby, as he hath a natural power, so he hath a legal authority to take the charge of souls that are committed to him. O the glorious furniture of the great mediator! O the divine commission that gives security to faith! How happily are they joined in *Jesus* the Lord! And how much doth the knowledge of this conduce to a believer's comfort!

I have also shewn at large, in the second place, how a christian comes by this knowledge: He has abundant testimony to the truth of all these things from heaven and from earth: God himself hath given witness from heaven, by miracles, visions, and voices: The apostles, prophets, and martyrs, have filled the earth with their witness; and, by most convincing arguments, have proved the all-sufficiency of *Christ* to save. The believer hath a witness in his own soul, to the power and grace of *Christ* when

when he feels holiness wrought in his heart by the gospel, and divine peace in his conscience, with the fore-tastes of heaven.

Now from such a knowledge, derived from scripture and inward experience, he grows up to a holy courage in believing; he can venture his immortal concerns with assurance into the hands of *Christ*; he is bold, and triumphs in his faith, and can suffer for it without being ashamed.

Thus having briefly recalled the doctrinal part, I proceed now to the last thing I proposed; and that was, to attempt some useful remarks on this subject or discourse.

1st remark. Here we may learn the true nature of saving faith in *Christ*. It is a committing of the soul into the hands of *Christ*, from a due knowledge of his person, and his power to save. It is true, that my text is not the mere language of a young and feeble faith, but the divine oratory of holy confidence, joy, and triumph; yet the nature of saving faith is so fully comprized, and so plainly expressed in it, that I have often thought I know not any one single verse in the whole bible, that gives us so clear and distinct an account of this grace. By the words of my text it is rendered as intelligible as love, or hope, or fear, or almost any of the common actions of life or religion.

It is a committing or trusting of the soul to *Christ* for complete salvation, flowing from a sense of our sin and misery; a knowledge of his personal qualifications, and his divine commission; or a persuasion of his ability and willingness to keep what is thus committed to him to the day of final judgment.

Saving faith is not a feeble belief of the words, or works, or power of *Christ*, upon a short hearsay and slight notice, but it is built upon knowledge and just evidence. It is not a mere doctrinal and historical assent to the truths which our saviour spoke; nor is it a mere rational conviction by the best arguments, that *Christ* is furnished with such abilities to save: It is not a sudden fit of desire, or hope, or well-wishing to our souls to be saved by *Christ*; nor is it a rash and bold presumption that *Christ* will save me, and make me happy: But it is a solemn trusting of my soul into his hands for salvation, built upon a deep sense of my own sin and danger; a solid knowledge of his sufficient furniture for such an undertaking; and an earnest desire to be made partaker of this salvation, in the full nature of it, both the holiness and the joy.

Saving faith therefore supposes and implies in it a lively sense of the guilt of our sins, and the eternal misery that is like to ensue; a sight of the just vengeance of God to which we are exposed, and how incapable we are to make atonement for ourselves, or procure pardon; a sense of our want of a perfect righteousness to justify us before God, and how impossible it is for us to make one out of our own works and duties; for why should we trust another to do that which we can do for ourselves.

It supposes also a sight of the corruption of our natures, our perpetual tendency to fresh iniquity, and our weakness to perform the duties of life or religion; our natural delight in sin and the creature, and our natural aversion to God, and all that is holy; together with our utter incapacity of enjoying heaven whilst we are in this temper, and our impotence to change our own natures, and turn our souls from earth to heaven.

It supposes and implies a painful sense of our having offended God, and weariness of this state of sin, and a hearty willingness to be delivered from it: For why should we seek after the knowledge of such an almighty friend and saviour, if we were not fearful of eternal misery without one? Or why should we concern ourselves about a

person that can subdue sin in us, if we are not so far made willing to part with it, as to have our natures reformed into holiness? And let it be observed, that this painful sense, this inward weariness of the power and reign of sin in us, and this desire of deliverance from it, is the most essential part of true repentance, or the conversion of the soul from sin to God.

It includes, in the next place, a sight and belief of the all-sufficiency of *Christ* to supply our wants; that there is atonement in him for our sins, and pardon procured by him; that there is righteousness with him for our justification and acceptance unto eternal life; and all this by the means of his perfect obedience and death: That there is power and grace in him to conquer all our sins, to suppress temptations, to reform our vicious appetites, to incline our wills to God, to strengthen our endeavours for the practice of all holiness; to keep us in the favour and in the image of God, and conduct us safe to heaven; and that he is appointed by the father to do all this for sinners.

It consists formally in a committing of the guilty and sinful soul to the care of *Christ*, according to his Father's commission to take care of lost souls, and to keep that which is committed to him. It is a secret address of the heart unto *Christ*, whereby we resign our guilty persons to him, to be pardoned for the sake of his sufferings; our unrighteous souls to be accepted through his righteousness; our sinful and polluted natures to be sanctified by the power of his grace, and to be preserved safe to death and glory.

After all this, there follows an acquiescence, or rest of the soul in *Christ*, which he promised, when he called the weary and the heavy laden sinners to come to him, *Matt. xi. 28.* And this is accompanied with a good hope and expectation of all this salvation from *Christ*, for which the sinner trusts in him: And this excites his love and thankfulness to *Christ*, and awakens all his endeavours to a warm pursuit of heaven, in the path of holiness, in which God hath appointed us to walk to the kingdom. Thus every divine promise, every threatening, and every command, obtains a due authority over the heart, under the vital influence of such a faith. This is not a lazy and a slothful confidence, that casts away all care by throwing it on *Christ*, and walks in a secure and bold neglect of duty: For a believer well knows that he is bound to take the utmost care of his own soul, to work out his salvation with holy fear, to watch against temptation, to resist every rising sin, and persevere to the death; though, from a sense of his own insufficiency, he builds his safety and hope on the all-sufficiency of *Christ*.

Let it be observed here, that it is not necessary that all these several workings of the heart should be plain, and distinct, and sensible, in every act of faith, nor in every true believe: For the actions of the soul, and especially the springs, and the motives, and designs of those actions, are so hidden, and so mingled with each other, that they are not all distinctly perceived even in the soul, where they are transacted. When the jailor cried out, *What shall I do to be saved, Acts xvi. 30.* or when the poor man in the gospel, *Mark ix. 24.* said, *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief;* there were a multitude of crowding thoughts and passions that produced and mingled with those ideas and expressions of fear and faith, which could never be distinctly apprehended and recounted by the persons that felt them. But this I say, that most, or all the particulars I have mentioned, seem to be necessary in the very nature of a true and saving faith in *Christ*, where the gospel is known and preached so clearly as it is in our times, and must be pre-supposed or involved, and secretly included, in the very act



act of believing unto eternal life. It is a committing the soul to the care of *Christ*, from such motives, and with such designs, as I have described.

This account of saving faith guards it against all the mistakes of the age, and secures it against all the inroads of error on either side. A christian that takes in all these views, will not easily be led away by the *popish*, or any other doctrine, where faith is supposed to be a mere assent to the revelations of the gospel, nor will he be ensnared by the unwary expressions of some great writers, that faith is a full persuasion of our own salvation, which has given too much countenance to *antinomian* follies.

He that has this knowledge and this belief which I have described, and does thus heartily commit his soul to *Christ*, shall in no wise be cast out, and can never miscarry; but by repeated exercises of this faith, and humble watchfulness in walking with God, he shall grow rich in experience, and shall learn to say with triumph, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able, &c.*

III<sup>d</sup> remark. We may infer from this discourse, the value of a solid and regular knowledge of the person of *Christ*, and his gospel: It lays a good foundation for our first faith, and afterwards for its growth to a steady assurance. When we well know whom we have believed, we believe with a firmer confidence, and with boldness we commit our infinite concerns into the hands of a person of whose ability and faithfulness we are well persuaded; at first, by a distinct knowledge of his gospel, and afterwards, by an experimental acquaintance with his power and grace. Our hope in his salvation is hereby better established, and our hearts grow fearless. Such a hope is an anchor that loses not its hold in the wildest storms, and makes the vessel ride in safety.

What is the reason of the perpetual doubts and dependencies of some christians, that have made a long profession of the gospel? Whence is it that they are alarmed at every turn, and tremble, as though all were lost? How comes it to pass, that these hurries of mind should return so often, and almost overwhelm some pious souls, that walk watchfully and humbly with God? Is it not because their faith has been too much built upon sudden and warm affections, without so solid a ground of regular knowledge? When persons of a weaker mind have felt a strong and divine impression from some particular scripture, or from some bright sentence in a sermon, which hath displayed the grace and salvation of *Christ*, they have made this inward sensation the ground of their hope; they have fed still upon this cordial, and lived upon this support. And whensoever these warm impressions return, they trust in *Christ* afresh, and rejoice sensibly in his salvation: But they can hardly give a rational account what their faith is, or why they believe; and when these extraordinary supplies fail them, they sink, and tremble, and die.

I confess, if this faith change their natures, purify their hearts from the love of sin, and make them walk in holiness, far be it from me to suspect the truth of it. But this I must say, that such souls are in danger of perpetual inquietudes, ready to be shaken by every wind, and exposed to every gloomy temptation: When the flashes of light are gone, they are all darkness and terror, because they cannot render a reason of the hope that was in them, from a distinct acquaintance with the person in whom they had fixed their hope, or from his rich ability to save.

It is not a piece of wisdom in natural things, to trust a man with affairs of importance before we know him; or if we do, every little dark circumstance, every flying report, will be ready to shake our hearts, and fill us with fear; though perhaps our concerns may be safe in his hands. And it is not a piece of holy wisdom to trust

*Christ*

*Christ* himself infinitely, and yet be contented to know him but a very little. Such souls may be safe at last, because the Lord, whom they trust, is honest and faithful; but they expose themselves to many fears, and frequent torments of mind, all the time of their absence from him. Let *Athenians* build their altars to the unknown God; but a christian should not trust in an unknown saviour.

Let us all be persuaded then to learn much of *Christ*, that with honour and wisdom we may trust him much; that we may venture our all for eternity into his hands, and rest securely upon well-known power and faithfulness. *They that know thy name, O God our saviour, will put their trust in thee*, Psalm ix. 10. There is a noble instance of holy prudence in a well-built and well-settled faith. Let us not fancy that we know *Christ* enough, when we have attained merely such a degree of knowledge as is absolutely necessary for conversion, or so much as is sufficient to make a profession of his name, and thereby obtain a right to the fellowship of the saints. Let us not be content to be always babes, feeble and fearful because unknowing: We should think no pains too much to acquire divine knowledge, and to improve it: And to this end, let the holy scriptures be our daily study, for these are the writings that testify of *Christ*. Let us not censure the preachers that feed us with a word of knowledge, nor complain of dry discourses, when in any particular sermon, the doctrines of religion are chiefly insisted on; for these are the foundation of our wisest faith, and the pillars of solid and exalted joy. It was knowledge that carried the great apostle into that ecstasy of pleasure, and divine mortification to every thing besides *Christ*, *Phil.* iii. 8, 9. *Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung,—that I might be found in him, &c.*

Seek after experimental acquaintance with *Christ*. Follow the advice of *St. Peter*, *2 epist.* iii. 18. *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus*. This is attained by much converse with him, in meditation and prayer; by secret and hourly addresses to him; by frequent breathings of soul towards our heavenly friend, in whose hands lie all our immortal concerns. Make daily observations of the work and power of his grace upon your hearts, in your performance of duties, and success against temptations; and have a care that you lose not the things which ye had wrought: Take heed lest you decline in your acquaintance with *Christ*; that your faith and hope being built upon a regular knowledge, you may have a blessed treasure of christian experiences to establish and exalt it.

III<sup>d</sup> remark. How unkind and unnatural is it for parents to let the souls of their children perish for want of knowledge! How necessary to acquaint them betimes with the gospel of *Christ*, that they may trust in him betimes, and that their souls may be safe in the great day! If I should ask every mother in the assembly this question, do you not desire all your children should be young believers? But how can they believe in him whom they have not known? How can you expect they should trust in any person, if you have never brought them into his acquaintance? Or will you content yourselves that you give them the name of christians in baptism, and let them know nothing of *Christ*.

Think it not enough therefore to make them repeat the words of a catechism, but enquire what they mean by such and such words and sentences, which they pronounce; and thus you will discover where their ignorance lies: Then inform them, and assist their young understandings. Acquaint them with the sin of their natures, with the sins of their life, with the anger of God, and danger of hell; till they are afraid of  
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it in earnest, and ask, what they shall do to be saved. Then teach them the knowledge of *Christ*, in his glorious person; in his excellent qualifications of love, power, and faithfulness; teach them the doctrine of his death as a satisfaction for sin, and of that all-sufficient righteousness, upon which only they can find acceptance with a just and a holy God: Acquaint them with his pleading in heaven as a priest, for sinners here on earth, and his reigning there as king, to give grace and holiness, pardon and repentance, and salvation, to all that are willing to accept it in his own way. And let this practice be continually repeated, till, by frequent enquiries, you find they understand what you teach them.

Shew them how to commit their souls into the hands of *Christ* by prayer and faith, and how to walk watchfully in obedience to all the commands of *Christ*, to practise the duties of religion toward God, and the duties of morality toward men; in order to evidence their faith, and to bring them onward to complete salvation. Tell them of the last great judgment-day, when all their secret actions shall be brought to light before God, angels, and men; and when they must give an account to *Jesus* the judge, of all their behaviour here. Make it evident, that there is no way to appear with safety before him as a judge, but by committing their souls to him, as their kind and all-sufficient friend: And then holy parents may hope to meet their sons and their daughters with comfort, at the right hand of the Lord in that day.

It is an acquaintance with such a favour, and such a trust in him, that will prepare them not only for the last judgment, but for every circumstance of life and the various changes they may pass through in the day of their pilgrimage; and it will fit them for an early or an aged death.

If they should be exalted to riches or honour in the world, such a faith will be of abundant use and safety to them, that the keeping of their souls was committed in their younger days to the care of *Christ*; and they will carry their profession and their conversation unspotted with the world, through ten thousand snares attending such circumstances, by the influence of such a faith.

If they fall under various and heavy afflictions in the several stages of their life, it will be their perpetual relief, that all their concerns are in the hands of a merciful and a faithful high-priest, who himself has suffered in the flesh, and knows how to pity them that suffer. When the tumults of sorrow gather together, and the waves rise high, to distract and overwhelm their spirits, they will find many an hour of sweet serenity and calmness, by having committed themselves to that *Jesus*, who can say to the waves, peace, and be still.

But this leads me to the next inference.

IVth remark. We may infer from this discourse, how well God has provided for the safety and comfort of believers. For their safety, because he has set up and appointed a person so able to take care of their souls; and for their comfort, because he gives them such a knowledge of him in his own word, and by their own spiritual observation. It is this knowledge, this faith, and holy confidence, in the power and faithfulness of *Christ*, that prepares the soul for all accidents in the natural and spiritual life; it is this that gives the christian his support and comfort under every change of circumstances; and makes him valiant, and ready to meet them all.

Shall we run through a few of these seasons briefly?

In times of abounding error, when the gospel of *Christ* is corrupted, the believer gives diligence to reading, that he may hold fast the form of sound words; he prays for the inlightning spirit to confirm him in the truth; but he rejoices in this, that his  
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soul is in the hands of *Christ*, who will not suffer him to be seduced into damnable heresies, but will secure him from every fatal mistake.

Under the violent temptations of *Satan*, it is a support to the faint, that the powers of hell are all led captive, and trodden under foot by him who is the guardian of his eternal welfare: He knows that his Lord will save him from the mouth of the lion, will deliver him from every evil work; and will preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, 2 *Tim.* iv. 17.

Under a sense of fresh guilt, and sins of daily infirmity, the christian mourns bitterly, because of his failings and follies, but hopes for security from ruining transgressions, and the unpardonable sin; because the virtue of the atonement in which he trusts is eternal: *Christ* has undertaken to preserve him from final apostacies, though the best of saints are not secured here from the workings of sin.

And under these discomposures of mind, and the frequent vexations and uneasinesses in the things of this life, that may ruffle their tempers, had it not been for their acquaintance with *Christ*, they had been sometimes utterly overcome; but how often have they retired into their closets, and left the tumult of their thoughts behind them in the world, while they went to converse with him by prayer, who had the care of their spiritual concerns? Or, at least, they have cried unto the Lord because of those uneasy companions; have shook them off in his presence with holy anger, and returned into the world again with serenity in their countenance, and victory and peace in their souls. This strength they derive from their blessed Lord, whom they have chosen for their divine guardian.

Under the weakness of our graces, and the inconstancy of our tempers, it is a matter of relief to an humble saint, that the keeper of his soul is compassionate, and pities his frailties; is almighty, and will strengthen him under his weaknesses; is unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The lambs of his flock are weak, and cannot follow him in some rugged and difficult paths; then he gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom. *Isa.* xl. 11 And there are some of the sheep of his fold that are ready to straggle into forbidden ways, to wander abroad, and lose themselves in the wilderness: But the Lord is their shepherd, he restoreth their souls, and leads them again into the way of righteousness, for his name's sake, *Psalms* xxiii. 3.

In an hour of desertion, when God has withdrawn his joys, when the light of his countenance is concealed, and darkness lies upon the spirit, the believer holds fast his hope, though his rejoicings are interrupted; for he has committed his soul to the care of *Christ*, who has full interest with the Father, and can prevail for the recovery of his joys again. While he walks in darkness, and has no light of comfort, still he can trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. *Isa.* l. 10.

Under sickness, and pains of nature, that threaten a dissolution of the body, the pillow of a believer lies easy under his head; for his soul, his dearest part is in safe keeping and cannot perish. Amidst all the languishings of nature, we have often heard the triumphs of grace from the mouth of a lively christian. "If I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for my almighty friend is with me, *Psalms* xxiii. 4. I know that if the tabernacle of this earthly house be dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. There is a mansion above prepared for me by him, who has the care of my eternity. He went up on high, on purpose to prepare a place, and he will come again, and take me to himself; that where he is, there I may be also; if it were

were not so, he would have told me; for I know whom I have trusted; and whither he is gone I know, and the way I know, 2 Cor. v. 1. *John* xiv. 2, 3, 4."

Upon this view and assurance, the dying saint attempts the praises of his Lord, and practises something like the worship of heaven before-hand: *To him that is able to keep me from falling, and will present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,—be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen. Jude* 24, 25.

Vth. remark. See whence ariseth the divine and amazing courage that some christians have expressed under the foulest reproaches and sharpest sufferings for the sake of the gospel. This holy fortitude springs from a good acquaintance with the person of *Christ*, and a full persuasion of his ability to save. When we are ignorant, and in the dark, we are afraid of every thing, but courage is the effect of light and knowledge. A faith that is well founded on a due knowledge of *Christ*, can raise the suffering christian above the power of shame and fear. And I chuse to make this remark a distinct head of discourse, because it is the very occasion on which the apostle introduces the words of my text. *Christ* has abolished death, *ver.* 10, *He has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*: This I am well acquainted with, saith the apostle; for this very person, even *Christ*, my Lord has appointed me a preacher of this doctrine: *For which cause I also suffer.—Nevertheless I am not ashamed: For I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

It is a point of folly for a man to expose himself to reproach, and pain, and death, without any solid reason, or just hope of recompence. But *St. Paul* was no fool, when he was ready to be bound and die for the name of *Christ*; for he looked forward to the last great day, he saw his immortal interest safe under the care of *Christ*, whom he had well known and trusted; and therefore he had good reason to venture all on earth for the sake of such a friend in heaven. He saw the recompence secure in the hands of *Christ*; and therefore, says he, "I am not ashamed of my sufferings, nor of my faith. Let my persecutors destroy this flesh, but they cannot touch my soul; for it is in safe hands: I know where I have trusted it. Let the *Jews* or the *Romans* kill this body, but it shall be raised up again at the great day, by his power, to whom I have committed my all for here and for hereafter; for he is able to expel death from his possessions, and make the grave restore all its prisoners. I know his power to subdue all things to himself. Let them load me with shame and reproaches now, but I shall look them in the face in that day with courage; and they shall tremble, and be confounded with everlasting shame. They may deprive me of a mortal life, and all that belongs to it; but they cannot rob me of a blessed immortality; for the Lord of life hath taken charge of that important concern; and I am assured he is able to keep it. None can pluck me out of his hand: He will present me safe before his Father in that day, and make it appear with divine evidence, that the light afflictions which I suffer now are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is then to be revealed. He puts me into the same promise with himself; if I suffer with him, I shall also reign with him: And his promises are an eternal security. *I know whom I have believed.*" Thus you see what a glorious encouragement may be assumed from such an acquaintance with *Christ*, to endure the cross, and despise the shame for the sake of *Christ* and his gospel.

I grant there have been weak christians of lower degrees of knowledge, that have born sufferings and martyrdom with a courage beyond all expectation. There have

been some babes in *Christ*, that could not dispute for the truth, yet they could die for it. But let it be noted, that such persons have had generally but small advantage for improvement in knowledge; either they were young converts, or had but mean natural parts, or a poor education; yet a sincere zeal for their Lord: And perhaps also they had a bright and strong experimental knowledge of the gospel, by its sweet and sanctifying influences. Now when such as these have been called out by providence to bear a testimony to the truth, they have had a mouth and wisdom given them immediately from heaven, which all their adversaries have not been able to gainsay, nor resist: And this, according to the promise made to the apostles, in their infancy of understanding, *Luke* xxi. 15. They have been upheld under their torments by the arms of *Christ*, and by his sensible presence: Their divine fortitude hath been all inspiration. But you that have fair and daily opportunities for a large acquaintance with the gospel, have no reason to expect such miracles for your assistance in our day, if ye refuse the appointed means of hearing, reading and meditation.

Take this further advice also along with you: While you are treasuring up truth, seek after holiness, and every grace. See to it, that all the knowledge you gain by these methods be wrought into your very souls, and that you experience the sanctifying and comforting power of these truths on your consciences, your passions, and your lives. Divine truth, thus turned into spiritual nourishment, gives a vital strength for service and suffering. When you have the word of God in your mouths, as the sword of the spirit, *Eph.* vi. 14, &c. the breast-plate of righteousness, to cover your hearts, the hope of salvation as a helmet on your heads, and the shield of faith to ward off every dart; you are then best furnished to resist unto death.

But I would here chide the ignorant and the lazy christian. What will you do when ye shall be assaulted with the witty reproaches of the heathens of our age, those apostates from christianity? When they shall laugh at you for a fool, because you profess to be a believer, and they think they have reason to laugh, if you can give no reason why you believe? What will you say, when they shall tell you the gospel of *Christ* is but a fable, and endeavour to scoff you out of your faith? When they shall ridicule you for paying the honours of a God, to a poor man, that was hanged upon a tree in *Jerusalem*, and hath been dead and buried seventeen hundred years ago? What will you say, when they shall ask you, how you can imagine that this man was the son of God, or the scriptures are of divine original? Will you answer as a *papist* does, "I believe it because the church believes it?" Or will you reply with the *Turk*, "I believe in *Christ*, as the *Turk* doth in *Mahomet*, because the whole nation believes?" Or will you give the answer of a child, "I believe the bible is the word of God, because my mother told me so?" But how unworthy is this of a person that professes to be a christian, and is grown to full years of maturity? How ridiculous is it for a man to believe, and he knows not why? A man that hath had a thousand advantages to get his faith well grounded, and to learn the reason of the hope that is in him?

Besides, how will you be able to stand in such an hour of temptation? Perhaps you will lose your faith, and all your religion. A bold jest, or a fair shew of argument, may make so deep an impression on a weak and unfurnished mind, as to give a sudden inlet to the tempter; and your soul may be filled with doubts and suspicions of christianity: Then from one degree of unbelief you may be led on to another, till you have made shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience too. Thus you will part with all your hopes of immortality and heaven, for want of a well-grounded knowledge of the person in whom you profess to trust.

But

But further; if persecution should grow sharp, and days of torment and martyrdom return again, how would you be able to resist unto blood, and to bear the fiery trial, for the sake of a favour that you have not much acquaintance with? How could you hold out in this conflict till the death, if you have but little knowledge and little experience of that gospel which promiseth a crown of life? Would such ignorance as your's is, endure to be plundered and banished? To be scourged and buffeted? To be fastened to the chains of a galley slave, or to die by lingering tortures? Do you think you could bear what our neighbours and brethren in *France* have endured upon the account of your faith, and yet have no better reason to give for it? You will make but a poor confessor or martyr, if you can say no more for christianity than an heathen can say for his national religion? If you have no more to plead in defence of the blessed *Jesus*, than a native of *Morocco* hath for his prophet *Mahomet*; a man of *Ephesus* for his goddess *Diana*, or a citizen of *Athens* for his unknown God.

Attend therefore to the advice of the apostle *Peter*, 1 epist. iii. chap. ver. 14, 15. *But and if ye suffer for righteousness-sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;—but be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: And again I would put you in mind how he concludes his second epistle, and what direction he gives even to those who had some good knowledge of christianity; that you may be secured from the growing apostasy of the age. ver. 17, 18. Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing you 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.*

Vith. remark. This doctrine relieves our sorrows at the death of our pious relatives\*, for we know to whom they had entrusted their souls. We are in no pain or jealousy about their eternal state; for when they leave us and this world, they have parted indeed with their friends on earth, but it is to dwell with a better friend: for this is the design of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and of his powerful prayer, *John xvii. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; to behold my glory.*

And we should learn for the same reason to be well pleased with the time when *Christ* calls up to heaven those souls that he has taken care of; for he knows the properest hour, when to dismiss them from flesh into the invisible world.

If they are declining in their religion, and beginning to wander away from God, we may be ready to say, "O that they may live till they are fully recovered again to the brightness of their former profession!" But *Christ*, who hath the care of them, calls them now, lest they run further away, and fall into grosser sins; he hides them from temptations in the silent grave, and seizes their souls to himself in the wisest and kindest moment.

If they grow more holy, more delightful, and more lovely to all their friends, we are ready to say, "Now let them live long, to bring more glory to God, to please, entertain, and profit us." But the voice of *Christ*, to whom they had committed their souls, may say, "Now let them die, and quit the world with the fairest honour, that they may leave behind, amongst their friends and the churches, the sweetest favour of all their conversation, and the most precious memory of their names."

Are they taken away by sudden death? They know him who has the keys of death, and they have committed the care of it to him, to determine the time and the manner, when and how they should be released from this prison of flesh, and be taken up

\* This sermon was first preached on occasion of the death of a worthy member of our congregation.

to his own bosom. Though they may be conveyed with a sort of surprize into the unseen world, yet it is but a seizure into the arms of their best beloved, who is ready to receive and conduct them to the Father in perfect righteousness, with abounding joy.

Last remark. This doctrine leads us on to a joyful and entertaining prospect of the great and last day; the day when *Christ* shall make his faithfulness appear in all the trusts that he ever undertook; for then he shall have fulfilled them all, and shall deliver up his account to the Father. Then millions of souls, that were committed to his care in successive ages, and human bodies, an equal number, that had long lain sleeping in the grave under his eye, shall be reunited, to make complete and glorious persons; then shall all his saints at once appear, and give honour and everlasting thanks to their faithful and almighty guardian.

“Behold he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him! He comes in his own glory, in the glory of his father, and with all his holy angels! Behold, he comes exalted upon a throne of judgment, where the Father hath placed him to finish his great commission, and to pass a decisive sentence upon all mankind. My faith descries him afar off; I see his day, and I rejoice to see it. He shall summon all the nations before him; and I shall appear there, I trust, at his right hand, among the blessed. Then shall he remember, and fulfil all the kind words that he hath spoken to me on earth, by his holy writings: For in the days of my infirmity and warfare on earth, I have not been ashamed of him before men,” nor will he be ashamed of me before his Father, and his holy angels, *Matt. x. 32.*

“See, O Father, will the Lord *Jesus* say, see, here am I, and the children that thou hast given me, *Heb. ii. 13. While they were in the world I kept them, through thy name: Behold, there is not one of them lost, John xvii. 12.*”

“Come,” will the Lord say to every humble believer, “come to my right-hand, and stand there among the saints: Behold, all is safe that thou didst once entrust to my keeping: I know thy faith; I acknowledge thy love; I will now reward all thy humble obedience with everlasting honours; and thou shalt confess I have been a kind and a faithful friend.”

God the Father shall say to our Lord *Jesus*, “Well done, my best of servants, my son, my first-beloved; thou hast kept all those whom I gave thee to keep, and brought them safe into my presence; they shall be thy glory and thy eternal crown.” And every saint shall as it were, echo to the voice of the Father, and say, “my first-beloved, my Lord, and my best of friends, thou hast kept me through all the days of my infirmity and flesh, ever since I gave myself up to thy keeping; and thou hast brought me safe to thy Father’s house; the glory and the crown be thine for ever!”

O the unknown transports of this hour! The unspeakable joy and glory of this day! Faith is even astonished at the delightful distant prospect, and longs till the Lord appear.



## DISCOURSE XI.

## The ordinary witness of the SPIRIT.

## The First Part of this SERMON.

ROM. viii. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

**H**ERE is a sacred honour and dignity conferred upon men by a patent from heaven: The patent is the scripture, or word of God, and the dignity is, that we are made his children. Here are also two distinct witnesses to this title of honour; *viz.* our own spirits, and the blessed Spirit of God: The Spirit itself witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the children of the most high.

Every one that reads the text may plainly discern, that, by *the Spirit itself*, we must understand the holy Ghost, or third person in the ever blessed trinity, who is sent to dwell and operate in the hearts of christians; as it is expressed in several of the foregoing verses. And it is as manifest, that our own spirit here signifies that principle within us, distinct from our flesh, whereby we are enabled to think, reason, compare things together, and to judge concerning them. This is sometimes called the mind, the heart, the conscience, the soul; and it is termed our spirit here in the words before us.

The Spirit of God may sometimes operate by himself alone, in a very extraordinary manner, upon the souls of men, and give them immediate and divine assurances of their adoption and their interest in the love of God, as his children: And this favour was sometimes bestowed in the primitive days of christianity, when the saints were called in an uncommon manner, to undertake services of uncommon difficulty. But the words of my text seem rather chiefly to refer to that more ordinary and usual testimony which the Spirit of God gives to our sonship, by assisting our own spirits to attain the knowledge of this privilege,

In order to improve these words, I shall endeavour

- I. To lead your thoughts on in a few propositions, toward a plain and easy notion of this ordinary or assisting witness of the Spirit of God.
- II. Shew what methods the holy Spirit generally takes in this work.
- III. Propose some advices concerning it. And then
- IV. I shall give my thoughts also concerning the extraordinary witness of the spirit.

First, I would open the way toward a plain and easy notion of this ordinary or assisting witness of the spirit of God with our own spirits, in a few propositions.

I. Prop. God, in his word, has given us the description and the characters of his children. This is evident, and beyond dispute. Many scriptures there are that evince it.

it. He has told us what we are by nature; viz. children of wrath; and laid down the character of sinful men in an unregenerate state, who are called the children of the devil. He has acquainted us with what we are by grace; viz. his own children, born again, or born of God; and has laid down various marks of that privilege also, that so we might distinguish between good and evil, between saints and sinners.

The marks of the children of God in scripture, are chiefly such as these.

1. They believe in *Christ Jesus*. *John i. 12. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God; even to as many as believed in his name. 1 John v. 1. You have the same thing expressed in other words: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: Whosoever so believes him to be the Messiah, as to receive him for a saviour from sin and hell, according to his commission to save.*

2. They are such as do not willingly indulge sin, that do not make sin their practice. See *1 John iii. 9. He that is born of God sinneth not: He doth not drink in iniquity with greediness, as others do; he has still a settled rooted aversion in his mind, to those sinful practices into which sometimes he is drawn by the power or surprize of temptation; for he has the seed of God abiding in him, and the divine likeness and temper communicated to him by regeneration, so that he sins not with a full bent of soul, nor with his whole heart, as he loves God, and seeks him, nor with constancy and perseverance; Psalm cxix. 2. 10. 38. 44.*

3. Such as love God, and keep his commandments, they are the children of God: And this you have frequently repeated in the 1st epistle of *John*. When a principle of divine love reigns in the heart, we keep the commands of our heavenly Father with delight, and they are not an heavy task or burden to us: *His commandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 3.*

4. Justice and charity toward men, and special affection toward our fellow-christians, are further evidences of our adoption. *1 John iii. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* When our righteous and friendly conduct toward our fellow-creatures proceeds from a sense of the authority of God, and his divine compassion; when our meekness, gentleness, goodness to all men, and our peculiar love to the saints of God, spring from a right principle; when we love the brethren because they carry the image of God in them; these are such characters as distinguish the sons of God from the children of wrath, and the seed of the wicked one.

5. Peace-makers are intitled to this dignity: *Matt. v. 9. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God: But he that sows discord among brethren is of the seed of the serpent.*

6. Sanctified afflictions, and patience under them, is another mark of adoption. *Heb. xii. 7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; and he does this for our profit, ver. 10. that we might be partakers of his holiness.* If the sorrows, the burdens, the reproaches, the pains, the sicknesses, and the sufferings that we sustain, either from the hands of God or men, do not draw out our angry disquieting passions, but are born with a holy composure of spirit, looking to the hand of God as our Father; and if we find our hearts weaned from this life as from a state of sin and sorrow, and drawn nearer to heaven, it is a comfortable sign that we belong to the family of God.

7. They that gain a victory over the world, and live above the reach of the frowns and the smiles of it, they are the children of God too: The apostle *John* assures us of this. *1 John v. 4. He that is born of God overcometh the world.*

8. They

8. They are the children of God that walk as *Christ* walked, and live as *Christ* lived: They that follow the glorious example of the original and first-begotten son, have the mark of true children. *Rom.* viii. 29. God has predestinated all his children to be conformed to the image of his son *Christ Jesus*.

I might sum up all the foregoing evidences of sonship in this general character of likeness and conformity to our redeemer: For if we consult that text, *1 John* v. 6. we shall find that the water and blood are the two great testimonies that are given to the sonship of our Lord *Jesus*. This is he that came by water and by blood. And as he was manifested to be the son of God by the purity of his life, and the blood of martyrdom, which also was a blood of atonement, so are we manifested to be the children of God. The blood is our witness, when we by faith lay hold of the atoning blood of *Jesus*, and commit our guilty souls to pardoning mercy, to be accepted through that blood of his sacrifice. And when we are sprinkled with the clean water of sanctification, or baptized with the holy Spirit and made holy, as *Jesus* is holy, then we have the witness of the water too. Thus, by the witness of the water and the blood, *Jesus* the first son is evidenced, and we also appear to be children.

II. Prop. As the word of God discovers to us, and describes the characters of his children, so the Spirit of God works these heavenly dispositions in us, these happy characters of our sonship. By nature we are the children of wrath, the mere seed of the first *Adam*, and the offspring of *Satan*, rather than of God; in our corrupt natural state, we are led by the prince of the power of the air; we are children of disobedience, and of death. *Eph.* ii. 2. There are none of these divine marks upon us. It is the blessed Spirit that forms these filial graces in our souls, lays the foundation of these evidences in the heart with power, and makes them appear in the life with beauty and praise. Therefore the children of God are said to be born of the Spirit, *John* iii. 5, 6.

It is he that takes us out of the kingdom of *Satan*, the family of death and hell, and brings us into the family of God, and the kingdom of his grace. It is he that, by his divine influences, translates us from darkness into the kingdom of *Christ*. It is he that takes away all the wild and savage marks of an unclean beast from the soul, and gives it the disposition and the character of the sheep of *Jesus*. It is the blessed spirit who, by his sanctifying and renewing work, stamps the image of God on the soul, forms the features and resemblance of the divine nature, and imprints on the heart such gracious habits and dispositions as render it like to God. Thus the child of God bears the Father's likeness, as the figures engraved on the seal are copied out on the wax. And this some have called the seal of the holy Spirit. *Eph.* i. 13. and iv. 30

And as the Spirit of God works these divine principles of holiness in the heart, so he is said to be given to us, to dwell in us; *i. e.* to preserve those holy principles which belong to the children and heirs of God: And in this sense he may be called an earnest of their future inheritance, *Eph.* i. 14.

Blessed are your souls, who have the forementioned characters impressed upon you. Rejoice in your own happy state, and bless the eternal Spirit, who has stamped the likeness of God upon you; who has begotten you again to a new life, by the power of the word working effectually upon your hearts; who has translated you from the household of sin and *Satan*, and made you the children of the most high God.

Here also we may remark, that in this we bear a resemblance to *Christ Jesus*, the only begotten son. It was by the descent of this Spirit on the blessed virgin, and by the

the overshadowing power of the most high, that the child *Jesus* was formed; and therefore that holy thing which was born of the virgin, was called the son of God. *Luke* i. 35.

The resemblance holds yet farther: For the Spirit was given to dwell in *Christ* without measure, to sanctify his human nature, and to work miracles, *John* iii. 34. By this Spirit of holiness he was also raised from the dead; and thus he was declared to be the son of God with power, as some interpret that text, *Rom.* i. 4. He was God's first-born, before all worlds; and it is the same Spirit that dwells in him, the original son, without measure, that is sent, according to our measure, to dwell in us also: It is the same Spirit that raises us from a death in trespasses and sins to a new life: It is the same Spirit that is given to sanctify us, and to make us children.

Go on yet and compare *Rom.* viii. 9, 11, 14. with *Heb.* ii. 14. and you will find, as he was pleased in a way of condescension to take flesh and blood upon him, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, that he might be like them, *Heb.* ii. So he is pleased to give his own Spirit to men, that they might be like him also: For he that has not the Spirit of *Christ* is none of his. *Rom.* viii. 9. For this reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, children of one father; for he partook of their flesh, and they partake of his Spirit.

III. Prop. God has given to each of our spirits a power of reflecting upon our own hearts and lives, whereby we become witnesses and judges for or against ourselves: And by this power we pass a judgment both concerning our particular actions, concerning the temper of our spirits, and concerning our state toward God.

This power is sometimes called conscience. It is a faculty whereby we compare our words, our thoughts, and actions, with some rule; and that rule is the law of God: And hereby we judge concerning these particular thoughts, words and actions, whether they are good or bad. But when we compare the habitual frame and temper of our spirits, as well as the transactions and conduct of our lives, with the plain description and characters of the children of God, that are given us in his word; hereby we judge of our own state, whether it be a state of sin, or a state of grace.

This is that light that God has set up in men, by which they should pass sentence in their own case, with regard to their own present conduct, and their future hopes. And *Solomon*, for this reason, calls the spirit of man the candle of the Lord, *Prov.* xx. 27. The heathens had this conscience in them, and those broken pieces of the law that were written in their hearts, was the rule by which their consciences did either excuse or else accuse, *Rom.* ii. 15. But we have a more certain rule to judge ourselves by, even the word of God, the revelation of his mind and will, that he has made in the bible. Our consciences must judge according to this rule. We are bid therefore to try, to judge, to examine ourselves, *2 Cor.* xiii. 5. Examine and prove yourselves. And *1 Cor.* xi. 28. *Let a man examine himself.* This self-examination is required as a necessary duty, in order to come at the knowledge of our sonship, that our spirits may be able to bear a witness, that we are the children of God.

Blessed are they who, upon such an inward search and examination of themselves, can find such marks of his children. Blessed are we, if our own hearts condemn us not: Then we may assure our hearts before *Jesus* our judge, and have confidence at his coming, *1 John* iii. 19,—21. Happy is our state, if our spirits bear witness that we are the children of God, by this inward and impartial reflection upon ourselves, and the comparison of our hearts with this rule of judgment.

IV.

IV. Prop. Though God has given us this power of reflecting and comparing ourselves with characters laid down in his word, yet there is need of the assisting light of his Spirit to search with our spirits, and to witness to his own work in our hearts.

We are too often ready to deceive ourselves in this matter two ways: 1. In some persons, pride and self-flattery are so prevalent, that they always think better of themselves than they deserve, and are ready to pronounce themselves the children of God, without just evidence and sufficient ground. 2. Others, who are humble and sincere christians, have their spirits so depressed, either by a melancholy constitution, by a natural self-diffidence, by weakness of body, or by heavy afflictions, that they can see nothing good in themselves; they cannot read any characters of divine grace in their hearts, though grace shines visibly in their whole conversation, to the view of their fellow-christians.

On these accounts, and some others also, we stand in need of divine assistance in this work of self-examination. And therefore it is, that though we are commanded to search ourselves, yet we have the examples of saints in the scripture, that desire the Spirit of God to search them too. With what zeal and fervency doth holy David entreat that God would search him. See *Psalms* cxxxix. 23, 24: when he had been examining his own heart in the two former verses, he concludes, search me, O Lord and try me. As we cannot work grace in our own hearts, so, in an hour of darkness, we cannot clearly discover that grace that is there, to the full satisfaction of our consciences, unless the same Spirit that wrought it, is pleased to reveal it to us by his assisting influences. It is by observations and assistances borrowed from the sun, that hour-lines are drawn on a sun-dial, and they abide there in the dark; but we cannot find what hour of the day it is, unless the sun shines upon those hour-lines: So grace in the heart is wrought by the holy Spirit, and it abides still even the darkest night of temptation, when once the Spirit of God has wrought it there, it shall never be quite lost; for the seed of God remains: But the soul cannot discern it clearly, so as to take comfort from it in an hour of darkness; unless the Spirit, like the sun, dart his beams of light into the soul, and discover his own work. Therefore, a great writer of practical divinity, Mr. R. *Allein*, expresses it, "As the Spirit seals us, by being the mark of the Lord upon us, so he witnesses, by being the light of the Lord within us, whereby we come to discern the mark of the Lord upon us." As *Hagar* in the wilderness did not see the fountain of water, though it was near her, till God opened her eyes, *Gen.* xxi. 19. so the springs of divine life and holiness, which the Spirit of God has raised within our souls, are sometimes, as it were, hidden from the soul itself, till the Spirit shew it to the believer, by assisting his enquiring faculties, and shedding down a divine light. This leads me to

The second thing proposed: And that is, to shew the method by which the Spirit generally works in this assisting testimony.

1. He doth it by stirring up the soul to a most diligent search, and making it unwearied in this toil and labour of self-examination. I call it labour and toil, for by nature we are very unwilling to be accurate, and strict, and just in the search of ourselves. The Spirit of God will hold us to it, when we find great averfions and disinclination in our own hearts to such a work. We, who have so much sin, are sometimes much afraid to look into the bottom of our souls, lest we should find no sincerity there: It is the Spirit of truth therefore, that excites us to diligence in these holy enquiries.

2. He gives us sometimes a fair opportunity and occasion for the exercise of some grace in a clear and distinct manner; and hereby assists the witness of our spirits. Perhaps by the discovery of the grace and glory of *Christ*, in a sermon, he invites our faith, our love, our holy joy to appear: By a kind providence, and some new signal mercy, he puts us in mind of thankfulness: Or if our souls have lain long in a secure careless frame, he leaves us, it may be, under some spiritual affliction, some terrible temptation, and awakens us to thoughtfulness, repentance, holy mournings, and longing desires after God. Thus the characters of adoption appear in our hearts, that before were covered over with the dust of this world, and buried under the cares or vanities of life.

3. It is the Spirit of God that inwardly assists these holy principles, and strengthens them in their exercise, when he hath given an outward and providential occasion to awaken them: For as he is the first spring of all the powers of the new creature, so he is a constant assisting principle to promote their holy exercise. He dwells in the saints for ever, and is an everlasting spring of their holiness. It is he that excites and manages the vital motions of our souls, and makes it appear by holy exercises, that we have spiritual life in us; otherwise the providential occasion and opportunity for the exercise of such a grace might be given, and pass away, and be lost, while the soul itself lies sluggish, negligent, and inactive, if the holy Spirit did not set it on work: For we are not of ourselves sufficient even to think or do any thing truly good. *2 Cor. iii. 5.*

4. The Spirit of God sometimes assists this witnessing work, by bringing some word of scripture into the mind, wherein the character of a child of God is described, agreeable to some holy disposition which we find working in our own hearts: And this makes the matter clear, plain, and evident to the conscience. Though this be not a constant method with God, yet surely the experience of many christians can subscribe to the truth of it, when they have been searching their own hearts, to find what grace is there, some proper sentence of scripture has been brought to their minds, wherein they have, as in a glass, beheld their own face, beheld the likeness of the children of God in their own souls; and then they have been constrained to pronounce with holy joy concerning themselves, "Surely I am a child of God."

Nor is it at all hard to suppose, that God's holy Spirit should cast a happy sentence of his own word into our minds, or bring it to our remembrance, in order to evidence our adoption, when it is generally granted the evil spirit may have such access to our minds by the organs of the brain, or the fancy, as to suggest to our thoughts profane, impure, malicious, or blasphemous speeches, or to tempt us to presumption or despair.

5. It might be added, in the last place, that the discerning faculty of the soul is enabled to act aright by the Spirit of God, and kept from all dangerous mistakes and self-deceivings in this work of examination. Hereby he makes it appear, that such a principle of faith, or love, or repentance, which we find working within us, is true evangelical repentance, is sincere love, and faith unfeigned; and that it is indeed God's own work in the heart: And thus he puts an end to our doubtful fears about the truth of grace.

These things seem to me so plain and intelligible in themselves, and so correspondent with those divine aids of the holy Spirit which are promised to the children of God in all their serious and religious exercises, and without which we can do nothing that is truly good, that I trust it will be easily understood, and readily received,  
by

by those who are much conversant in transacting their most important affairs with God, according to the light of scripture.

The substance of this testimony of the Spirit to our adoption may be represented in short, after this manner: The Spirit of God in his word has described the marks and characters of his children; and, by his gracious influence, he works these holy dispositions, these characters in our hearts: God has given us a conscience, which is a faculty of comparing ourselves with the rule of his word and judging accordingly: The Spirit of God, by his power, and by his providence, awakens these holy dispositions into lively exercise: He assists our enquiring and our judging faculties, helps us to compare our own souls with his word, and thus confirms our own spirits in the belief of this proposition, that we are the children of God. This is the more common and ordinary way and method, whereby God is pleased to give the comforts of adoption to his people.

It is the remark of a judicious writer on this subject, "That as on the one hand wicked men are sometimes convinced in their own consciences that they are children of wrath, and further confirmed in this persuasion by that evil spirit who labours from hence to drive and hurry them on to despair; so, on the other hand, when the hearts of believers speak peace to them, telling them that God is their father, reconciled to them in *Christ*, and the holy Spirit saith the same also, then they have perfect peace."

That the Spirit of God may thus concur with the inward consciousness and testimony of our own spirits in so important a matter as our love to God, and his love to us, is very easy to be supposed, when the apostle speaks of this concurring witness of the Spirit of God to his own consciousness, and his sincere love of his countrymen, when he says, *Rom. ix. 1. My conscience also bearing me witness in the holy Ghost.* There is nothing in all this account of things but what is perfectly agreeable to the word of God, and to the rational actings of created minds, under the happy influences of the uncreated Spirit.

The third thing proposed was, to give a few advices relating to this ordinary witness of the Spirit of God concurring with our spirits.

1. Satisfy not yourselves with one slight examination, but renew the work frequently, and search whether you find the same marks and evidences of adoption remaining in you or no. Do not content yourself to run the whole course of life with one or two solemn examinations of your own hearts, when God first began to work religion in you, but enquire and see whether your principles of grace abide in the same brightness, evidence, and activity, as in time past. Perhaps by this means you may discern a sensible growth in grace and you may find abundant advantage, worth all the care and labour of self-examination; or, if you find decays and backslidings, it will awaken repentance and zeal toward a recovery.

2. In this searching work keep aloof from carnal self-love. When you call yourselves to an account, set yourselves before the bar of your own consciences, as before the bar of God; for conscience is a judge for God within us. Pass an impartial sentence concerning yourselves, even such as you suppose God himself would pass, if you were now summoned before his tribunal. Suffer not yourselves now to be biased by the esteem or the fondness that we all have naturally for ourselves. The matter is too important, the enquiry too solemn and awful, for you to indulge self-flattery. It will be no profit to deceive your souls in this work, for you cannot de-

ceive God. Come therefore and apply yourselves to this holy exercise, with an unbiaſſed deſign to pronounce concerning yourselves whatever you find the word of God pronounces concerning you.

3. Trust not merely to your own ſpirits, without earneſt prayer for the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God. *Jer. xvii. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things:—Who can know it?* Therefore *David* prays importunately, as we have before obſerved, that God would ſearch him and try him. *Pſalm cxxxix. 23, 24.* Beg of the Lord that he would not ſuffer you to be deceived, when you ſet about this ſearching work; for it is a matter of moſt high concern. A miſtake here is dangerous, and it may be for ever fatal.

4. When you find any character of adoption made to appear with ſtrong evidence upon your ſouls, be not utterly diſcouraged, though you do not find all the characters of grace there.

It is true indeed, where there is a new nature and a divine principle wrought in the heart, there are the ſeeds of every holy diſpoſition; but they do not all ariſe to an equal ſtrength, nor ſtand forth and ſhine with equal evidence. The Spirit of God may ſometimes witness with your ſpirits, though but one mark of adoption appear plainly, while others are not ſo eaſily diſcovered. A ſingle bough of the tree of life has upheld ſouls from drowning in deſpair, when they could but lay hold of that one bough. Many a chriſtian, under great difficulties, inward tumults, doubts, and darkneſſes of ſpirit, have been enabled to hold on their way by living upon ſome one plain ſcripture, and finding the ſenſe of it tranſcribed into their own hearts. Some one evidence of true faith, or holy love, of repentance, or heavenly-mindedneſs, has been ſet in ſuch a divine light before them, that they could not well miſtake; and this has born up their hope in an hour of temptation. But I muſt add

5. Though you ought to bleſs God for any mark of his children in your hearts, yet you ought not to content yourſelf with one mark, ſince the ſcripture has given us many. The faculties of our nature are various, and they have their various operations: The paſſions or affections of our ſouls are many, and ſome of them are frequently in exerciſe: Now all the paſſions and faculties of nature, with all their operations, ſhould be conformable to the rule of the word of God; and when it is ſo, there appears a variety of marks of the children of God upon us, even as many as there are powers or paſſions belonging to our ſouls. Whether it be love, it is love to God, and the children of God, for they are born of the ſame Father: Whether it be hatred, it is hatred to ſin, and to all that diſpleaſes God: If it be delight, it is a delight in heavenly things, and in holy ordinances: If it be deſire, it is a deſire after God, after a ſenſe of his love, a greater acquaintance with him, a more exact conformity to him, and a breathing after the heavenly ſtate, where we ſhall never ſin againſt him. Thus ſince the ſeveral powers and principles in our nature being ſanctified, yield us ſeveral diſtinct evidences of adoption, let us not be contented with one of them, but preſs forward toward a ſtronger hope of our ſonſhip. Let us labour and pray that all the ſprings of action within us being ſanctified by the holy Spirit, may yield the fruits of holineſs, may ſhine bright in a way of evidence, and raiſe our hope to full aſſurance.

6. When you have found any comfortable and ſolid hopes of your adoption, by the holy Spirit witnessing in this rational way with your ſpirits, that you are the children of God, walk in the chearful ſenſe of it continually; go on in the way of holineſs, rejoicing in the Lord. This was one end why *Chriſt* has given us the characters



characters of his disciples in scripture, that when we find them in our own hearts we might rejoice. This was part of the design of his farewell-sermon to his apostles, wherein some of these characters are described. See *John xv. 11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* The blessed Spirit, in the same discourse, is promised as a comforter, and we ought to walk in the light of his consolations. It is the most evangelical and the most constraining method of his grace, when he carries on his sanctifying work by the influence of peace and joy; and it is one of the glories of a christian, that the joy of the Lord is his strength, to fulfil all the duties of righteousness.

DIS-

## DISCOURSE XII.

## The extraordinary witness of the Spirit.

## The second Part of this SERMON.

ROM. viii. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

**I**T is great and divine condescension, that the blessed God should ever take any of the children of wrath, and make them the children of his love: But he condescends yet farther, when he sends down his own Spirit to give us notice of our adoption, and to acquaint us with our high and holy privilege.

The common and ordinary method whereby the Spirit of God bears witness that we are his children, is by drawing out our own spirits to search and enquire into the filial and holy dispositions which he himself has wrought in our hearts, and by assisting our consciences in this enquiry. Thus by his gentle, easy, and insensible influences upon our souls, he leads us on in a rational manner to infer and conclude, that we are born of God, because we find the image of God impressed on us, and those divine qualities wrought in us, which belong only to his children. This has been the subject of the foregoing discourse.

I proceed now to consider the extraordinary witness of the holy Spirit, when in a more immediate\* and more sensible manner he raises in the hearts of some of his favourites a powerful and a pleasant sense of their interest in the love of God.

This extraordinary witness may be distinguished into two kinds.

1. It may imply some very uncommon and powerful confirmation of the ordinary and rational witness, by most sensible impressions of divine love on the heart, by which it is raised to holy raptures, to heavenly joy and assurance. Perhaps the apostle *Peter* may have some respect to this, 1 *Pet.* i. 8. where, speaking of *Christ*, he adds, *whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* Here it is supposed in the text, that the persons to whom he writes were conscious of their own faith in an unseen favour, and their love to him; and thence they could infer that they were accepted of God: But without some peculiar and more uncommon influences of the holy Spirit, they could hardly be said to arise to such joy as was unspeakable and full of glory, or glorified joy, as the *Greek* text expresses it, *χαρὰ δὲ δόξα μόνον*, a-kin to that which the saints possess in the glorified state.

2. There

\* Note, By the word immediate here I do not mean without ordinances, such as prayer, meditation, &c. but rather sudden and speedy.

2. There is yet another sort of extraordinary witness of the spirit; and that is, when in an immediate and powerful manner the holy Spirit impresses the soul with an assurance of divine love, and gives the heart of a saint such a full discovery of his adoption or interest in the favour of God, without the more slow and argumentative method of comparing the dispositions of their souls with some special characters of the children of God in scripture. The Spirit of God may witness in an extraordinary manner to our adoption, by an inward experimental sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, assuring some of his favourites that they are the sons or daughters of God, without any particular examination of the heart at that time, or any present reflections on the characters of adoption described in the bible.

I confess the several acts of the mind of man, even the reasoning and argumentative acts of the soul, are so quick and sudden, and the sensible joy that may arise from them follows in so swift and close a succession, that it is sometimes very hard to distinguish and define the bounds and limits of the several actions, perceptions, and impressions on the mind. On this account I shall not be solicitous to keep up the distinction between these two kinds of the extraordinary witness of the spirit, but shall only speak of them in general, as distinguished from the ordinary witness of the Spirit, by the more immediate sensations of divine love, that are impressed through the peculiar favour of God on the souls of some of his children.

I am very sensible that, in our present age, the Spirit of God is so much withdrawn from the christian church in all his operations, that a man exposes himself to the censure of wild enthusiasm, and a heated fancy, if he ventures to discourse at all on such a theme as this: But as I am persuaded these things were frequent matter of christian experience in the primitive days of the gospel, and in scenes of sharp persecution, so I am satisfied that God has not utterly withheld his divine favours of this kind from his churches and his children, for sixteen hundred years together; and I hope I shall make it appear, that a supposition of this extraordinary witness of the spirit may be maintained, without giving a loose to all the roving dreams of a disordered brain, or to the bold presumptions of weak and conceited men or false and deceitful impostors.

The method of my discourse is this.

I. I will offer some very probable proofs that there has been, and is, such a thing as the extraordinary witness of the spirit of God.

II. I shall mention a few of the special seasons or occasions of such a divine favour.

III. Shew how it may be distinguished from delusions of *Satan*, and from the mere ferments and vivacity of animal nature, or a disordered fancy.

IV. Represent some other characters of it, and shew wherein it differs from the ordinary witness of the Spirit. And then

V. Conclude with a few directions relating to it.

I. Let me offer some proofs that there is such an extraordinary witness of the spirit.

Now that this is not the language of wild enthusiasm, or a mere fantastick notion of the brain, will appear from these few considerations.

I. Consideration. The great God, the Father of spirits, can reveal a truth to the mind of his creature, with such life, and power, and evidence, that the mind cannot dissent from it; or refuse to believe it; the overpowering light may be so divine and convincing, that the creature may be fully and justly persuaded it is a divine truth,

truth. Those who believe the prophets and apostles divinely inspired, can have no reasonable doubt about this proposition.

II. Consideration. It has pleased the great and blessed God to give such immediate assurances of his own love to some of his favourites of old, by visions and voices, and the message of angels, and by inward impressions on their minds by his own Spirit. Thus *Abraham* was assured that God was his God, and would be his exceeding great reward, *Gen. xv. 1.* Thus concerning *Moses*, it was made known that he was the friend of God, *Exod. xxxiii. 11.* Thus *Daniel*, was often informed that he was a man greatly beloved, *Dan. ix. 23. and x. 11, 19.* *Mary Magdalene*, and some others, who conversed with *Christ*, when he was here on earth, had a particular assurance that their sins were forgiven them. *Paul* was assured that he was a chosen vessel. And indeed, all the apostles had sufficient evidence of their acceptance with God, and their interest in the love of *Christ*, by the extraordinary communications of the holy Ghost. It is the opinion of a late ingenious writer, that not only the apostles themselves, but even all the primitive christians that were truly converted by their ministry, received these extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost in some degree; which did not only witness to the christian religion, but to the comfort of those who had it, with the assurance of God's pardon and acceptance. See *Miscellanea Sacra*, Essay i. p. 117, 126, 134.

III. Consideration. There is no evidence from reason or scripture, that all such immediate divine favours are ceased; and though there is not the same occasion for the frequency of them as there was in the beginning of christianity, yet the Spirit of God is a free and unconfined agent; and since it is plain from scripture, that he doth still dwell in his people, and carry on his divine work among the churches of *Christ* in all ages, to the end of the world, why may he not sometimes discover his power and grace in an extraordinary manner, above and beyond his ordinary and usual operations?

IV. Consideration. Some special seasons and occasions may arise, and indeed have arisen, wherein the blessed Spirit of God has thought it proper, vastly to exceed the measures and rules of his ordinary operations, in the exercise of his offices of illumination and sanctification? And why may it not be allowed in his consolations also?

1. There may be some reason for extraordinary acts of his illumination; as when persons are not able to read the holy scriptures, or when the bible is withheld from them, and when they have enjoyed but very poor and insufficient ministrations of the gospel; the blessed Spirit may sometimes shine into humble souls with some uncommon rays of divine truth, and they may enjoy more sensible teachings of the holy Spirit: Or sometimes a person of low parts, and weak understanding, may have been illuminated in the knowledge of some scriptural doctrine, beyond what the mere exercises of their own feeble reason upon scripture would have attained to in so short a time: And perhaps some christians of better capacities may have enjoyed this favour also. *Luther*, that extraordinary servant of God in the reformation, is said to have oftentimes learned more of the gospel on his knees in prayer, than in his laborious studies.

2. There may be, and there have been, instances of an extraordinary work of sanctification. To what glorious degrees of piety, virtue, and true holiness, have some persons been raised in a very short time? A most astonishing change has been wrought in their souls, and a swift preparation for heaven, beyond what appears in the ordinary work of the spirit, by the rational or persuasive influence of outward ordinances.

And since the spirit of God appears sometimes, for the honour of his own grace, to be an extraordinary enlightener and sanctifier; why may he not be an extraordinary comforter also?

V. Con-

V. Consideration. If we can credit the accounts which have been given by holy men in later ages, and some of which are recorded in the memoirs of their lives, we must confess that there have been instances and experiences of most sublime and extraordinary consolations of the blessed Spirit bestowed on them; such as, upon the most rational survey of things according to scripture, we cannot but conclude to have been truly divine.

It would take up many whole pages to cite such instances as we find upon record, in the lives of particular persons. Many such may be found in the late Mr. *Fleming's* fulfilling of the scriptures, especially in *Scotland*. I shall mention one only, and it shall be a most uncontroverted example, in our land, in *England*, even in our own day; the example of a person whose solid sense, whose deep sagacity, whose sedate judgment, and the superior excellence of his reasoning powers, leave no room to charge him with vain and delusive raptures of a heated imagination. The name is the late venerable Mr. *John Howe*. The name commands respect, and confirms the narrative. He wrote the following paragraphs in the blank leaf of his own bible.

“ December 26. 1689. After that I had long, seriously, and repeatedly thought with myself, that, besides a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying savoury taste and relish of them was also necessary, that with stronger force, and more powerful energy, they might penetrate into the most inward centre of my heart, and there being most deeply fixed and rooted, govern my life; and that there could be no other sure ground whereon to conclude and pass a sound judgment, on my good estate godward; and after I had, in my course of preaching, been largely insisting on 2 *Cor.* i. 12. *This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, &c.* this very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the divine majesty, did seem to dart into my open and expanded breast. I have often since, with great complacency, reflected on that very signal pledge of special divine favour, vouchsafed to me on that noted memorable day; and have with repeated fresh pleasure, tasted the delights thereof.”

“ But what of the same kind I sensibly felt through the admirable bounty of my God, and the most pleasant comforting influence of the holy Spirit, on *October* 22, 1704. far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes for joy that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men: and that for this very purpose, mine own heart should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit, *Rom.* v. 5.”

Besides this instance of so sedate, so rational, and so judicious a person, there have been many others of our pious fathers in *England*, but especially, as I said before, in the church of *Scotland*, have enjoyed such divine visits, and given very sensible evidence that the holy Spirit is not utterly withdrawn from men, even as to his extraordinary influences.

If any thing could be added to this testimony of Mr. *Howe*, it should be the instance of Mr. *Flavel*, the famous practical divine in the west of *England*, who, in his treatise of the soul of man, gives us this account of himself, but with his name concealed: “ That, in a journey on horseback, he fell into a divine meditation, wherein he had such tokens of the love of God, and his interest in the divine favour, manifested to him, that greatly surpassed all the rational and inferential evidences that ever he had; though he was known to be a close walker with God, and an eminent saint, and a lively preacher of the blessed gospel of *Christ*.”

VI. Consideration. There have been several learned and judicious divines, who have declared their firm belief of such extraordinary manifestations and witnessings of the blessed spirit; which belief has risen from their acquaintance with the scriptures, and their observations of the dealings of God with the spirits of his people, in some uncommon cases, though they have not professed any such experiences of their own. So the worthy and pious Mr. *Caryll*, on *Job* x. The Spirit brings in the witness of the water, and the blood, which is his mediate work. But besides and above these, he sometimes gives a distinct witness of his own, which is his immediate work; and is, in a way of peculiarity and transcendency, called the witness of the Spirit.

The learned and venerable Dr. *Owen*, in his treatise of communion with God, page 293, saith, "There are two ways whereby the Spirit worketh this joy in the heart of believers. 1. He doth it immediately by himself, without the consideration of any other acts or works of his, or the interposition of any reasonings, or deductions, and conclusions. This does not arise from our reflex consideration of the love of God, but rather gives occasion thereunto. He so sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and fills them with gladness by an immediate act and operation. Of this joy there is no account to be given, but that the spirit worketh it when and how he will: He secretly infuseth and distils it into the soul, prevailing against all fears and sorrows, filling it with gladness, exultations, and sometimes with unspeakable raptures of the mind." To this the doctor adds,

"2. The spirit works this joy also mediately by his other works towards us, &c. These are after the common or ordinary manner."

That great and evangelical divine, Dr. *Goodwin*, in Vol. iv. part 2. pages 95, 96. declares, "That, besides the testimony of the water and the blood, that is, faith in the death of *Christ* and sanctification, there is a third testimony, and that is the holy Ghost himself, which is immediate; that is, though it backs and confirms what the other two said, yet it quotes them not, builds not his testimony on them, but raises the heart to see its adoption and sonship, by an immediate discovery of God's mind love." And a little after he adds, "This witness is not a testimony fetched out of a man's self, or the common work of the Spirit in man, as the others were, but he speaks from himself: As when the broad seal is put to by a king, he writes *Teste meipso*; so doth the Spirit speak in the language of a king, *Teste meipso*, witness myself; and receives and borrows no witness from what is in us, but makes his own abundant-ly satisfy."

The late pious and judicious expositor of scripture, Mr. *Samuel Clark*, has written in the defence of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, and describes it thus: "When the Spirit of God, without consideration of, or reflecting upon, any of those gracious qualifications he has formerly wrought in the soul, does, by his own immediate power, imprint this persuasion upon the heart, thou art a child of God; and by an inward and secret, yet powerful voice, doth say to the soul, thou art a believer, thy sins are pardoned, or to that purpose; and so satisfies the soul concerning its state and condition."

I proceed in the second place, to consider the special seasons and occasions wherein such favours have been bestowed on men.

1. The Spirit of God has in a more immediate manner, made extraordinary impressions of the love of God on the soul, when persons have been called to great and difficult services in the church, or to uncommon sufferings for the sake of *Christ*. St. *Paul* was in labours more abundant, and in sufferings above measure, beyond the rest

rest of the apostles; he had need of eminent support: He was assured by a vision, that he was a chosen vessel: He was taken into heaven before-hand, and had a sight and taste of unseen future glories, to encourage his zeal and patience, *2 Cor. xii.* And if we read the history of the martyrs, even in later as well as in antient times, we can hardly forbear to believe this truth, when they have exulted under a sense of divine love, in the midst of racks and flames.

2. When the temptations of some humble souls have been extraordinary, and their afflictions above measure, pressing and overwhelming; when the hurry and tumult of their spirits hath not suffered them to recollect in a calm and rational way, the evidences of their adoption, the spirit of God may see fit to give a saint such a divine cordial to keep him from sinking. When a christian has been long contesting with doubts and darkneses, and been oppressed with many fears, the blessed Spirit has sometimes let a sudden light into the heart, and with or without some word of scripture, has given surprizing consolation. Mr. *S. Clark* tells us of a minister, who having been under a spirit of bondage many years, and now even ready to die in that condition, when *Rom. viii.* was begun to be read to him, a little before his last gasp, stopping at ver. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit:* "Stay, said he, I never saw so much in those words in all my days, though I have read them often, as I see now." This seems to be an instance of the sudden and extraordinary influence of the holy Spirit in his enlightening grace, as well as his witnessing and comforting power. This has been the case of some holy souls in their dying hours, or when just departing from the body, they have, as it were, entered into the world of light before they have left this world of sense, and flesh, and blood; or rather, heaven itself hath entered into their spirits.

3. When christians of the first rank of piety, have been warmly engaged in most lively acts of devotion, in fervent and holy prayer, and they have been brought near to heaven in the frame of their spirits, they have had a divine foretaste of the joys of the upper world, and an assurance given them of their own interest therein. *Daniel* had been engaged in fervent and zealous intercession for the church of God, when a heavenly messenger was sent to acquaint him, that he was a man greatly beloved, *Dan. ix. 23.* Or

4. Perhaps the Spirit of God may think it necessary to uphold some poor weak christians of the lowest rank of understanding, by some immediate impressions of the love of God, when he sees that their love to God is great and sincere, but they are so unskilled in the exercises of their rational powers, that they hardly know how to compare their hearts with the scripture, and pass a determinate judgment on themselves. Such weak creatures, it may be, could never come to any settled hope or peace, without such divine condescensions; and especially if they are under some special temptation, which gives a confusion or darknes to their thoughts.

*Thomas* was but a weak believer; he knew not how to build his faith of a risen saviour on what *Christ* himself had foretold, or on the testimony of his brethren, which were sufficiently just, and rational foundations for his faith: Therefore, in great condescension to his weakness, *Christ* appeared to him, and shewed him the print of the nails in his hands, and the wound of the spear in his side: Upon which discovery, *Thomas* cries out with joy, my Lord, and my God!

It is possible that other occasions may arise in the course of divine providence, wherein the great and gracious God may see it necessary to bestow such peculiar and extraordinary favours on some of his people; but there seems to have been sufficient

evidence

evidence already given, that some of the wise and the learned, as well as some of the weaker rank of christians, have had heavenly experience of this uncommon witness of the Spirit.

The third thing I proposed, was to shew how these extraordinary favours of heaven may be distinguished from the delusions of *Satan*, and from the mere ferments and fits of vivacity in animal nature, or a disordered fancy.

It has been said indeed, though perhaps too rashly, that they who go about to assert an immediate testimony, will never secure the soul from delusion: *Satan* will soon find artifices to counterfeit this testimony, and bear witness in the Spirit's stead; and when we think we have the spirit of truth to assure us, we shall have the father of lies to deceive us.

But if christians are careful and watchful in this matter, there are signs whereby the testimony of the spirit may be distinguished from his delusions.

Some divines have supposed this testimony of the Spirit to be known as the sun is, by its own light; and a man who hath seen the sun, can never mistake the moon for it; the very glory of the sun manifests itself, and convinces every beholder. And perhaps in the ancient inspiration of the prophets, and the gifts of the holy Spirit in the days of the apostles, there was a divine self-distinguishing light that accompanied these heavenly favours, which we know not how to judge of at this distance of time; we who never have experienced what divine inspiration is.

But the surest way of our discerning the extraordinary witnessings or joys of the holy Spirit, is by the effects; which are such as these.

I. It fills the soul with great degrees of humility and self-abasement, under a sense of its own vileness, guilt, and unworthiness; as holy *Job*, when he saw God in some more uncommon manifestations of his power and glory, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes, *Job* xlii. 4, 5. So *Isaiab* when he had beheld the Lord sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up, Wo is me, saith he,—I am a man of unclean lips, *Isa.* vi. 1—5. But vain delusions puff up the soul with a high conceit of itself; as *Simon Magus*, when, by the power of the devil, he performed some strange feats, he gave out that he was some great person, *Acts* viii. 9, 10. Many other instances of the like kind might be produced out of the histories of the christian church.

II. By this testimony of the Spirit the soul is led to a more sensible dependence on divine grace, having an inward and effectual conviction how dark and weak it is in itself, and how powerful is the grace of God, and the operation of the Spirit; it makes the soul run to the protection and succour of almighty grace; whereas vain delusions of the fancy, or temptations of the devil, rather lead the soul away from divine grace, and incline it to a sort of self-sufficiency and dependence upon its own attainments, its own light, and its own strength.

III. The witness of the spirit does more establish the soul in the great doctrines of the gospel, and particularly in faith on *Christ Jesus*. Many of these immediate testimonies of old were given to the primitive christians with this design, to confirm them in the doctrines of grace, and in the faith of *Christ Jesus*. When *St. Paul* was transported into the third heaven, *2 Cor.* xii. and had doubtless an uncommon manifestation of the love of God; as soon as the next danger and trial appeared, he besought the Lord importunately, and could not be satisfied till he received this answer from *Christ*; my grace is sufficient for thee, *2 Cor.* xii. 9. He was weak in himself but strong in *Christ*. But, on the other hand, it has been evident too often, when the devil has endeavoured to delude weak creatures in this respect, he has drawn them off from  
*Christ*



*Christ*, or filled their imaginations with some strange errors, and led them away into false and foolish opinions, contrary to the doctrines of the gospel. The blessed Spirit will perform his office when he becomes a comforter, he will be an advocate for *Christ*, for so the word *paracletos* also signifies; he will take of the things of *Christ*, and shew them to the soul; he will guide his people into the same truths to which he witnessed so gloriously in the primitive times; and will confirm believers in the faith of the holy scriptures, *John xvi. 13, 14.*

IV. The witness of the Spirit draws out the heart to some special degrees of love to God, and engages it in warm and lively thanksgivings for such divine and undeserved favours: The soul admires the rich grace and goodness of God in *Christ Jesus*. Thence will arise an utter aversion to all sin, an hatred of every thing that is displeasing to God, a powerful sense of indwelling corruption, a watchful care to please God in every thing, and to make some humble returns of love for such inestimable favours, and divine manifestations; whereas the warm presumptions of fancy, or the delusions of the devil, leave the soul in a more careless and unholy frame; or, at least, they are oftentimes attended, or quickly followed, by some powerful temptation to gross iniquity; which the deluded soul too often and too easily complies with: And there have been many instances, wherein persons under the power of vain delusions from the devil, have been drawn away to the practice of various sorts of crimes, and particularly to foul and scandalous sins.

In the last place, I might add also, in general, that though the Spirit of God may witness in an extraordinary manner to our adoption, when the soul cannot plainly see or does not actually and plainly recollect the characters of adoption in itself; yet it never leaves the soul without awakening the exercise of such graces as are indeed the sure marks and evidences of the children of God: Where the Spirit comes, it will bring some of its own fruits with it, in a sensible manner. Now the *fruits of the Spirit* are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, Gal. v. 22.* If we are comforted by the Spirit, we shall crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and endeavour to walk and live as becomes the sons and daughters of such a father as God is.

Upon the whole, I conclude, that it does not seem to be agreeable to the wisdom and providence of God, in the government of the world, to suffer the devil so exactly to counterfeit the works of his own Spirit, as to leave no marks or evidences whereby to distinguish them from the impostures of *Satan*. Truth and holiness are the objects of the devil's hatred; and though he may transform himself in some particulars into an angel of light, yet he brings along with him some peculiar evil badge, whereby he may be known or distinguished: And if christians will be sincere and honest, watchful and diligent, to examine not only the present impressions, but the succeeding effects of such sort of assurances of their adoption, together with earnest prayer to be kept from all delusions, I can hardly think that God will suffer his own people to be imposed upon in a matter of so sacred importance.

The fourth thing I proposed, was to mention briefly some characters of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, wherein it differs from the ordinary witness.

1. The extraordinary testimony of our adoption is a more sensible and strong impression upon the soul; which seems to be distinguished in itself from the more slow successive, and rational operations of the human faculties. The spirit of a christian searching out his own interest in the love of God, exercises his reasoning powers, lays down these propositions: He that believes in *Christ*, or he that loveth God, is a child  
of

of God. Again, I believe in *Christ*, or I love God : And then it infers this conclusion ; therefore I am one of his children. Now the Spirit of God in his ordinary and usual influences, does so gently, so secretly, and in such a con-natural manner, assist these operations of the soul, that it seems to be all our own work ; and the influences of the Spirit are seldom sensibly distinguished from the operations of our own faculties ; and we learn, that we have the assistance of the holy Spirit herein, rather by the doctrine of scripture, and by its sanctifying effects, than by any powerful sensations of a superior influence on our souls : But in the extraordinary witness the case is otherwise ; for the superior and external influence appears strong and sensible. The holy Spirit impresses the conclusion, or the assurance of our adoption, with power upon the soul, without any successive deduction of it from any foregoing propositions, sets it in a bright light, and persuades the soul to believe it.

2. This extraordinary witness is usually short and sudden, the other is more durable ; this is only a cordial to encourage us in an hour of danger, or support us in a fainting season ; the other is our common food, and our daily refreshment. It has been said of this favour, it is *rara bora, brevis mora* : A visit seldom belted, and of short continuance.

3. The ordinary witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits, proving our regeneration and adoption in a rational way, may in some measure be made out to others ; but the extraordinary witness of the Spirit is like the white stone of absolution, and the new name written in it ; *Rev. ii. 17.* which none knows but he that receives it. It is like hidden manna, with which God, at special seasons, may feed his children in secret.

4. The extraordinary witness of the Spirit fills the soul with great and exceeding joy, and brings it, as it were, within the confines of heaven : It is joy unspeakable, and glorified, as the apostle *Peter* calls it : *1 Pet. i. 8.* The other maintains the soul in such a degree of peace, comfort, and well grounded hope, as carries the christian onward through the difficulties and duties of life, though without such raptures of inward joy. There is an unknown sensation of heavenly light and love, which runs through the spirit of a christian, under such extraordinary assurances of divine love ; and it has been with a saint at such a time as it was with *Peter* in the mount, when he said, Lord, it is good for us to be here. *Mat. xvii. 4.* When he was overwhelmed with revelation and pleasure, such a soul has felt more than feeble nature was able to bear, and has cried out, " it is enough, Lord ; or, it is too much for a state of flesh and blood, Lord : Either withhold thy comforts, or enlarge the vessel ; for I cannot bear these joys."

5. This extraordinary witness of the Spirit doth not belong to every saint. Many a christian, it may be, passes the whole course of his life, and practises a regular faith and holiness for many years, without this excess of joy, this assurance of God's love. Believers are generally led on in a rational way of evidence and hope ; and walking in the paths of holiness, having good hope through grace, hold fast an humble confidence unto the end. The extraordinary witness is exceeding rare and uncommon, at least in our days.

I proceed now to finish this discourse, by offering to your thoughts a few advices concerning these witnessings of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary and extraordinary ways.

1. Though you have never felt any such immediate influences of the Spirit of God, giving you an extraordinary assurance of your interest in his love, yet have a care of ridiculing and reproaching these peculiar and uncommon operations of the holy Spirit :  
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Take heed of pronouncing them all at once the delusions of the devil, the visions of an heated fancy, or vain and idle dreams. It is certain that God has bestowed some such favours on men in the primitive days of christianity. It is certain also, that there is no place of scripture that declares, that these influences are utterly ceased, or that God will bestow no more such divine favours. It is certain yet further, that wise, and judicious, and holy men, have had very extraordinary impressions of this kind made on their souls, so that they were almost constrained to believe that they were divine; and the effects of these impressions have been holy and glorious: We should set a guard therefore on our hearts and our tongues, lest we cast a reproach and scandal on such sacred appearances, which the Spirit of God will hereafter acknowledge to have been his own work.

2. Let not humble christians, who walk with God according to the ordinary methods of his grace, be discouraged, though they have never found this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, nor tasted of these peculiar favours. Value the evident marks and characters of the children of God, wrought in your hearts, more than extasies of joy and pleasure. Value mortification to sin more than raptures; for mortification is a certain sign that the Spirit of God dwells in us, and that we are heirs of life, *Rom. viii. 13.* If you by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live. Heaven is the place of complete joy; heaven is the state where sight and sense shall be exercised; but we are here ordained to live by faith, *2 Cor. v. 7.* We may have the assisting presence of the Spirit of adoption, and by that Spirit may say unto God, "*Abba Father,*" without the extraordinary witnessing of that good Spirit.

3. Dare not believe any sudden raptures to proceed from this extraordinary testimony of the holy Spirit, unless you find some considerable measure of those sanctifying effects of them which I have described, I have granted that in particular seasons of trial when the natural spirits sink and fail, and temptations are exceeding strong, God may give this immediate testimony, on purpose to bear up the soul from sinking; yet we should not dare to trust such sort of vehement impressions, and pronounce them divine, if we neither find any of the plain scriptural marks of the children of God upon us, before or after these impressions. There is great danger of depending upon such raptures, if they leave no evident and lasting effects of sanctification behind them. Where the Spirit shines with such a divine light, he will warm the heart with uncommon love, and the soul must be conscious of some such rational evidence of adoption, such a love to God in the heart, as will effectually prove that God has first loved us.

Perhaps this is one reason why some christians fall under so many doubts and fears, because they live more upon their inward sensations of joy, their transports of pleasure in religion, which they call the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, than they do upon the characters of the children of God, which should be written in their hearts, and by which they should endeavour to search out and to evidence their interest in the favour of God.

4. Let every believer walk humbly before God, in all the paths of holiness. Take heed lest at any time you resist the blessed Spirit, in his sanctifying influences, lest he withdraw your comforts of every kind. Be not deceived, for the Spirit of God will not be trifled with. If you sow to the flesh, after you have received any witnessings of the Spirit, you may expect to reap desertions, sorrow, pains, and long mourning. Keep a conscience tender, and afraid of every sin; grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption. *Eph. iv. 30.*

5. Wait

5. Wait on God in all his holy ordinances, and wait for the manifestations of his love. It is in a regular attendance on the public and private duties of religion, that we may hope to meet with the witnessing Spirit; there the principles of grace are wont to be awakened, and called forth into lively exercise; and where your love to God your father, and to *Jesus* your saviour, is excited, and your souls exert themselves as becomes the children of God, you have most reason to expect the presence of the holy Spirit, to bear witness to your adoption, and to your interests in his love. He will never bestow consolations of an ordinary or extraordinary kind, where there is a wilful neglect of the duties he has prescribed. Frequent the services of his holy temple; the out-goings of God our king are in his sanctuary. His power and glory, his grace and kindness are made visible in his house. There has he promised his own presence; and where his presence is, he often brings with him the witnessing Spirit.

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## P O W E R S and C O N T E S T S

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## F L E S H and S P I R I T.

**I**T is agreed by all the more sober and thinking part of the world, that man is a compounded creature; and it is made evident from this plain and easy observation, *viz.* that he puts forth hourly such different kinds of action as one simple being could never perform. Flesh and spirit are the two ingredients that go to the composition; yet they keep their own natures still distinct, unmingled, and unconfounded. By the flesh we eat, drink, walk, and sleep, and are a-kin to brute animals; by the spirit we think, know, and chuse, and hold kindred with angels.

It appears to every careful observer, that each of these parts of the man have their particular and distinct natures, qualities and operations.

The flesh, or body, includes in it the limbs, blood, and breath, with all the grosser and finer materials, solid or fluid; that make up the animal; it has many inward ferments and appetites of it's own; it has several visible, as well as hidden motions; and it receives various impressions, made by outward objects of sense, which are proper to itself, and in which the spirit has no share.

On the other hand, the soul or spirit includes the understanding and will, which are it's chief powers: It has it's thoughts and conceptions, it's judgments and reasonings, it's acts of choice, aversion and desire, in great variety; which are peculiarly it's own, and belong not to the flesh.

But while we dwell in this present world, there is such a near and special union between soul and body, that there are very few operations or affections of the mind, which do not receive a sensible turn or influence from the qualities and ferments, the impressions, powers, and passions, of flesh and blood.

Sometimes these animal motions attend or follow the acts or exercises of the mind, and yet even then they increase them in many cases: So when the soul is ashamed, the

bloud flushes in the face, and the shame is doubled; when the spirit is angry, the cheeks kindle, or grow pale, and the inward wrath burns fiercer. So in a fit of fear, the bloud retires, the flesh trembles, the natural spirits flutter, or sink into faintness, and the soul is more terrified and overwhelmed.

At other times these inward ferments of the juices of the body are entirely beforehand with the soul; these motions or impressions of the flesh, and sense, and animal nature, may first awaken, and then maintain the anger, or fear, or love, or other affections of the mind.

Thus most of the actions of man in this present state are of a mixed nature, wherein both flesh and spirit concur, and each perform their several parts; though in such a manner, that, in many cases, it is hard to say how far the flesh and how far the spirit have their distinct shares of influence. Yet there is one excellent and unfailing rule to judge of this matter, if we could but always apply it right; and that is, whatsoever knowledge, consent, or choice, is in any action, belongs to the mind; and what implies mere matter, shape, or proper motion, must be attributed to the body.

These appetites and affections of human nature, which are the mingled operations of flesh and spirit, are either lawful, sacred, or sinful; and they are properly and formally so called, partly according to the different objects of them, and partly according to their various degrees, or some other circumstances of time or place, that may attend them; as will be made evident by such instances as these. Thus it will appear that the same action or passion may be determined to be lawful, sacred, or sinful, if it be exercised toward different objects, or in different degrees. Thus it is lawful to be hungry and thirsty, and to desire proper food, bread and wine; and to desire, with faith and holy affections, to eat the bread and drink the wine at the Lord's supper is a sacred action. But to covet that meat or drink, that bread, or that wine, which belongs to another man, is sinful; for it is a violation of the tenth command, and becomes a transgression. So to fear the great God, or to love him, is a sacred affection. To fear a robber, or a roaring lion, or to love my house, or my servant, are very lawful affections: But if my love or my fear of any creature exceeds my fear or my love of God my creator, it becomes hereby sinful. It is lawful, or rather it is religious and holy, to be angry, to hate, and to be ashamed, when sin is the object of these passions; but to be ashamed of virtue and religion, where I am called to profess them, or to hate my neighbour, or even mine enemy, or to be angry without a cause, or above a proper degree, are all criminal passions, and render a man guilty before God.

The mere motions and ferments of flesh and bloud, or whatsoever share mere animal nature has in these actions or affections of the man, can have no moral good or evil in them, considered apart from the soul; nor are they properly called lawful or sinful in themselves; for they are the pure operations of brutal matter, till the soul or the will indulges them, or approves them, commands them, or complies with them. Yet if the objects of these fleshly motions be forbidden by the laws of God, or if the degree be excessive, or the time or place unlawful, then these motions and ferments of the flesh may be called sinful; not formally in themselves, but occasionally; because the soul so often complies with them, and becomes guilty; and thus these operations of the flesh are sad occasions of sin.

Now in this present fallen state, wherein all the children of *Adam* are found, these sinful motions and ferments, appetites and passions abound in our flesh and bloud; partly as we derive too much of them from our sinful parents, and partly as we have

have too much encouraged and strengthened them ourselves, by frequent practice and indulgence.

It is evident also, that the greatest part of the actions of our lives are ready to be influenced by appetite or affection; and it is plain, that the outward senses of the body, or the inward ferments, motions, and impressions of flesh and blood have so large a share in them, that they are called the deeds of the body, the desires, lusts and affections of the flesh, in many places of Scripture; thence it comes to pass that our flesh becomes the chief cause and occasion of sin to the soul.

Now though it be difficult, as I have hinted, in many particular actions, to determine precisely how far the influence of the flesh reaches, and how far it is the act of the mind or spirit, yet it is of great use in the christian life to search into these matters, in order to find how far our actions are criminal and guilty, that we may abase our souls before God, and take shame to ourselves so far as we are culpable; and on the other hand, that from a melancholy or superstitious mistake, we may not charge ourselves with more guilt than God charges us with, or lay heavier loads upon our own consciences than the divine law lays upon us.

We shall find these enquiries also of excellent use to lead us to proper methods for the mortification of sin, and to shew us the justice and wisdom of divine conduct, and the holiness and beauty of the providence of God, in appointing our present state of trial, in order to a future judgment.

I. The first thing I shall discourse on here, is the unhappy influence that our flesh or animal nature, has to tempt us to sin. And then

II. I shall shew what powers the soul is furnished with to resist the sinful motions of the flesh, and to maintain the sacred warfare.

This is the proposition therefore that I shall first lay down in my discourse; *viz.* That the principles, springs, and occasions of our sinful actions lie very much in the flesh; and these have a fatal and unhappy influence to lead the soul or spirit into sin.

I shall make this evident from the word of God, especially from the writings of the blessed apostles; and shall confirm it by many common observations and an easy train of reasoning.

When those sacred writers have occasion to describe sin, in its principles or operations, they use the words flesh, fleshly, or carnal, the body, or the members, with much freedom and frequency. *St. Peter* speaks of walking after the flesh, *2 Pet.* ii. 20. of alluring men by the lusts of the flesh; *2 Pet.* ii. 18. of fleshly lusts that war against the soul, *1 Pet.* ii. 11. *St. Paul* bids us mortify the deeds of the body, *Rom.* viii. 12. and he calls the principle of sin the body of death, *Rom.* vii. 24. He speaks of sin reigning in our mortal bodies, *Rom.* vi. 12. He places the sinful principles, which he calls the law of sin, in our very members, *Rom.* vii. 23. And particular sins he calls our members, *Col.* iii. 5. And in correspondence with him the apostle *James* speaks of lusts that war in our members, *James* iv. 1. And *John* and *Jude* make mention of the lusts of the flesh, and garments spotted with the flesh. And there are few words more frequent on *St. Paul's* tongue than the word flesh, when he would signify sin; the mortification whereof he calls crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, *Gal.* v. 24. He names adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, envy, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, the works of the flesh, *Gal.* v. 19. Persons in a sinful state are said to be in the flesh, *Rom.* viii. 8, 9. A course of sinning is called sowing to the flesh, living after the flesh, minding the things

of the flesh, walking after the flesh, fulfilling the desires and lusts of the flesh, in several parts of his epistles.

But in sanctified and un sanctified persons, sin, in the judgment of *St. Paul*, lies very much in the flesh, as to the springs, principles, and occasions of it. See *Rom. vii. 5.* compared with the 18, and 25 verses. In *Rom. vii. 5.* *St. Paul* speaks concerning the natural and unregenerate state: When we were in the flesh, that is, all flesh, no spirit, that is, no spiritual life, then the motions of sin did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. And when he speaks concerning himself in a regenerate state, at the end of that chapter, he describes sin still as having its occasion and cause much seated in the flesh. See verses 18, and 25. I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. So that, considering himself either in a natural or in a regenerate state, still he supposes the great occasion of sinful actions to proceed from the flesh.

I confess that in some places of the new testament, and perhaps in several of these which I have now cited, the word flesh may be used something figuratively, to signify all the principles of sin that are in human nature, whether they immediately reside in the mind, or in the body, as the subject; but the figure itself seems to be borrowed from this very sentiment, that the flesh, with its affections and appetites towards fleshly objects, is the chief spring and occasion of sin.

I might add also, that there are some other places of scripture, where the word flesh must necessarily be taken in a literal and proper sense, denoting the body to be the seat or spring of many sinful affections; as *Eph. ii. 3.* where the desires of the flesh are distinguished from the sinful desires of the mind. And *2 Cor. vii. 1.* where both the filthiness of flesh and spirit is mentioned; and there are very few places which will not allow us to understand it in a literal sense. And it is evident to any one who compares the various parts of the writings of this apostle, that he speaks ten times of the body, the flesh, or the members, as the springs of sin, where he once mentions the lusts of the mind; intimating, that the far greatest part of the sins of men are derived from their flesh, and are owing to their compliance with the sinful desires or affections of the body.

I would not be mistaken here, as if I supposed the flesh to be the only immediate spring of all our sins; though perhaps, it is the original, and remote spring of all, as I shall shew presently: But the soul of man, being once depraved, has many sinful qualities in it; the understanding, and the will, the very mind and conscience, are defiled, *Tit. i. 15.* The soul itself has some propensities to things that are forbidden, as well as sinful aversions to God, and things holy and heavenly. There are the lusts of the mind as well as lusts of the flesh. There is a filthiness both of flesh and spirit. The devils, who have no flesh and blood belonging to them, are vile sinners; these are called spiritual wickednesses in high places, *Eph. vi. 12.* or, as it may be translated, wicked spirits in heavenlies; that is, in the airy regions: So the spirit of man has sins of its own, that it borrows not immediately from the flesh: There is a pride in the mind, arising from learning, and intellectual powers, and accomplishments; there are vain and excessive desires of human knowledge; there is a sinful curiosity, prying into secret futurities; there is a glorying in self, a vanity of mind, and self-confidence, instead of trusting in God, and giving him the glory of all: There is, indeed, a secret dislike and aversion to God and holiness, in the soul of every un sanctified sinner; these are more spiritual iniquities.

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I might add also, that there are several of those sins which, in some appearances of them, are numbered among the works of the flesh, because they are often excited, and almost always increased, by the humours and ferments of the body; which yet, in some other operations and appearances, begin in the spirit, belong chiefly to the soul, and must be called spiritual sins, or lusts of the mind; such as malice and envy, self-conceit, emulation, hatred of good men, &c. which are doubtless found in the fallen angels, those evil spirits, who have no flesh about them. Now as an un sanctified soul may be sometimes guilty of these when in the body, so, when it is dismissed from flesh, we must grant, that it would be filled with all these iniquities, these spiritual lusts, for ever, though none of the carnal sins, no appetites to fleshly objects, should follow it into the separate state.

But the point which I propose to prove is this, that though there may be several sins that arise chiefly from the mind, yet there are multitudes of disorderly appetites, sinful inclinations and aversions, as well as violent immoderate tendencies towards lawful objects, seated in our animal nature, in our flesh and blood, in this mortal part of our frame and composition, wherein we are a-kin to the beasts that perish; and it is by the senses, by these sensitive motions and ferments of flesh and blood, that the human soul is most frequently led into temptation and sin: And more especially I may venture to say, that the soul of a true christian, which is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and has a new and heavenly temper and bias, and a divine nature given it, owes most of its actual transgressions to the flesh, and the lusts thereof, to which it is united in the present state.

There is one objection that seems necessary to be answered; and that is drawn from the words of our saviour, *Mark* vii. 21, 23. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, &c. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. Now some person may say, it is evident, that by the heart he did not mean that inward bowel so called, but the soul itself; because, according to the vulgar philosophy, and common sentiments of the *Jews*, the soul of man had its chief residence in the heart; and upon this account they attributed to the heart the several affections and inward operations of the soul, whether they were sinful or holy; and in this sense our saviour may be supposed to attribute to the soul, or spirit in man, all these wickednesses.

But it is easy to solve this difficulty two ways.

1 That neither the philosophy of the *Jews*, nor the common language which our saviour used, did make any nice distinction in those principles of human actions what share the spirit had in them and what the flesh; but they used the word heart, for all those inward powers of the man whence outward actions proceeded; and this because the springs and motions of the blood and life, as well as the ferments of several passions, were found there: So that our saviour using the common language of the people, does by no means exclude the inward ferments of the flesh from their share in these sinful actions; but rather includes them in the word heart.

2. If we could suppose the word heart in this place to signify merely the soul or spirit, yet it would by no means exclude the inward ferments of the flesh from being the first springs and occasions of many of these sinful practices; for they do not become sins till the soul has consented to them; nor can they break forth into outward acts without the command, or, at least, the sinful compliance of the soul. Thus all those actions that may justly be called evil and wicked, such as *Christ* here mentions, proceed from the soul, so far as they are truly and properly sinful; and

yet

yet the first secret occasions and incentives of many of them may spring very much from the powers of the flesh.

Now as I have made it to appear in some good measure, that the springs and principles of sin lie very much in our fleshly natures, from the frequent expressions of holy scripture, so it may be made yet more evident still, by these following considerations, drawn from reason, observation, and experience.

1. Consider how different are the sins of men, according to their peculiar constitutions of flesh and blood. These may be called the sins that easily beset us, *Heb. xii. 1.* because our temper and constitution is always present with us.

Those that are of a brisk and sanguine make, whose blood flows high and vigorous, how often are they tempted by the gay scenes of life, to pursue vanity, and to indulge forbidden pleasures? Luxury and intemperance are their peculiar vices: they follow after carnal mirth with eager gust, as well as with long forgetfulness of God, and of things spiritual. By this means they indulge a fatal security, and groundless presumption of long life here, or happiness hereafter, being ever animated by lively sensual fancies, appetites, and passions.

On the other hand, those that have melancholy humours mingled with their natural constitution, are inclined to sullen vices, to an unsociable and uncharitable behaviour among men, as well as they are often tempted under the influence of these prevailing humours of the body, to despair of the mercies of God, and, upon this account to abandon all religion.

Some have a greediness of desire wrought into the very frame of their natures; and these are inclined to selfish and covetous iniquities, and often are found hard-hearted and uncompassionate to the necessities and cries of the poor.

Others are sour and peevish in their native temper, having an excess of sharp juices mingled with their flesh and blood; and these are easily awakened to sudden wrath and resentment, and kindled into a flame of sinful anger upon the first and slightest provocation.

I might instance in several other qualities of the constitution, whereby multitudes of iniquities arise amongst men, and sufficiently discover that the flesh is a most fruitful spring of temptations, and a constant occasion of sin.

2. Consider how many particular sins we may be inclined to, by reason of some sudden distemper of body, or long and habitual diseases that attend flesh and blood-

When the four or acid humours in animal nature rise to an irregular height, or when the body is frequently exercised with sharp and tedious pains, even a well-tempered man becomes peevish and fretful; he vexes his own spirit with impatience; he murmurs against the hand of God; and this secret uneasiness, though it dares not appear in visible rage against his creator, yet it cannot contain itself in silence, but breaks out with too much evidence and guilt, quarrelling with his fellow-creatures round about him: He tires out his best friends with perpetual disquietude; he loses his meek and gentle temper; and the man that was wont to be always pleased and easy, now repents every thing, and scarce any body can please him.

This appears with bright evidence to be occasioned by bodily disorders; for even our natural hunger makes us peevish: When sharp and corrosive juices prey upon the stomach itself, for want of food, how touchy and fretful does our temper grow, till a good meal provides matter for those digestive juices to act upon? then the flesh grows easy, and the good humour returns.

But to pursue the observation concerning diseases.

When

When the natural spirits are reduced very low by long weakness, how cold and unactive are some good men? When phlegmatic humours prevail in the body, how slothful are some christians in every duty? How backward to all active services of God or man? Even those very persons who were once chearful and zealous, and ready to every good work.

After the same manner, when, through distemper of body, black and melancholy juices get the ascendant over the more sprightly animal powers, how often do we find persons of a sweet affable behaviour grow sullen and unfociable? Those who were fond of company and conversation seek dark corners, and solitary chambers of retirement; they grow listless to every diversion, and will hardly admit a visitant, or give answers to the common questions of life.

Again, when the powers of nature are broken by continual diseases, the man of courage becomes fearful, and starts aside from duty, at every appearing difficulty: The man of faith gives into fears and doubts, to perpetual unbelievings, and suspicious thoughts, with regard to the promises of God, and all the encouragements of the gospel.

And to put this matter beyond all dispute, experience teaches us, that the very same persons who have been fretful, peevish, slothful, sullen, or excessively timorous, under the influences of these several distempers of body; when, by the means of medicine they have been restored to health, they have returned again to the chearful practices of those single and social virtues, which so long lay cramped, confined, and buried under the diseases of the flesh.

Now if the occasion of these several sorts of sins, both of omission and commission, did not chiefly arise from the flesh, why should the same christian so remarkably find his whole temper and his conduct altered for the worse by the diseases of his body, and restored again by the recovery of his health?

3. Consider how different are the sins of youth and old age; how contrary are their several temptations.

The youth delights in gay company, public vanities, sensual amusements, luxury and profuseness; he contemns money, and despises his ease, to pursue with labour the gratifications of fancy and wanton appetite; and hereby he neglects all the duties of retirement, and serious thoughtfulness. The old man loves his ease above all things, except his money; he neglects and despises the pleasures of the flesh, and gay diversions; but he daily hoards up his gold for fear of want; and in counting over his treasure he wastes the latter hours of his life, which he should spend in a preparation for death at hand.

The youth fears nothing, and rushes on to guilt headlong; the old man is frightened at every thing, and shrinks back from the most necessary duties.

Whence are all these differences of sin? The natural philosopher will give happy hints toward the solving this question with ease and truth: He knows that one is occasioned by the florid blood, and juices, and active powers of young human nature; these hurry the soul on to pursue every fleshly delight. The other is owing to the languid and gross stagnant humours that mingle with the blood of old age: These render him dull and unactive; and his perpetual fears of want, and poverty, and of every other evil, arise partly from the poor low state of those feeble spirits that attend that last and expiring period of life. The unholy soul is too easily influenced by both these extremes, in the different seasons of its dwelling in this mortal and sinful flesh; and the soul that is sanctified finds it hard work to resist.

4. Let

4. Let us consider yet again, how great a part of the sins of men arise from the presence of tempting sensible objects; and these are conveyed to the mind by the sensitive powers of the flesh. What influence could the whole world of enticing objects have on the spirit, if the notices of them were not brought to the spirit by the senses? The presence of alluring temptations strikes strongly on the outward organ of sense, awakens the carnal appetite, and with a powerful, an unhappy, and an almost constraining force, persuades the soul to guilty practices and enjoyments. At other times it causes a sinful neglect of proper duties to God or man; or, at least, it calls in vain thoughts to mingle with our services, both civil and religious; and thus gives them a sensual taint, and pollutes and spoils them.

Particular circumstances of time and place, where sensual temptations attend us, become unhappy occasions of defiling the soul. And where is the time, or where the place, in which such objects or occasions are not to be found? The day-light opens before us the scenes of a vain world, crowded with ten thousand allurements to sin; nor can the shadows of the night conceal or banish those temptations that attack us at other avenues besides the eye. A wanton song, an immodest touch, the scent of dainty meats, or the remembered relish of delicious wine, are sufficient to provoke the fleshly appetites, and to inflame the soul to the pursuit of iniquity. Thus every sense has a hand in the conveyance of sin to the spirit.

Not the board, nor the bed, not the shop, nor the exchange; no, not the closet, nor the temples of worship, are secure from temptations that assault the soul, by means of this wretched flesh. We are in danger when in the midst of company; nor are we safe when solitary and alone. How often have eyes and ears been the unhappy torches to kindle either unlawful love, or malice and revenge, according as a man hath been casually led within sight or hearing of the person that has allured him to pleasure, or put him to pain? Pictures and stories have many a time become fatal instruments of the same mischief. When we sit at a well-spread table, doth not our palate often tempt us to improper food, and to riot upon a beloved dish? We venture to taste of the luscious compound, even though we suspect, or are almost certain, it has sickness or disease lurking in it; and sometimes we indulge the freedom of appetite in the most wholesome provisions, to a vicious excess and surfeit. How many a wretch is enticed to become a glutton, or a drunkard, or to rush on to the pursuit of adultery and polluted pleasure, by his passing through some insnaring occurrences of life, and having the soul united to this sinful flesh? The wanton eye, and the greedy palate are tempting engines, that draw the mind away to forbidden objects.

It is upon this account that our blessed Lord gives advice in his excellent sermon: If thy right-eye offend thee, pluck it out; or, if thy right-hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast them both away from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. *Matt. v. 29, 30.* And though our Lord may be supposed here to speak metaphorically, and to bid us part with those beloved sins that are dear to us as an hand or an eye, yet he designs to teach us that the eye, and the hand, and the fleshly powers, may become wretched occasions of sin to us; and if there were no other way to avoid the danger, it is better to bear the pain of parting with those mischievous and offensive members, than yield to their temptations, and rush on to guilt and eternal misery.

I might here also take notice, that the very presence of all sorts of corporeal objects, even the most necessary, and the most innocent, may become occasions of sin, at special seasons; as when we are engaged in any part of divine worship, the common and obvious appearances round about us, the walls, the doors, the windows, the

the furniture of the place, or the persons present, impress our senses, and often turn away the thoughts from the sacred work. We forget God to pursue the creature, even in his own awful presence, and in the midst of our solemn devotions. A curious ear shall wrap up the soul in the melody of the song, till it has lost the divine sense and meaning. A vain and wandering eye roves among the faces, the postures, and the dress of our fellow-worshippers, and calls the mind away from prayer and devout attention. Oh how often does the criminal indulgence of these sensitive powers carry the soul afar off from God and religion! How does it break off many a holy meditation in a moment! What long intervals does it make in our addresses to our creator, and interline our prayers with folly and sin! So, when we are employed in any business of the civil life, that is our proper present duty, our senses glance at some other object, and draw the soul away to a quite different work, which is sinful at that season; though perhaps it might be the duty of the next hour, or the proper business of the morrow. And where is the man that has not reason to complain often of this sort of temptations every day, while his spirit dwells in this house of flesh?

5. Consider further, that most of the temptations that we meet with, even when the outward objects are absent, arise from the images of them remaining in the brain, which is, as it were, the shop, or storehouse, of the memory and the fancy. The impressions which those objects made on the outward senses, when they were present, are conveyed to the brain, and laid up there, ready to appear at the first call of the mind, when these objects are withdrawn. But they oftentimes also start out unbidden, and a whole scene of wickedness is spread all over the imagination, before the soul is aware; and sometimes when the soul expressly forbids it too: Then the corrupt appetites are kindled, and sinful passions awake again. Thus the temptations return, and solicit the spirit to sin, even when the objects are afar off, and out of reach: For fancy and memory are but the pictures of sense; it is sight and hearing at second hand. Now if the soul seeks and calls for these tempting visions to appear, or if it indulges these impure exercises of the imagination; if it delights itself in these criminal ideas when they happen to arise, and please itself with these painted shapes of iniquity. then it too frequently repeats the sin, and renews its own guilt and defilement.

Such is the composition of our natures, that the images on the brain, the traces and footsteps of past sensations, and the springs of fancy and passion, are linked together by unknown and unperceived ties: so that when one is touched and awakened, a whole train of images appears at once, and awakens all those fancies, and those guilty passions, which were linked and connected together when that leading image was first painted on the brain through the organs of sense. So one line of a comedy, or the door of the play-house, or the sound of an actor, or a hero's name, shall call over again all those alluring and mischievous scenes which first drew the heart away from God and religion, spoiled the labours of a pious education, and plunged the young sinner into early debaucheries.

Besides all these mischiefs that arise from the recollection of past occurrences, there is an infinite variety of new scenes of vice, that fancy can furnish out on the sudden, by mingling, joining, enlarging, multiplying, and compounding, the vicious images that the brain can supply it with. Thus in this shop of vanity, this workhouse of sin, and these secret chambers of imagery, new-devised iniquities are coined continually; new engines are forged every minute, by a busy and fruitful fancy, to charm the soul, and transport it to fresh guilt and ruin. Thus the treasury of the brain and those inward

and hidden parts of the flesh, become many times as effectual occasions of sin, as all the outward senses joined together, and an army of tempting objects.

6. There is another consideration too, that will make it appear to any person of an enquiring and thoughtful genius, that sin has much of its seat and root in the flesh, if we do but reflect how many iniquities we commit, which, in their outward appearance, are very nearly imitated by brute creatures, which have no intelligent spirit, no rational soul; whose blood is the very soul, spirit, and life of them, as the scripture speaks. *Lev. xvii. 14. Eccl. iii. 21.*

Is there not something like envy working in a dog, when he forbids the ox from the crib or the manger, and yet he neither wants nor tastes the hay nor the corn himself? Is he not the picture of malice, when he grins with fury, and grows mad with rage, against the harmless traveller? Does not the wasp, that little angry insect, fix a sting in us sometimes without any provocation? And thus it becomes the very image and proverb of ill-nature as well as the dog; so that men of such a temper are called dogged and waspish. Does not our Lord *Jesus* himself give *Herod* the name of a fox for the same reason, *viz.* because of the craft, the plunder, and the various and bloody injuries which were practised by that man among his subjects, and are well represented by the natural actions of that subtil and mischievous animal among his fellow-brutes. See *Luke xiii. 32.*

Is not the swine often overwhelmed with food by its own greediness? And does not that foul animal imitate the glutton well? You grant all this proceeds from the very make and frame, the blood and juices of these animals, and from the keenness or other peculiar qualities of their natural spirits: And why may not the first motions and stirrings of the same vices in us proceed from the ferments of our blood too? Have you never observed the resemblance of pride working in a peacock, or a well-fed horse; how those brutal beings exult and glory, the one in his beauty, the other in his strength and his peculiar endowments? This proud ferment heaves and swells their bodily natures: And why may not some of our pride be supposed to begin there too?

I confess these animals have no rational mind in them, no thinking spirit, no will, either to resist or consent to these motions of the flesh or blood; so that they are under no moral law: These actions of theirs are agreeable to their original nature, and are under a divine appointment rather than a prohibition; therefore they are not capable of sin and guilt. But man, who hath these same animal motions and ferments of the flesh, and the same appetites, and springs of passion, had nothing vicious in his original frame and constitution, but derived all that is faulty from his first parents, who were wilful sinners, and who spoiled their whole nature; and upon this account he will hardly be found innocent.

But his guilt appears much more evident, when we consider that man has also an intelligent mind, a reasonable soul, capable, in some measure, of resisting these irregular tendencies of the flesh; therefore he becomes guilty in the sight of God, by wilful consent to them, and indulgence of them, contrary to the forbidding law of his creator. Now this proposed contest between flesh and spirit is ordained by God our maker in infinite wisdom, to be a proper state of trial for us, in order to future rewards and punishments.

7. I might add, in the last place, another argument to prove that our flesh is the chief occasion of sin to the soul, from this consideration; that the soul at first is tainted, corrupted, or defiled, with original sin, by its union to sinful flesh.

You

You will immediately enquire, how is this possible, since the soul is a pure spiritual being, created immediately by God himself, and therefore innocent and holy ; and since it cannot touch, nor be touched, by any thing corporeal, such as flesh and blood ? In what manner can the soul, though united to the body, receive any such sinful pollution, or sinful impression, from the body ?

Take this account of it in short, in these few propositions.

1. Though the spirit of man be incorporeal, and is created by God without depraved or sinful qualities in it, yet it never exists, or comes into being, but as a part of human nature ; and that not as a piece of new workmanship, but as a part of mankind propagated from parents by the continued power of God's creating word ; " Be fruitful and multiply." When the infant-body of man is so far formed as to become fit for union with a rational soul, the soul comes into existence in union with the body, by the original law of creation, and becomes a part of the man, as much as the breath, which is borrowed from the air, or the blood, which is made out of the food of the mother.

2. Thence it follows, that the soul is not to be judged of, or considered, as a single separate being, but as in union with flesh and blood. as making up a compound creature of the human species.

3. Since in the very first moment of it's being, by the old and general rules or laws of creation and providence, it belongs to a human body, derived from *Adam*, it is esteemed as propagated by the parents, and it becomes hereby a son or a daughter of fallen man, and is naturally, by the law of creation, involved in the same circumstance of ruin, has no claim to preserving or securing grace, above the mere and untaught faculties of its intelligent nature. Then

4. Since this body has many sinful ferments and irregular appetites in it, conveyed down from the original sinner, the new-made spirit being created and joined to the flesh, is perpetually impressed and allured by these motions, passions, and appetites of the flesh, and willingly complies with those that are criminal as well as those that are innocent ; and thus the young creature contracts actual and personal guilt, perhaps, as soon as it is capable of exerting any actions with understanding ; and such as are properly human, and capable of moral differences.

Thus the soul is defiled by communion with the flesh ; and, according to the original law of creation, which is called the covenant of God with *Adam*, it partakes of a sinful nature from degenerate parents, and by degrees becomes an actual sinner.

But I proceed no further on this head, having delivered my sentiments in another place more at large, in the deep and difficult controversy of original sin ; which may be best accounted for in this manner, as far as my judgment reaches.

What I have said here is sufficient to shew that, in the present state of human nature, the flesh is the chief cause and occasion of sin to the soul.

#### MEDITATION I.

And are we tempted to sin so often by our fleshly powers ? Then how little should we reckon ourselves debtors to the flesh ? How much mischief has it already done us ? And how much still have we reason to fear from its influences, as long as we continue to dwell in it !

Little do you think, O sinners ; little do you think what an enemy you carest, while you pamper the flesh, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it ; it is a foe that sits close to you, and is a partner of your very natures ; and thus it has a thou-

find opportunities to do you mischief, when other adversaries are afar off: It has done you already more injury than the devil and the world joined together; for in all the pernicious and secret snares which they have laid for your souls, and all the open attacks that they have made upon your virtue, or your peace, the flesh has ever been an accomplice with them, and helped onward the fatal design; besides the many guilty practices into which it has drawn you, without the assistance either of the world or the devil. Not all the deceitful vanities on the earth, nor all the armies of hell, could lead your souls astray from God, and your own happiness, in half so many instances as they have done, if you had not such a secret traitor so near you, that is in league with them for your ruin. And shall this enemy be your counsellor and your guide? Shall this flesh be your chief darling, which has been ever warring against your soul?

Would you not distrust a man that has dwelt with you from your childhood, and every day of your life has led you into some mischief? Would you not be watchful and jealous of all his motions, who has betrayed you into some snare almost every hour? Would you not guard against his perverse practices, if, whenever he took a walk with you, he had thrown you into a pit, and defiled your garments? Such a dangerous attendant is this flesh of yours in the present degenerate state.

Why then will ye be so fond of this tempter, this deceitful companion? Why will you spend your best moments, the prime of youth, and the very flower of life, to dress and adorn, to flatter, and please, and gratify, such a wretched traitor to your soul, such a foe to your eternal welfare? The very best of men have already given too much respect to it. But when a person is sanctified by divine grace, the flesh begins then to be subdued to some useful services to God: Then the eye by reading, and the ear by hearing, and the feet by going to attend upon the divine word, are made to help forward his spiritual and heavenly interest; and many a hundred services of this kind must the members of the body do, in order to make the soul any tolerable recompense for all the injuries that the soul has received from its corrupt appetites and passions. Well therefore might the apostle say, we are by no means debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, *Rom. viii. 12.* Nor do we owe any more of our strength, time, thought, or contrivance, to gratify its vain or sinful inclinations; for they that are *Christ's* have so far crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts of it, as to keep it under, and hold it in subjection, that it may not get the mastery over the soul. *Gal. v. 24.* and *1 Cor. ix. 27.*

Nourish and support the flesh, that is your duty: Heal it when it is sick, and endeavour to preserve it in health, that it may be a proper servant to the spirit. It was made for this end; and the soul should know its own dignity, and keep the body in its place: But dare not pamper it with too much fondness, lest it usurp the dominion, and cause the soul to walk after it in the sinful appetites and inclinations thereof; which is quite contrary to the character of the saints, as they are described by the apostle, *Rom. viii. 1.* Those that are in *Christ Jesus*, to whom there is no condemnation, walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

## MEDITATION II.

Is the body such a foul and wretched spring of sin? Then what a heaven of purity and pleasure is provided for the children of God at their death, and is contained in those few words of the apostle, absent from the body; *2 Cor. v. 8.*? When a child of *Adam* has received a new nature by the new-creating power of the holy Spirit, and is become a son or daughter of God, it is thenceforward as it were, a prisoner in this untoward



untoward mansion of flesh and blood : It is in a state of perpetual conflict, yet it cannot change these old sensual appetites, nor correct at once these long habits of irregular desire. It labours daily in this work ; it maintains a vigorous warfare against the flesh ; but, through the power of sensible enticing objects all around us, it is too often carried away into sinful compliances. O wretched man that I am, saith the apostle, what an unhappy law, or spring of sin, is there in my members, that carries me away from the better dictates of the law of my renewed mind and bears me captive to the law of sin that is in my flesh ! O wretched man indeed ! and who shall deliver me ? O blessed hour of death, that shall break the chain and set the prisoner free ! O sweet and glorious moment of release from this body, which tainted my spirit early with its poisonous influences ; and, by drawing me away perpetually by its dangerous attachments to things sensible, has kept me long at a painful distance from my God !

## THE IMPROVEMENT.

**T**HE former part of this discourse proposed this sentiment, *viz.* That the principles and springs, or occasions of sin, lie chiefly in our bodily natures, in our flesh and blood : And as I have made this to appear from several places of scripture, so I have proved it from rational observations ; *viz.* how great an influence the different constitutions of mankind, their casual distempers, and their various ages of life, have upon the soul, to incline it to the practice of different sins ; and all these are plainly derived from flesh and blood. I have considered further, what sinful actions arise from the presence of tempting objects impressing the senses ; and when the images of them are treasured up in the brain, they become the seeds of impure imagination and sinful appetite. Many of our sins also are nearly imitated by the brutes that perish, whose blood is their life and soul ; and even original sin is conveyed to us by the flesh.

Hence we may learn to judge aright concerning several cases of difficulty in the christian life, relating to sins and temptations, and find an answer to some practical questions of great importance.

**Question. I.** Whether the first start or motion of our nature towards unlawful objects, is properly sinful, and brings guilt upon the soul ?

**Answer.** The mere ferments of the blood and spirits, the appetites and motions, that belong purely and only to the flesh, and spring entirely from it, are not properly sins ; because the flesh, considered in itself, is but mere matter : Now mere matter, whether it were united to a rational mind or no, would be thus moved and acted by natural springs and impressions, and is under no moral law ; and where no law is, there is no transgression. The brutal or animal nature, abstracted from the soul, is not capable of knowledge or will, consent or dissent ; but the first moment that the soul indulges or consents to any of these irregular ferments, these springs of unruly passion in the blood and yields to these inordinate appetites of the flesh, it commits sin ; as soon as it complies with any of these desires, that are contrary to it's duty, the soul becomes guilty in the sight of God ; for the proper notion of sin is the tendency of an intelligent being to things disagreeable to the divine law ; the practice of what is forbidden, or the neglect of what is commanded.

If

If the eye beholds food, though the man be assured there is hidden poison in it, yet the hungry stomach will have a natural appetite toward it, and this is not sinful ; but if the soul comply, and the man eats it, or desires to eat it, he breaks the sixth command, which forbids all murder. Our saviour has sufficiently decided this part of the controversy in his sermon on the mount, that the soul's very desire and consent to sin is sinful, *Matt. v. 27*. And the fuller and stronger the consent of the will is, and the further it goes on to encourage or impel the body to the forbidden action, so much greater is the sin.

When our blessed saviour spake these words, he that looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart, *Mat. v. 28*, it cannot be supposed that he intended to give a law that should make the inward motions or ferments of mere animal nature sinful ; for these were not originally and naturally subject to the immediate command of the soul in the state of innocency, so as to be raised or prevented absolutely and immediately by the will, as the motion of the hand or foot is. But his design is to shew, that the soul itself inwardly consenting to these animal ferments and motions, or encouraging or indulging them but one moment, is really sinful in the sight of God, even though the man did never proceed to the outward and actual commission of those sins in the flesh : And hereby he vindicated the law of God from those narrow and corrupt expositions which the scribes, and doctors, and interpreters of those days put upon it, who would allow nothing to be sinful but the outward act.

This will appear with fuller evidence, if we consider that there might be in the flesh of innocent *Adam*, some natural appetites towards objects that might be forbidden by the express and positive law of God ; for the flesh, merely considered in itself, has a natural propensity to things that please and gratify it, without any regard to the unseen circumstances or moral relations of things ; without any respect to a law that permits or prohibits them. Thus *Adam*, or his partner, might feel an innocent inclination in their animal natures, towards any fruit in the garden that was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food, even to that of the tree of knowledge : And this indeed was necessary, in order to make a proper state of trial ; and it was fit and becoming divine wisdom, to appoint such a tree to be the test of their obedience. Now while they continued innocent, the soul resisted this inclination of the flesh, under a sense that the fruit was forbidden ; but the first moment that they indulged the flesh in this irregular appetite, or consented to it, they made themselves transgressors ; then their nature was corrupted ; thus they did eat the unlawful food, and became the parents of a sinful race.

The chief differences therefore in this matter, betwixt innocent and fallen man, are these :

1. That it is probable his flesh might have no natural inclination to objects apparently hurtful in themselves, but to such only as might be made unlawful by some attending circumstances, or by an express and positive law. And

2. These inclinations also, perhaps, were but few and feeble, in comparison of the multitudes of violent appetites, and irregular desires, that are found in our degenerate natures, to all sorts of unlawful objects. And

3. That his soul had power in itself, by due consideration, to resist and subdue these appetites of the flesh, though not absolutely to prevent them ; whereas, in our present corrupt state, we are soon transported and hurried away into a sinful compliance with them : The spirit is ready to yield as soon as it feels the temptations of the body ;

body; so that there are scarce any such inordinate ferments or propensities arising or stirring in our flesh and blood, but the soul more or less consents to them in some degree.

Thus, though the first motions towards sin that are in our members, are not in themselves properly sinful, nor is the sense or perception of the mind sinful neither, for this is natural and necessary, according to the composition of human nature, if the mind were never so holy: Yet these motions seldom arise in our members, especially in an unregenerate state, but the soul is defiled, and becomes guilty; and that is by some consent of will, some degree of indulgence to them, or compliance with them. Well then may we cry out with the Psalmist, *Psalm xix. 12.* Who can understand his errors? Cleanse us O Lord from the multitudes of our transgressions, and the millions of our iniquities: Cleanse us from secret offences, and keep us free from presumptuous sins.

**Question. II.** Whether all impure imaginations and blasphemous thoughts are properly sinful; and render us guilty before God?

**Answer.** It is possible that some peculiar qualities of the constitution, some dis-tempered humours of the body, or some sort of improper food, may excite impure images on the brain; and this is often done also by the casual and unavoidable, occurrences of human life. An indecent picture, an immodest or profane song, or the vile, the impious, or uncleanly language of the wicked world, may spread a dangerous scene over the fancy. The devil also is a watchful and a busy adversary, and we know not what secret power he has to draw evil pictures on the brain, to write blasphemy there, or to awaken some old traces of immorality. The powers and devices of wicked spirits are a great and unsearchable secret to us, who dwell in the flesh. He may buzz into the ear some impious syllables, or lewd and profane sounds, especially when his chain is a little lengthened, and he has a divine permission to approach human nature.

But all these things that I have here described may be impressed on the animal powers of an innocent person: The soul may have a very painful perception of all this without actual sin, supposing still, that it strives and wrestles both against its own flesh and blood, and against those principalities and powers of darkness; supposing that it fights, watches, and prays for divine aid, and uses all the holy armour and the weapons of sacred appointment, to fence against these assaults of fleshly and spiritual enemies, these sore invasions of its holiness and peace.

I confess it is hard in this fallen and imperfect state, to be thus attacked on any side, without some degree of compliance in an unguarded moment; and especially if we are beset on all sides, and assaulted by the flesh, the world, and the devil at once. It is seldom or never that the best of men can pass through such a scene of conflict and sharp trial, without something of defilement. Our saviour himself indeed was assaulted by *Satan*, and by the world; but the prince of darkness found nothing within him to promote or assist his temptations. *John xiv. 30.* But he finds so much tinder in our nature, ready to catch fire, and blaze, at every spark of iniquity, that it is scarce possible we should pass through such dangerous hours of contest, and keep our spirits pure and unpolluted.

Yet still it must be determined, that where there is perpetual resistance, and no manner of indulgence of these vicious scenes, where there is no consent of the will to them, nor a neglect of any proper and appointed means to oppose and suppress them, there is no sin.

Let this be a word of consolation and sacred encouragement to those poor melancholy christians who are sorely buffeted by *Satan*, and his hellish suggestions, or are vexed with the wild and unruly insults of fancy, under some distemper of the flesh. Let them enquire whether these evil thoughts be not their constant burthen; whether it is not their daily and hourly toil of spirit, to suppress and cast them out; whether they do not make this the matter of their holy complaint and mourning before God night and day; whether they are not wrestling hard with these adversaries of their peace, and pleading hard at the mercy-seat, for grace to resist and subdue them: Then let them take the same encouragement that *St. Paul* does, who is an excellent example both of such sufferings, and of such hope and consolation. *2 Cor. xii. 7—10.* He had a thorn in the flesh, he had an angel of *Satan* sent to buffet him, he besought the Lord thrice, that is, often and earnestly, for deliverance: And though God did not answer him immediately by a full release from the temptation, yet he afforded him such a sufficiency of grace, that he could glory in hope of final victory. Nor did he call the buffetings of *Satan*, nor the thorn in the flesh, his own sins; but his infirmities, which he durst even glory in, from his great assurance of the grace of *Christ*, to assist him in the combat, verse 9.

I have written this to prevent the humble holy soul, that lies under these exercises, from charging itself with more guilt than the law or justice of God charges it with: Let such a one also take comfort from those words of the apostle, as there is no condemnation to them that are in *Christ Jesus*, who walk not after the flesh, in the course of their lives, *Rom. viii. 1.* so there is no guilt in such instances of sinful imagination, where there is no indulgence.

Yet here it is necessary to take notice, that some persons have heretofore given so criminal an indulgence to their sensual lusts, or have been so freely engaged in profane or immoral conversation in their younger years, that they have tainted their fancy with many foul and impious representations, inscribed it with vicious words and images, and lodged a fatal treasure of iniquity there. They have often recalled these scenes with so much delight, that when divine grace has been pleased to awaken them to a sense of their folly, and give a pious turn to their souls, they have been many years perplexed with the vile workings of imagination: These scenes of iniquity have returned unbidden, and risen up incessantly, in spite of all their sacred labour to abolish them: These have filled their spirits with sorrow and perpetual anguish; and there is just reason they should deeply humble themselves before God on this account. For though it is possible such wicked thoughts may be suggested to holy souls, who have kept themselves in their youth from this sort of defilement; yet when persons themselves have been so far accessory to their own guilt and misery, they ought to take fresh occasion from their present temptations, to renew and maintain repentance for their old sins.

Besides the habit or customary return of such corrupt imaginations, that these unhappy sinners have entailed upon themselves, they have also given hereby such a fatal handle to the temptations of the devil, and furnished such a pleasing habitation for unclean spirits, that lewd and blasphemous thoughts have been continually imposed upon them with ease, by the sport and malice of the tempter; these have given them many grievous days and restless nights, constant fatigue and combat, and sorrow of heart; nor could they ever free these inward recesses of the brain, these secret chambers of the fancy, from the impure pictures which they themselves have hung up there, till the whole mortal tabernacle has been demolished. Those wicked  
images

images have been graven so deep, and lasted so long, that all their pious labours and tears have never been able to blot them out, till the flesh itself has been destroyed in death.

Betimes then, O ye young sinners, awake betimes to serious piety, and flee every youthful lust; avoid the persons and the places that would tempt you to sensual or profane practices; turn your eyes away from the very appearances of guilt, and from all defiling representations; let your ears be deaf to all the language of profaneness or immodesty, lest you suffer a fatal inroad to be made upon the avenues of the fancy, and admit such a guilty treasure of mischief and iniquity there, that may lay a foundation for toil and anguish, and much bitterness of soul, in the following and the better years of life.

Question. III. Whether we may be guilty of sin in our dreams, in hours of delirium, under a fever, or in seasons of distraction and madness?

Answer. I join all these three together, because they all agree in this, that the representations made on the brain are so strong and predominant in all of them, that imagination is almost equal to sense; it imitates sight and hearing, and the appearances and actions of life so nearly, that the soul cannot distinguish them; and sometimes the wild operations of the brain overpower even the present impressions made upon the senses, and fancy prevails above the ear or the eye. Dreaming is but sleeping distraction, as the distraction of a delirious hour is but a waking dream.

Now where the images of fancy are so prevalent, the soul even of a holy man may be so far overpowered, as that reason is quite thrown out of its seat; the understanding is dazzled and deceived by the glaring flashes of imagination; the notions of conscience, the rules of duty, and the sacred motives of religion, are, as it were, confounded and overwhelmed, and lost for a season, under the constant strong impressions of the animal spirits revelling in the recesses of the brain: And where the disorder rises to such a degree as this, the springs of carnal appetite and passion are soon touched and awakened; and being of a kindred nature, are suddenly inflamed; so that a man of piety may be hurried to consent to sinful practices, under any of these waking or sleeping distractions. In such a case the guilt seems to be lessened so far as the reason is drowned in confusion and darkness, and the thought and conscience overpowered and cheated with false impressions. Perhaps at the end of this disorder, when the man awakes into day light and reason again, he knows nothing of what has passed; or if he recollects the folly, he blushes and mourns over the infirmity of his nature, and while he asks forgiveness of God, he can scarce forgive himself, that he should yield the least consent to criminal inclinations.

Where the confusion of thought does not arise to such an overwhelming degree, but there are some debatings of reason, some notions of duty, some workings of conscience, and yet the soul complies at last, there the guilt is increased, and rises higher in proportion to the exercise of the intellectual faculties. But this crime can never become near to the guilt of the same actions, done in a waking hour, or in a season of health, and soundness of mind and memory.

I have known a man of serious piety take the name of God in vain, and curse under the power of distraction, which he would have abhorred with all his soul, if he had been in his senses, and not absolutely overpowered by the disordered humours of the flesh.

Yet take this awful caution by the way: That where these disorders or diseases of the brain, sleeping or waking, are caused by our own folly or wickedness, by luxury,

by unmortified lusts, or by any immoral practices, the case seems to be far worse, and perhaps the guilt of every irregular action is proportionably enhanced and aggravated thereby; as in the wild freaks of a drunkard, who has indulged his vicious appetite, till it has overcome all his better faculties; for there reason itself, and the common judgment of mankind, determine the crimes then committed against the society to be justly punishable: He that kills a man in his drunken fit, must be put to death when he is grown sober. And how far God will impute every thing that is criminal, and whether he will not deal with such a one in rigor, according to the full guilt of the crime, can be determined only by God himself. He sees all the secret motions of the flesh and spirit; he weighs every circumstance in a true balance; he knows perfectly all the rules of strict and impartial justice; and will judge the world with divine equity and wisdom.

Let us watch and pray then, lest we enter into temptation in the healthful and waking hours of life: Let us carefully shun all those practices that have any tendency to discompose the brain, or introduce disease, or disorder into that part of our animal powers; lest if we bring these inconveniencies upon ourselves by our own guilt or negligence, we expose ourselves to more just censure and punishment, for the unhappy effects and attendants of such a disordered imagination.

And there is another reason too why we should take care at all times to employ our thoughts and our time aright; and that is, that we may introduce a better habit into animal nature, and provide better against those seasons wherein either the daily course of nature, or the afflictive providence of God, may seem to give the powers of the flesh an excessive or superior influence over the faculties of the mind. Let us never indulge the corrupt appetites, the unlawful desires, or the sinful passions that work within us: Let us be watchful against every rising enemy, and subdue the vicious propensities of nature, by holy diligence in our proper duty, and by earnest addresses to the throne of grace: Let us treasure up in our imagination the sacred histories of the bible, and fill our memory with the things of religion; that the ideas of better things than riches, honours, and pleasures, may be ever ready to start up and appear to the soul, when it is at leisure from other necessary business. This might happily furnish out safer and sweeter scenes to entertain fancy at midnight-hours, or when the brain labours under worse disorders by reason of some bodily distemper. The wise man tells us, that a dream cometh through the multitude of business, *Ecc. v. 3.* And by the multitude of thoughts that pass through the mind, and are entertained with delight, in the vigorous and wakeful parts of life, the animal powers of fancy and passion will generally be in some measure influenced and regulated. The best way then to cure covetous, or ambitious, or luxurious dreams, is to fight against the workings of these iniquities when we are awake; for a very pure fountain, even under some casual disturbance, will not send forth its streams so much defiled, and so muddy, as where the spring is filthy or corrupt, and under some disturbance too.

**Question IV.** Whether all persons are equally defiled with original sin?

**Answer.** We must here distinguish between the guilt of sin belonging to the person, and the power of sin that is in the nature.

Now whatsoever guilt is derived to any person from *Adam*, by communion with him in his first apostasy, the same is derived to all the posterity; nor is this the thing that is doubted or enquired here.

But as to the power of sin in the nature, it is evident that there are not the same degrees of sinful propensity, vicious appetite, and passion, in the bodies of all, even from

from their very birth and infancy. The constitution of animal or fleshly nature in some, is much more sullen or greedy, more wanton or peevish, more slothful, or proud and haughty, than it is in others, according to the various mixture of the blood and humours, and the different ferments that arise thence, whereby the soul is early impressed and governed, and habituated to particular vices betimes.

Though we are all conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, *Psalms* li. 5. yet there are some who are emphatically wicked in their very constitutions, who are more remarkably estranged to all that is good from the womb, and go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies, *Psalms* lviii. 3. Whereby the psalmist may seem to intimate that some persons have wickedness more eminently running through their families; they are born and bred utter strangers to God, honesty, and goodness; and they have a sort of craft and knavishness mingled with their temper, that they practise lying as soon as they can speak.

It is evident enough to the observation of every man, that some persons are of a more temperate, more chaste, more modest, more friendly and kind disposition, even in animal nature; they are more plain-hearted, and of a more honest and sincere make from their very infancy; they have more of the dove and of the lamb in them, than of the fox, the bear, or the lion; and the soul is not led astray to the practice of the contrary vices, either so far, or so early, as those who, perhaps, from their immediate parents, have received flesh and blood more tainted with these iniquities. And if this be called a different degree of original sin, I will not stand now to contest the word, nor can I utterly deny the matter.

But still it is abundantly evident also concerning every one of us, who are sons or daughters of *Adam*, how sinful or how holy soever our immediate parents were, that we bring vicious propensities enough with our flesh and blood into this world, that if we encourage and indulge them, and walk after the flesh, we shall soon be found sufficiently wicked here, and grow meet for a just condemnation hereafter; and this will be the case of the best constitution, unless a mighty change pass upon nature, by the power of renewing and sanctifying grace. All that is born of the flesh is flesh, or sinful; and except a man be born of water and the spirit, that is, regenerated by the Spirit of God, which is typified by baptismal water, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, *John* iii. 3, 5, 6.

Question V. Whether the same sin always carries equal guilt with it in different persons, who have the same advantage or the same degrees of knowledge?

Answer. It seems to be supposed in the question, that different means or different measures of knowledge make the sinner more or less guilty in the sight of God; and indeed our saviour himself has determined that point beyond all dispute, *Matt.* xi. 21, 22. *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* having seen the miracles of *Christ*, and heard his doctrine, were much more culpable than *Tyre* and *Sidon*, whose great ignorance would render their case more tolerable in the day of judgment.

But to answer this question, let it be considered that there are other things besides knowledge that make sins more or less heinous. The same crime committed under a small and single temptation, is much more culpable than when the temptations are many and strong, whether they be within us or without us. Now if a person of a sharp and fretful constitution, or whose natural juices of the flesh are soured by long sickness and pain, should fall into frequent passions of sinful anger, notwithstanding all his labour and watchfulness against it, he is not quite so criminal in the sight of God as another, who has no such peevish and fretful springs of passion in his nature, neither

ther by original constitution, nor by any accidental distemper. The man that perpetually carries about with him the vigorous and active seeds of any sinful appetite or affection, may take ten times more pains in mortification than another does who is of a happier temperature, and yet may fall more frequently into his own peculiar iniquities, and be overcome by the sin that easily befalls him: Nor is his guilt so great as it is in those who are blessed with a better animal nature, but either take no care to guard, against those sins, or perhaps excite nature to practise the same iniquities, beyond its own inbred appetite.

And for this reason it is evident, that a person, who in different periods of life, commits the same sins, may deserve much more blame at one time than another; so wanton practices are more hateful and criminal in old age, and slothfulness and inactivity in duty is a greater fault in the days of youth; because in those different seasons of human life, there is less temptation to those sins arising from the flesh.

So fear, and sudden anger, and sorrow, wheresoever they are found excessive in persons of enfeebled constitutions, labouring under sharp pains, or oppressed by nervous maladies, and weak natural spirits, have not quite so much guilt in them as those sins would have in the same persons, when they were in a state of vigour and health; for then they had less uneasiness within to join with the provocations and temptations from without; and besides they were much more capable of bridling the inferior powers, of countermanding the animal motions and evil ferments: Then they could more easily maintain a wise self-government, they could range their thoughts in better array to resist these sudden attacks of the flesh.

I might add further also, that under these sort of infirmities, they are more exposed to sudden surprizes; the hurry of the natural spirits shakes the whole network of the nerves in a moment; they throw all the blood into the face at once; or, by a contrary operation, spread an universal chill and tremor over the body, and cloath the countenance in paleness and the image of death.

They flash like gunpowder, they force the sweat through every pore, and convey a ferment of passion through the whole nature at once, so that the soul is sometimes seized into a sudden consent to the sinful motions of the body before it is aware; which dangers are much more easily prevented in a calm and healthful state of life.

But here let me insert a cautionary remark or two, to guard against the abuse of this doctrine, which is designed for the relief of holy, humble, and dejected souls.

1. Caution. Many who return frequently to the commission of the same sin, excuse their own slothful and sottish negligence by throwing the blame on their constitution; let them take heed, lest it be found that it is their own wilful indulgence of sinful appetite and temptation, and not constitution, hath made the habit of sin so strong within them, and hath formed their very temper into such vice and iniquity, which was by no means born with them in any uncommon degree, but is owing to their own wicked practice: God sees through such vile hypocrisy and disguise as this, and will punish the sinner with a double stroke of vengeance, one for his guilty sensuality, and the other for his hateful dissembling. If I would give an instance of this pretence, I think it is found no where more frequently than among the drunkards, the passionate, and the unclean; and such persons also discover the vanity of their pretences, in that they always excuse their sins, and seldom or never mourn under them.

2. Caution. If your iniquity that frequently befalls you, arise from any bodily disorder, which you have brought on yourself by your own sins, dare not murmur, and charge the providence of God with this your disease or impotence, but maintain



a humbling sense of your own guilt, which, perhaps, God hath thus chastised in righteousness: And let younger sinners avoid all those guilty practices that may turn their very nature and better constitution into vice and raging appetite, or into such diseases as may expose them to the violent and unruly insults of flesh and blood. Let them take heed of indulging vehement desires or aversions, even to common, indifferent, or lawful objects, lest affection get the ascendant, and subject the flesh; and, by that means, the soul also, to a slavish habit of appetite and passion.

3. Caution. Let not those persons, whose happier constitution, or uninterrupted health, gives them some advantages in this respect, throw off their daily watchfulness, or neglect prayer, lest a vain self-confidence betray them into foul iniquities: And let them remember too, that their guilt will be the greater.

Nor should those whose appetites and passions are become more unruly, either by the original temperature of their flesh and blood, or by particular distempers, indulge themselves more easily in a sinful compliance, under pretence that their guilt is less; unless they are content to dwell for ever in fire and sorrow, upon this condition, that some of the sorrows of hell be sharper than theirs, and some part of the flame be hotter and fiercer. O rather think that you are called by the providence of God to a stricter watch, to more frequent and fervent prayer, and to a more laborious resistance of the flesh; and the grace of *Christ* is sufficient to assist the weakest warrior, and make him an overcomer even in the hardest conflict.

But this naturally leads me on to the next question.

Question VI. Whether there be not a very unequal distribution of providence in these various constitutions of mankind? And how can this be reconciled to strict justice, to make the difficulties of the state of trial so much harder in one man than it is in another, by exposing him to much stronger temptations?

Answer. This difficulty, which dwells on the lips of profane sinners, is easily solved by attending to a few such propositions as these:

1. This must be laid down as an eternal and an unmoveable truth, that the great God has all possible perfections belonging to his nature, and his whole conduct in providence is ever regulated by those perfections; so that he can no more be unjust, than he can be impotent or ignorant; nor can any part of his conduct be unrighteous, any more than it can be weak or unskilful.

2. It is evident to the universal observation of heathens as well as christians, that mankind is a fallen and degenerate rank of beings, who have lost their primitive innocence and happiness; and are running on to deeper guilt and misery, with headlong and thoughtless haste: Though it is only the scripture that informs us how this came to pass, which philosophers, by the light of nature, could never find out.

3. If the whole race of creatures, which were so degenerate, had been put under the most difficult tests of obedience, in a state of trial appointed in order to their recovery from ruin, not one of them had any just reason to complain, or murmur against their sovereign ruler in the methods of his wisdom working toward their recovery.

4. If some of these fallen and degenerate beings have therefore some easier circumstances of trial appointed to them, such ought to be very thankful indeed, but others ought by no means to quarrel with their maker, or treat their fellow-creatures with envy. Is thine eye evil because he is good, *Matt. xx. 15*.

5. Perhaps many of those who have less inward temptations in the flesh, are, in the course of providence, exposed to greater outward temptations in the world; and  
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this case, the state of trial for both of them may be equally difficult; the one is balanced with the other,

6. How great soever the difficulties appear which any soul is exposed to by the unhappy circumstances of flesh and blood, to which it is united, there is sufficient relief provided in the covenant of grace; there is sufficient atonement and pardon in the blood of *Christ* to remove the deepest guilt, and sufficient aids of the blessed Spirit promised in the gospel, to mortify the most violent appetites, and perverse affections of the flesh; and there are many souls now in heaven, who wrestled hard with as vile constitutions of body here on earth as you are vexed with, but have been made conquerors by the power of this gospel,

7. Consider also, that the harder the fight is, the brighter shall be the crown, and the most laborious combat shall be attended with the fairest prize. Maintain your conflict with flesh and blood, though the strife may be never so sharp and painful; hold out till you are called up to the world of spirits, and you shall find that your labour was not in vain.

Have a care then, O man, of contending with God thy maker; nor let the earthen vessel say to the potter, "Why hast thou formed me thus?" If thou givest a loose to thy corruptions because they are strong, thou practisest the same folly as if the keeper should give a loose to a lion, because it is a very wild and large one, and let him run at random because he is full of rage. What dost thou think the event will be, O sinner? When thy native appetites are still grown stronger by indulgence, and become utterly ungovernable, and thou art plunged into unspeakable guilt, and endless misery, what a cutting reflection it will be to thy conscience, that, instead of watching, praying, and striving against thine inbred sins, thou wert ever quarrelling at the great God thy maker, that he did not form thy nature just according to thy directions: Especially when thou shalt see others advanced to high seats in glory, and reaping the joys of the christian conquest, who had as many adversaries to wrestle with in the days of their flesh, and each of them as violent and as mighty as thine.

Question VII. If the springs of sin lie so much in the flesh, are not some methods of reforming the flesh proper to be practised, in order to facilitate the work of mortification, to cure our sinful distempers, to prevent actual transgression, and break the habits of sin?

Answer. Since the seeds and occasions of sin lie so much in the flesh and blood, doubtless it is our duty to take some care that these seeds of iniquity be suppressed and killed, as far as possible, by all proper methods; such as do not necessarily interfere with other commands of God, or plain duties of christianity. But in all matters of this nature, persons are in danger of running into extremes,

The papists require a certain abstinence from meats, and forbid to marry, without a due attendance to the circumstances of times, places, and persons; whereby superstition is supported, and sinful appetites are often irritated, instead of suppressing them. At other times they wear sackcloth on their flesh, they scourge and whip themselves, they lay their bodies under much painful discipline, and sometimes too under bloody correction, in order to mortify sin. But it was never required of God, that we should break the sixth command in order to keep the seventh; for the advice of *Christ* about parting with a right-hand, or a right-eye, *Mat. v. 29.* is to be taken metaphorically for the mortification of darling sins, or at least, in a comparative sense, that it is better to bear the loss of a limb than to be eternally miserable, if there were no other possible way of escape.

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Besides, it is part of their design also in popery, to make some sort of atonement and satisfaction for past sins by these superstitious severities, which are so far from being acceptable to God in this sense, that they dishonour the blood of *Christ*, and will be abhorred of the Father.

Some protestants run to another extreme, and because our religion is spiritual, therefore they neglect many due restraints of the flesh, and think to secure themselves from sin merely by the exercises of the mind, without due guard or care to keep the body under proper discipline, in order to mortify the lusts thereof. They are ready to imagine that this is too legal a way of mortification, that it detracts from the liberty and privilege of the christian state, to keep under the flesh by any such methods of self-government.

But in opposition to these two extremes, the scripture seems plainly to lead us to a medium; and the rules which may be drawn from the word of God, may be chiefly comprised under these few heads.

1. Never dare indulge the craving of the flesh in any one sinful appetite or inclination; much less make provision for it, to fulfil the lusts thereof, *Rom. xiii. 14.* Here indeed you should be well informed what is and what is not sinful, and not bind the body to extravagant and unreasonable restraints, under a mistaken notion of sin and duty. But when you are once upon just grounds satisfied what is unlawful, then, if sinful neighbours, or if sinful self entice, consent thou not; for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed, *Prov. i. 10. James i. 14.* Compliance with sin is the way to make sin strong: Every such indulgence gives it courage to demand more, and makes the inclinations grow into a confirmed habit. It is the character of the children of wrath, that they fulfil the desires of the flesh, *Eph. ii. 3.*

2. Keep out of the way of temptation. Whatsoever place, company, diversion, or unnecessary business, you have found ready to provoke a corrupt passion, avoid it as much as possible. Remove thy way afar off, and come not nigh the door of her house, *Prov. v. 8.*

3. Deny the flesh sometimes in its lawful appetites, to teach it subjection, and let it learn to be governed, by being sometimes restrained and disappointed in its innocent desires, that it may with more ease be withheld when unlawful objects appear. The holy apostle seems to have this in his eye, when he tells the *Corinthians*, that he that striveth for the mastery must be temperate in all things: And he assures them, that he keeps his own body under, and brings it into subjection, *1 Cor. ix. 25, 27.* And in the last verse of the eighth chapter, he will eat no flesh while the world stands rather than make his brother offend. Surely then he would use the same self-denial, rather than be in danger of giving himself leave to offend.

4. Keep the body in such temper and circumstances as may render it fittest for the present duty. If excess of faintness and feeble spirits make it unfit for service, refresh it with the proper comforts of life. If through excess of vigor and a florid state of the blood, it grow unfit for any duties of religion, or lead the mind astray to dangerous vanities and allurements, it may sometimes be kept under by diligence in labour, by sparing diet, and diminished hours of sleep. When *Jeshurun* waxed fat, he kicked; *Deut. xxxii. 15.* And the danger of *Sodom* was plenty and luxury, which the scripture describes by fulness of bread, joined with abundance of idleness, *Ezek. xvi. 49.*

And it is upon this account that you find fasting joined with prayer, in the new testament as well as in the old; and perhaps the word watching, which is coupled there-

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with, may in some places be supposed to include its literal sense also: for abstinence from full measures of food and sleep may give occasional assistance to the soul in devout exercises; and where experience finds that a full indulgence either of sleep or food unfits the body, or clogs the soul in any duties of religion, there those appetites of the flesh are certainly to be restrained.

I might add, in the last place, that if any sharp diseases of the body, or disordered humours, awaken the sinful ferments of any passion or appetite, in a more than ordinary manner, seek relief from the physician, to restore the flesh to its best state of service to the soul; that it may be delivered, through the divine blessing, from vexing disquietudes, from sudden surprizes of sin, from the feeble flutterings of animal nature, from languor and heaviness, and every other infirmity; and may join cheerfully and regularly with thy willing soul, to glorify God, thy maker and thy saviour.

But after all, never imagine that these, or any other methods of mortification, will be effectual to suppress and cure one sin, without converting and renewing grace, without the knowledge and faith of *Jesus Christ*, who is the only redeemer of mankind, appointed to save us from our sins; the only physician able to cure our spiritual maladies. It is a deep sense of the universal corruption of nature, together with a trusting our whole selves into the hands of *Christ*, to be sanctified and saved, is the only effectual and sure way to holiness. It is faith must purify the heart, *Acts* xv. 9. It is by the influences of the great and precious promises of the gospel, that we must be made partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust, *2 Pet.* i. 4. All our labours, short of regeneration, and an entire change of the whole soul, by the mighty work of the Spirit of *Christ*, are but like nipping the blossoms of a poisonous tree, like cutting off the twigs, or lopping the branches, while the fatal stock stands firm still, and the root maintains its life and full vigour. Thus it will be ever springing with new shoots, and bring forth fruits of guilty and mortal favour. But converting grace is a blow at the root; it kills the sinful principle, or, at least, gives it a deadly wound. Seek earnestly therefore the Spirit of *Christ*, to renew your whole natures: Walk under the influences of this blessed Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, *Gal.* v. 16, 24. For it is only they that are *Christ's*, who have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts; and if, by the assistances of this Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall have a life here on earth, made up of the peace and beauty of holiness, and you shall die out of this world, into a diviner life of glory. *Amen,*

## DEATH

D E A T H  
A N D  
H E A V E N;  
O R

The last Enemy conquered,

A N D

Separate Spirits made perfect:

With an ACCOUNT of

The rich VARIETY of their Employments and  
Pleasures ;

Attempted in T W O

F U N E R A L D I S C O U R S E S,

In M E M O R Y of

Sir *JOHN HARTOPP*, Baronet, and  
his *LADY*, deceased.

With the P R E F A C E to the *German* translation;



T O

Sir JOHN HARTOPP, BARONET.

S I R,

**T**O descend from such parents as yours, is no common favour of heaven; nor is it the blessing of every descendant to inherit the natural virtues of his progenitors: yet I know that you esteem your happiness incomplete, without the imitation of their heavenly graces, and the attainment of their sublimest hopes.

Forgive me, Dear Sir, if I take the liberty to say, it is with a sort of fond pleasure that I have beheld your victories over the most dangerous scenes and temptations of youth; and every step in your progress towards perfect triumph, is an addition to my joy. The world and the church hold their eyes fixed upon you, while God and angels, and, perhaps, the souls of your sacred ancestors, look down from on high to observe your conduct. Never was there a more proper time to awaken your zeal for the religion of *Christ*, than in a day of spreading infidelity and heathenism; nor can there be a fitter season to exert your utmost efforts for the support of serious piety, than in an age of numerous and growing iniquities. Your just sense of religious liberty will shine in its fairest glory, while you stand as a barrier against the fearful inroads of a wild and unbounded licentiousness. Nor can your attachment to the cause and interest of the protestant dissenters appear with more honour, than while they are defamed and scorned by the proud and the profane, and while their own imprudent contests stand in need of your candour and charity.

Many are the advantages you enjoy for this purpose. Divine providence has placed your circumstances above the bribery of a flattering world, and a corrupt generation. Your superior sense has no need to stand in awe of fools, who make a mock of sin and godliness. Let your native modesty and gentleness then arm itself with an unshaken courage in the cause of God; and fear not the malicious scoff and censure of sinners, since you have nothing to expect or hope from them.

Go on, Sir, and prosper in the things of heaven, and become an example of shining holiness in a degenerate world. Let the libertines of the nation know, that you also dare to think freely for yourself, and with all that freedom of thought you dare to chuse the paths of your holy ancestors.

The peculiar favour of God has provided you a consort, whose natural and pious accomplishments and assistances will attend you through all the way. These will soften the seeming severities of strict religion with the tenderest endearments of life, and make the pleasures of it double and transcendent. The name, the title and the character of your excellent father deceased, require and demand an eminent degree of goodness in his successor. The pious lady your mother, now in heaven, would have

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rejoiced

rejoiced in the present prospect, and would have purchased your felicity even with his own life: and your numerous relatives around you suspend their happiness upon yours. The piety you have shewn towards your worthy parents from your infancy, and the affectionate honours which you now pay their memory, give me further assurance that this is your aim, and your glorious ambition. And that you may ever keep in mind their example and your duty, you have commanded me to make public these discourses, which were framed on the occasion of their decease.

You well know, Sir, I am no friend to loose panegyrick, nor am I wont to bestow it on the dead or the living. What I have written of the late Sir JOHN HARTOPP at the end of the second discourse, is the first attempt that ever I made of concluding a funeral sermon with a distinct and particular character of the deceased, through the whole space of twenty-three years of my ministry; and surely the world will not envy nor detract from the just honours of a name so much beloved. As for the lady, your mother, she affected retirement to such a degree, that it would have placed her in a wrong light to have drawn out her virtues at length, and set them to public view. I have therefore only interspersed a few hints of her eminent piety, as the text and argument led me into them: And indeed this is the utmost that I have ever done before on such occasions.

I have much reason to ask pardon that I have so far enlarged these discourses, and especially the last; for I hate the thoughts of making any thing in religion heavy or tiresome. But having entertained myself many a time with some of these meditations on the business and the blessedness of separate spirits, I took this opportunity of shewing them to the world, enshrined in the lustre of two such names as adorn my title-page.

To render the reading of them yet more agreeable to yourself and to all your friends, I have cast them into distinct sections, that my readers may leave off almost where they please, and peruse so much of them at one time as suits their present inclination and convenience.

You know, Sir, I pretend to no authority to pronounce effectual blessings upon you; but you will accept the sincere good wishes of a man that loves you, and is zealous for your felicity in the upper and lower worlds. May the best of mercies descend daily on yourself, your lady, and your little offspring! May the closet, the parlour, and public assemblies be constant witnesses of your piety; and the house where a Sir JOHN HARTOPP dwells, be a house of prayer and of praise in every generation, nor the name be extinguished in your family till the heavens be no more! May the ladies your sisters live happily under the sweet influence of that mutual affection that has been always remarkably cultivated amongst you! Their interests are your care: And I am well persuaded that their sollicitude and tender concern for your welfare, will ever deserve and find such returns of love, as I have long observed with delight! May the prayers of your progenitors in past ages be answered in hourly benefits descending on you all, and be fruitful of blessings in ages yet to come! Such a lovely scene, with such a long and joyful prospect, will advance the satisfactions of my life, and give pleasure even in a dying hour, to him who had once the honour to be your affectionate monitor, and must ever write himself,

S I R,

Your obliged, humble servant,

July 6,  
1722.

I. WATTS.



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## The P R E F A C E to this book of Death and Heaven,

When it was translated into the *German* language, and published at HALLE in *Saxony*, 1727.

To the R E A D E R.

**H**ERE is communicated to you a treatise, in which the late pious Mr. *Frank*, professor of divinity at *Halle*, found so much edification and satisfaction, that he engaged an able person to translate it into our *German* tongue, to make others partake of the same spiritual benefit. This treatise consists of two funeral sermons, which an *English* divine, who perhaps is still living, composed on the death of two eminent persons, which he enlarged afterwards for their publication. The subject of the first is death, taken from 1 *Cor.* xv. 26. The second is heaven, from *Heb.* xii. 22. From this last he takes an occasion of flying with his thoughts into the blessed mansions of the just made perfect, by giving us not only a very probable and beautiful idea of the glory of a future life in general, but also an enumeration of the many sorts of employments and pleasures, that are to be met with there.

After the several false notions, people of different complexions have of eternal life, are laid open, the author of the preface goes on and quotes some *German* authors, who have writ upon that subject, and says at last: I hope nobody will presume to aver this doctrine to have been so far exhausted by those authors, that nothing new could be said upon it. For several learned writers in *England*, who in meditating and searching after hidden truths, have shewn an extraordinary capacity, prove the contrary; and amongst others there is the treatise, called, *The future state*, published 1683, by a gentleman whose name is concealed, which appeared in *French* 1700, and is now printed in *German* with a preface of the famous Dr. *Pritius*, senior, at *Frankfurt ad Manum*. There is among Sir *R. Blackmore's* essays, one upon the future beatitudes. The traces of these two *English* gentlemen are followed by our present *English* divine *I. Watts*, who, however, in many points has outdone these his predecessors, and advanced a step farther in his contemplations.

Though the first sermon contains many elegant passages worthy to be read, yet the latter seems to be a more elaborate piece, because it sets the doctrine of eternal life in a greater light, and enriches it with many probable inferences drawn from the word of God. He proposes his excellent thoughts in most emphatical terms, in that beautiful order and with such a vivacity of style, that he keeps the reader in a continual attention, and an eager desire to read on. It is plain the author's mind was so taken up with the beauty of heaven, that his mouth could not but speak from the abundance

*The P R E F A C E.*

dance of his heart. There is a secret unction in his expressions, which leaves a sweet favour in the reader's heart, and raises in him a desire after the blessed society he speaks of. And though the reader should not entirely agree with the author's notions, yet he will not peruse this treatise without a particular edification and blessing. I cannot deny but the author's conjectures may be sometimes carried a little too far, but that doth not prejudice the subject in the least. Besides, he is generally so happy as to find some arguments for his probable notions in the word of God, and to answer very dexterously all the objections, that can be made against him.

May the ever-living God give a blessing to this work, and grant that those sweet and relishing truths proposed in these leaves may make such an impression upon the minds of the readers as those noble truths deserve. May he prevent all the abuse of this delightful subject, and never permit it to be turned into a mere dry or fruitless speculation; but may he inflame every reader with a holy desire after a blessed eternity, and rouse and excite all those, that have not begun yet to tread the path of salvation, to enter into the same without delay; that they may not rest in a mere delightful prospect of the land of *Canaan*, nor be for ever excluded by their unbelief from the eternal enjoyment of it.

Given at HALLE, July 10, 1727.

**JOHN JACOB RAMBACH,**  
*S. Theol. Prof. Ordinar.*

**T H E**

T H E

# CONQUEST over DEATH,

Described in a

FUNERAL DISCOURSE in memory of the  
Lady *HARTOPP*, deceased.

The INTRODUCTION.

**I** Persuade myself that none of you are unacquainted with that mournful providence that calls me to the service of this day\*. The words which were borrowed from the lips of the dying, I am desired to improve for the instruction and comfort of those that live. They are written in

1 Cor. xv. 26.

*The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

**W**HEN a nation hath lain for whole ages under the power of some mighty tyrant, and has suffered perpetual ravages from his hands, what gladness runs through the land, at the sure prediction of his ruin? and how is every inhabitant pleased, while he hears of the approaching downfall of his great enemy? "For this is he that has slain my father or my mother, my children or my dearest relatives, and is still making havock of the remnant of my friends, while I myself stand in hourly danger." This pleasure grows up into more perfect joy, when we are assured this is the last tyrant that shall arise, the last enemy that shall afflict us; for he shall have no successor, and we shall be for ever free. Such should be the rejoicing of all the saints, when they hear so desirable and divine a promise as the words of my text; *The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

To improve this glorious proposition, let us consider these four things, with a reflexion or two upon each of them.

I. How

\* Nov. 9, 1711, the lady Hartopp died, and this discourse was delivered at Stoke-Newington, Nov. 25, following.

- I. How death appears to be an enemy to the faints.
- II. Why it is called the last enemy, or the last that shall be destroyed.
- III. How it is to be destroyed, and what are the steps or gradual efforts towards its destruction.
- IV. What are the advantages that the faints receive by the destruction of this last enemy.

## SECTION L

*Death an enemy even to good men.*

**T**HE first enquiry is, how, or in what sense death appears to be an enemy to the faints.

That it is in general an enemy to human nature, is sufficiently evident from its first introduction into the world; for it was brought in as an execution of the first threatening given to *Adam* in paradise, *Gen. ii. 17.* in the day thou eatest thou shalt die. It came in as a punishment for sin, and every punishment in some respect opposes our interest, and our happiness. When it seized on man at first, and planted the seeds of mortality in his nature, he then began to be deprived of that peace and health, that vigour and immortality which he possessed before his fall, till at last it brought him down to the dust; and ever since, all the sons of *Adam* have found and felt it an enemy to their natures.

To sinners indeed it is an enemy in a more dreadful sense, and its attendants are more terrible a thousand-fold. For besides all the common miseries of the flesh which they sustain, it delivers over their spirits into everlasting misery; it finishes their reprieve and their hope for ever; it plunges them at once into all the terrors of a most awakened conscience, and cuts them off from all the amusements and cares of this life, which laid their guilt and their conscience asleep for a season. Death confines over a sinner to the chains of the grave, and the chains of hell together, and binds and reserves him a prisoner of despair for the most complete torments of the second death.

But I would confine my discourse here only to believers, for it is with respect to them this chapter is written. I know death is often called their friend, because it puts an end to their sins and sorrows; but this benefit arises only from the covenant of grace, which sanctifies it to some good purposes to the children of God. It is constrained to become their friend in some instances, contrary to its own nature and its original design: But there is reason enough, if we take a survey of its own nature, and its present appearances, to call it an enemy still, upon these following accounts.

1. Death has generally many terrible attendants and forerunners when it comes; terrible to nature and the flesh of the most exalted christians.

Here, should I begin to describe the long and dismal train of death, the time would fail me. Shall I mention the sickness and the pain, the sharp anguish of the body, and sometimes the sharper methods of medicine to relieve it, all which prove useless and vain in that day? Shall I recount the tedious and uneasy hours, the tiresome and sleepless nights, when the patient longs for the slow return of the morning; and still when the light breaks, he finds new uneasiness, and wishes for the shadow and darkness again? Shall I speak of the dulness of the natural spirits, and the clogs that hang heavy upon the soul in those hours; so that the better part of man is bound and oppressed, and shut up, and cannot exert itself agreeable to the character of an intellectual being?

-Besides

Besides, all the designs of the mind are interrupted and broken in death; all that the faint intended to do for God, is cut off at once, and his holy purposes are precluded, which often adds to the trouble of a dying christian: *Psalms* cxlvi. 4. When man returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.

Shall I put you in mind of the sighs and sorrows of dearest friends that stand around the bed all in tears, and all despairing? Shall I speak of the last convulsions of nature, the sharp conflict of the extreme moments, and the struggling and painful efforts of departing life, which none can know fully but those that have felt them, and none of the dead come back to give us an account? Is it possible for us to survey these scenes of misery, and not to believe that the hand of an enemy has been there? The bodies of the faints are the temples of the holy Ghost, and the members of *Christ*, *I Cor.* vi. 15, 19. Death murders these bodies, these members of the Lord, and ruins these temples to the dust, and may well be called their enemy upon this account.

2. Death acts like an enemy, when it makes a separation between the soul and the body. It divides the nature of man in halves, and tears the two constituent parts of it asunder.

Though this becomes an advantage to the soul of the faint through the covenant and appointment of grace, yet to have such an intimate union dissolved between flesh and spirit carries something of terror in it; and there may be an innocent reluctance in the nature of the best christian against such an enemy as this: therefore *St. Paul*, in *2 Cor.* v. 4. does not directly desire to be unclothed, but rather to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life; that is, to be translated at once into an immortal state. The soul and body have been long acquainted with each other, and the soul has performed almost all its operations by the use of the senses and the limbs: It sees by the eye, it hears by the ear, it acts by the hands, and by the tongue it converses. Now to be separated at once from all these, and to be at once conveyed into a new strange world, a strange and unknown state both of being and action, has something in it so surprizing, that it is a little frightful to the nature of man, even when he is sanctified and fitted for heaven.

And as the soul is dismissed by death into a state of separation, so the body, like a fallen tabernacle, is forsaken, lies uninhabited and desolate. Shall I lead your thoughts back to the bed where your dear relatives expired? and give you a sight of the dead, whose beauty is turning apace into corruption, and all the loveliness of countenance fled for ever? The body, that curious engine of divine workmanship, is become a moveless lump: Death sits heavy upon it, and the sprightliness and vigour of life is perished in every feature and in every limb? Shall we go down to the dark chambers of the grave, where each of the dead lie in their cold mansions, in beds of darkness and dust? The shadows of a long evening are stretched over them, the curtains of a deep midnight are drawn around them, the worm lies under them, and the worm covers them.

A faint is no more exempted from all these frightful attendants of death than a sinner is. Those eyes that have been perpetually lifted up to the God of heaven in prayer, lie closed under ground. That tongue that has spoken much for God in the world, lies silent in death. Those hands that have ministered to the necessities of the faints, and those feet that have gone often to the house of God, death has confined them in his chains. Those natural powers that have been active in the service of the gospel, can speak, can move, can act no more. But I need not recite these things to you, the images of them are too fresh and painful, and sit too heavy upon your remembrance.

3. Death is an enemy to the saint, so far as it hinders him from the enjoyment of his perfect heaven, for it keeps one part of him in the grave for many years or ages.

Let us think of the dust of the antient martyrs, the dust of the apostles, and the holy prophets: Let us look many ages backward to the dust of *David*, and *Abraham*, and *Noah*, to the dust of *Adam*, the first of men: How long have their souls waited in heaven, as it were in a widowed estate? How long has their flesh been mingled with common earth, and lain confined under the bands of death, usefess to all the glorious purposes of their formation, and their being? A tedious extent of time! Four or five thousand years, wherein they have done nothing for God in the body, and in the body received nothing from God? For death hinders a believer from some of the business of heaven, and some of the blessedness of it.

1. From some of the business of heaven: It is only the soul that is then received to glory, and dwells there alone for a season, while death keeps the body prisoner in the grave; it is only the soul that glorifies its maker in that upper world, the world of spirits, for the flesh lies silent in the dust: *The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee*, O Lord; *Isa. xxxviii. 18.* The body is redeemed with the blood of *Christ*, as well as the soul, but death puts fetters upon it, and forbids it to serve its redeemer.

2. The believer is restrained also by death from some of the blessedness of heaven; it is only the soul enjoys the delight, and that too only in its abstracted nature, and pure intellectual capacity; it is cut off by death from all that rich variety of pleasure which rises from its communion with so noble a frame as the body of man is. It has no senses to receive the satisfactions that arise from the material part of heaven: It has no eyes to behold the glorified flesh of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; no ears to hear his voice; no tongue to converse with its saviour. And though we are sure there is a holy correspondence between *Christ Jesus* and separate souls, for we are said to be present with the Lord, when we are absent from the body, *2 Cor. v. 8.* yet this correspondence cannot be so complete and glorious, as it shall be, when with our eyes we shall see God in the form of a man.

It is granted, that the separate heaven of souls is abundant pleasure beyond what we can now conceive or express; and our friends, departed in the faith, enjoy the delightful presence of their Lord, and the heavenly converse of their fellow spirits. That honoured and deceased saint, whom we this day mourn, dwells with that *Jesus* with whom she had long been acquainted: She converses with him in heaven, whom she loved much upon earth: She finds herself safe for ever in his hands, to whose care she committed her immortal concerns; and she rejoices in the sight of him above, with whom she held many hours of sweet correspondence by faith here below. Doubtless also, she holds sweet conversation with the holy souls that went to heaven before her. A soul so greatly desirous of spiritual discourse as she was, so constantly prepared for pious conference and mutual communications of sacred knowledge, must needs enjoy that privilege, and that pleasure, in that upper world, where there is nothing all round her, but what is holy and divine. But it is certain she cannot enjoy that perfection of humble society with *Christ* in his glorified human nature, nor with fellow-saints, while she is deprived of one part of herself, her body lying silent and moveless in the prison of the grave: and she yet waits for the more complete satisfaction of all her hopes, when death her last enemy shall be destroyed, and her body redeemed from the dust, together with the bodies of all the saints. This leads me to the next particular.

#### 4. Death

4. Death is an enemy to believers, because it divides them for a season from the company of their known and valuable friends, and parts the dearest relatives asunder.

Though dying fairs be transmitted into better company, even to the spirits of the just made perfect, yet it is a mournful thought to be separated so long from those whom they loved with so strong and just an affection. It adds a sharpness even to the last agonies, when we think we must leave parents, children, or friends behind us, whom we love so tenderly; that we must leave them amidst the sorrows and the temptations of a vain world and a corrupt age; that we must leave them struggling with all the difficulties, the hardships, and the dangers that attend a christian in his travels through this wilderness, and not see their faces again in the flesh, nor converse with them in the manner we were wont to do, till the heavens be no more.

Upon this account also death is a worse enemy to those that survive, for they sustain the biggest loss: It deprives them of their dear and delightful relatives without any recompence, for the world grows so much the more undesirable to a saint by the death of every friend. Children are torn away from the embraces of their parents, and the wife is seized from the bosom. This is, as it were, tearing the flesh asunder of those whose hearts are joined; this gives occasion to bitter sorrows, to long and heavy complaints. How suddenly are we sometimes deprived of the desires of the eyes, and the comforts of life, the ornaments, and the supports of our earthly state? And we have lost all their love, and their counsel, and their care; all their sweet sympathy of joys and sorrows, all their agreeable conversation and heavenly advice. What a tedious way have we to walk through without such a guide or helper? We have lost the benefit of their watchful eye, their holy jealousy for our souls, their fervent and daily prayers. But there are records in heaven, where all the prayers of the fairs are kept; and God often turns over his register, and, in distant successive years, pours down blessings upon the posterity, and multiplies his graces amongst them, in answer to the requests that were offered up on earth by the fairs that are now with God.

5. The last reason I shall mention to prove death an enemy to the fairs, is the terror that it fills the mind with long before-hand. There are but few that, in their best estate on earth are got quite above these terrors, and there are none can say, I have been always free from them: so that in the younger days of their christianity at least, all have been afraid of death; and these fears are enemies to our peace. Some spend all their lives in this bondage of fear, and that upon different accounts.

A christian of weaker faith cries out within himself, "How shall I pass that awful moment that sets my soul naked before the eyes of a holy God, when I know not whether I am clothed with the righteousness of his son or no, whether I shall stand the test in that day? I dread that solemn, that important hour that shall put me into an unchangeable state of miseries that are infinite, or of infinite blessedness. How shall I, that am a sinner, stand before that tribunal and that judge, in whose sight no mortal can be innocent? My evidences for heaven are dark and cloudy, that I cannot read them; they have been often sullied with fresh guilt, and I doubt whether I am new born or no, or reconciled to God. And what if I should be mistaken in this affair of the greatest moment? The mistake can never be rectified; therefore I shake at the thoughts of death, that hour of decision; for my faith is weak."

Another saint of a strong and lively faith, but of a timorous temper, cries out, "How shall I bear the agonies and the pangs of death? I am not afraid to enter into eternity: the grace of *Christ*, and his gospel, have given me hope and courage enough to be dead; but I am still afraid of dying; it is a hard and painful work, how

shall I sustain the sharp conflict? I shiver at the thoughts of venturing through that cold flood that divides betwixt this wilderness and the promised land."

Another christian is too much unacquainted with the world of spirits, with the nature of the separate heaven, with the particular business and blessedness of holy souls departed; and he is afraid to venture out of this region of flesh and blood, into a vast and unknown world. Though he has good hope through grace, that he shall arrive safe at heaven; yet the heavenly country is so unknown a land, and the valley of entrance to it so dark, that he fears to pass into it through the shadow of death.

Another is terrified at the thoughts of death, because he knows not how to part with his dear relatives in the flesh, and to leave them exposed to an unkind age and a thousand dangers. "If I had none to leave behind me, I could die with cheerfulness; but while I think of such a separation, the thought of death has terror in it."

Thus upon various accounts a good man may have fearful apprehensions of dying; and that which carries so much terror about it, may well be called an enemy.

Before we proceed any further, let us make two reflections on the first general head.

I Reflexion. If death be an enemy to the best of men in so many respects, then we may infer the great evil of sin: For it was sin that brought death into this our world; *Rom. v. 12. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

We are too ready to conceive a slight opinion of the evil of sin, because it is so common to the best of men, and so constant an attendant on human nature daily and hourly; we entertain too gentle and harmless thoughts of it, because its biggest evil is of a spiritual kind, and invisible; we see not that infinite majesty which it dishonours, that spotless holiness of God which it offends, the glory and perfection of that law which is broken by it: We can take but short and scanty notices of the injury that it does to God the supreme spirit, while we are shut up in tabernacles of flesh. But here in these scenes of death, we may survey the sensible and mighty injury that sin has done to the nature of man, and thence infer how offensive it is to God. By our eyes and our ears, we may be terribly convinced, that it is no little evil that could occasion such spreading and durable mischief.

We cannot frame a just notion of what man was in his state of perfect innocency, in his original beauty, and honour, and immortal frame; and therefore we cannot so well judge of the vastness of the loss which we sustain by sin: but we can see and feel the formidable attendants of death, and learn and believe that it is a root of unknown poisoned bitterness, that has produced such cursed fruit: Especially if we remember that all the sorrows before described, fall upon the saints themselves, even where sin is pardoned, and death has lost its sting. But if we descend in contemplation to the endless and unknown misery that waits upon the death of a sinner, and say, all these are the effects of sin; how inexpressibly dreadful will the cause appear? The wise man has pronounced them fools, by inspiration, that make a mock at such mischief, *Prov. xiv. 9.*

II. Reflexion. We may here learn the greatness of the love of *Christ*, that would venture into the land of death, and conflict with this mighty enemy, and yield to the power of it for a season, for our sakes. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, John xv. 13. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he died for us; 1 John iii. 16. Rom. v. 8.*

Many terrible attendants of death did our Lord meet and struggle with beyond what any of his saints can feel. Death, like a lion, ran furious upon him, as it does upon a sinner, its proper prey. He met death in its full strength and dominion, for he



he had all our sins upon him ; and death had its own sharp sting when our Lord entered the combat. There was the wrath of God which was threatened in the broken law to mingle with his pangs and agonies of nature : This made his soul exceeding sorrowful ; all his inward powers were amazed, and his heart oppressed with heaviness : *Mark* xiv. 33, 34. He was almost overwhelmed in the garden, before the thorns or the nails came near him ; and on the cross he complains of the forsakings of God his almighty friend, when death his mighty enemy was just upon him ; and all this, saith he, to every believer, I bore for thy sake : My love was stronger than death.

## SECTION II.

*Death is the last enemy.*

**I** Proceed now to the second general proposed, and that is to enquire, in what sense death is said to be the last enemy, or the last that shall be destroyed : For we may join this word last, either to death, or to destruction ; and in each sense it affords comfort to the saints.

1. It is the last enemy that the saints have to grapple with in this world. The three great adversaries of a christian are the flesh, the world, and the devil, and they assault him often in this life. Death comes behind, and brings up the rear ; the saint combats with this enemy, and finishes all the war. Every believer has lifted himself under the banner of *Christ*, who is the captain of his salvation. When he first gives himself up to the Lord, he renounces every thing that is inconsistent with his faith and hope, he abandons his former slavery, undertakes the spiritual warfare, and enters the field of battle.

It is a necessary character of the followers of *Christ*, that they fight with the flesh, subdue corrupt nature, suppress their irregular appetites, give daily wounds to the body of sin, *Col.* iii. 5. *Rom.* viii. 13. They fight against this world ; they refuse to comply with the temptations of it, when it would allure them astray from the path of duty ; they defy its frowns and discouragements, and break through all its oppositions in their way to heaven, *James* iv. 4. They resist *Satan* when he tempts them to sin, and vanquish him by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, *Eph.* iv. 11, 12, 17. and when he accuses them, and attempts to bring terror into their souls, they overcome him, and cast him down by the blood of the lamb, *Rev.* xii. 10, 11. They are made conquerors over these adversaries in the strength of *Christ*. Now the pangs of death are the last troublers of their peace ; death is the last enemy that attacks them, and some have very terrible conflicts with it.

It was in these agonies, in this sharp contention, the words of my text were uttered by that honoured saint whose memory will be always precious, and whose loss we this day mourn. This chearful language of hope, among many other scriptures, broke out from her lips. Thus lively was her faith in a dying hour. Methinks I hear her speaking the words with a firm trust in the promise ; “ *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* ” And this encouraged her onward through the few remaining struggles of life and pain. It is as if she had said, “ I have given myself up long ago to *Christ*, I engaged myself young in his service, I have fought with sin, I have learned to subdue flesh and sense, and to live by the faith of the son of God : I have not courted the flatteries of the world, the vain shews of life ; and I have been enabled to despise the frowns of it, and been kept stedfast in my profession, in the most discouraging

couraging and the darkeſt times. Through the grace of *Chriſt* I have overcome the evil-one; there remains but one enemy more, whoſe name is death; and I truſt in the ſame grace ſtill to obtain complete victory.” Rejoice ye dear relatives, let all the friends of the deceaſed rejoice, her name is now written down in heaven amongſt the overcomers.

2. Death may be called the laſt enemy becauſe it is not utterly deſtroyed till the reſurrection, till *Chriſt* hath done all his work upon earth, till he has ſubdued all his other adverſaries, and made uſe of death as his ſlave, to deſtroy many of them. It is in this ſenſe eſpecially that the words of my text are written by *St. Paul*, *1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.* *Then cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he ſhall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power; for he muſt reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed, is death.*

With regard to each particular chriſtian, all other enemies are deſtroyed when he dies, for whither he goes, they cannot come; he puts off the body of fleſh and of ſin together; he leaves every corruption behind him, when he aſcends to the company of the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect. The ſmiles and the frowns of this vain and vexing world, are too far off to influence the inhabitants of heaven; and *Satan*, the tempter and accuſer, is for ever forbid entrance at the gates of that holy city. But death holds one part of the ſaint in his priſon, the grave: And though the departed ſoul has overcome the terrors of this enemy, and triumphs in this expreſſion, O death, where is thy ſting? yet the body is confined as a priſoner under his power: But the hour is coming, when thoſe that are dead ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of God and live. All the priſons of the ſaints ſhall be broke to pieces, and burnt up, and the keeper deſtroyed for ever.

Let us make theſe two reflexions on the ſecond general head of this diſcourſe.

I. Reflexion. What abundant encouragement may we derive from hence, to engage us betimes in a war with all the other enemies of our ſalvation, that having overcome them, we may be aſſured death is the laſt enemy we ſhall meet with: And then alſo we may face death with a braver courage, may conflict with it with better ſucceſs, may vanquiſh it by a lively faith, and rejoice in the proſpect of its final deſtruction. The ſame armour of God, the ſame divine weapons, and the ſame almighty aſſiſtances by which we have ſubdued our former adverſaries, ſin, *Satan*, and the world, ſhall be ſufficient to gain this conqueſt too. We cannot begin the holy warfare too ſoon; none of us are too young to be aſſaulted by death; but let it come never ſo early in the morning of our days, it is the laſt enemy that we can fear, if we are liſted in the army of *Chriſt*, and have begun the glorious war.

I would addreſs myſelf to the younger branches of the mourning houſe, and ſay, have ye had ſuch a noble example of victory over ſin and death in vain? Will ye baſely ſubmit to the ſlavery of the fleſh, and yield tamely to the oppoſitions of this world, which were ſo bravely reſiſted by her that is gone before you? Will ye love this world, which is at enmity with God, and has ever been at enmity with all the ſaints? Are ye content to have your names for ever excluded from that honourable liſt of conquerors, where the names of your anceſtors ſhine before the throne of God, and are recorded with honour in the memory of his churches? Think how dreadful a moment that will be, when you ſhall look death in the face, if ye have not begun to wage war with ſin and *Satan* before! How dreadful to have many enemies at once aſſaulting you! the luſts of your own heart, raging deſires after the enjoyments of this world, the horrors of conſcience, the buffetings of the devil, and the pangs of death.

death. What will ye do in the day of such a visitation? And remember, that though death be the last enemy of the saints, it is not thus with sinners; it does but transmute them into the world of damned spirits, where enemies multiply upon them, and grow more outrageous. Besides the bitter anguish of their own conscience, they have the wrath of a God whom they have long provoked, and the malice of evil angels their tormentors, to conflict with to all eternity. But we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak, *Heb. vi. 9.*

II. Reflexion. What divine comfort is there in my text for aged christians and dying saints, who have been watchful and vigorous in their war with sin, and gained many victories over this world and *Satan*, who is called the God of it? What a delightful view such persons have, when upon the borders of life! Bear up with divine boldness ye heirs of glory, for you have but one adversary more to fight with: Let your faith and patience, and holy courage, hold out a little longer, and victory and triumph are yours for ever. There is no enemy lies in ambush behind the tomb; when you have passed the bars of death, you are out of the reach of all adversaries. Beyond the grave, the coast is all clear for ever: The country flows with rich and untrasted pleasures; every inhabitant is an inward friend, and peace and joy and love smile in every countenance.

Will an old saint complain that he finds many infirmities attend his age, that his senses are feeble, that his eyes are dim, that *Satan* now and then arises from hell, and casts a gloom and darkness around his soul, and buffets him sorely in that darkness? Will he complain that his natural spirits are heavy, that the world is troublesome to him, and every thing in life painful! Methinks it is a consolation equal to all these sorrows, that he is just entering into the last field of battle; the last hour of controversy is begun; a few strokes more will decide the strife, and make him an eternal conqueror. *Behold I come quickly, saith our Lord, hold fast that which thou hast gained, that no man take thy crown, Rev. iii. 11.*

### SECTION III.

#### *The destruction of death.*

**T**HE third thing we are to enquire, is, how death is destroyed, and what are the steps, or gradual efforts towards its destruction.

The person that has this honour put upon him to subdue this universal tyrant is our Lord *Jesus Christ*: so the words inform us all round my text. Though his mediation for sinners was sufficient to have prevailed with God to destroy death at once, yet it was agreed upon in the eternal counsels, that for wise ends and purposes it should be done by degrees. His blood was of sufficient value to have procured for his elect a deliverance from every enemy at once, and a translation to heaven as soon as they were born; but it was wisely concerted betwixt the Father and the son, that we should pass through temptations, difficulties, and death itself; that by feeling the sharp assaults of our enemies, we might be better acquainted with the greatness of our salvation, and pay a larger tribute of thanks and honours to our deliverer.

The steps whereby death is destroyed, are these:

I. It is subdued by the death of *Christ*; Its sting was then taken away, that is, the guilt of sin, *1 Cor. xv. 56, 57. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Which verses may be thus explained: Death was the punishment threatened by

by the law for sin, but *Christ*, as our surety, having sustained the execution of that threatening, and answered the law by a satisfaction equal to the offence, death has no more power over him. God has raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it; *Acts* ii. 24. And as *Christ* by his dying is said to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, because he has taken away its power to condemn believers, though he has not yet utterly destroyed its being, so he is said to have abolished death, *2 Tim.* i. 10. Because he has so far diminished and made void its power, that it shall not do any final mischief to the saints. It is like a serpent whose sting is taken away, and whose teeth are broken out; it may fright us, and do us some injury, but it cannot inflict a venomous or fatal wound. Now the believer, by a lively faith, shares in this victory of *Christ* over death, and gives thanks to God for it. He knows that though it may hurt his body, and bring it down to the grave for a season, yet it cannot send the soul to destruction, nor confine the body to the dust any longer than *Christ* shall permit.

2. Death is taken captive and enslaved by *Christ* at his resurrection and ascension, and made to serve his holy purposes; *Psal.* lxxviii. 18. *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.* This is spoken of our Lord *Jesus*, who has taken into his own dominion, death and the devil, who led the world captive. The enemy is not escaped out of the hands of this conqueror, but is put under his yoke, and constrained into his service.

Death, in its first character, was the very threatening and curse of the law of God, and includes in it all misery: but *Christ* having borne the curse, has redeemed his people from it; *Gal.* iii. 13. And now he has taken as many as he pleases of the threatenings and terrors of the law into his own new covenant, the covenant of grace; and has sanctified their nature, and made them blessings to the saint: he has turned the curse into a blessing; *Deut.* xxiii. 5. so that afflictions, and pains, and sorrows, and death itself, are no longer a curse to them, for they are ordained by the wisdom and grace of *Christ* to promote their best Interest.

Death, in its original design, was the under-servant of God's avenging justice: it was the jaylor to bring the soul out of the body before the divine tribunal, there to receive its condemnation to hell. It was the executioner both to torment and to destroy the flesh, and send the spirit into everlasting misery. But *Christ* having answered all the demands of this avenging justice, has also purchased the sovereignty over death; and though sometimes, when it seizes a saint, it may for the present signify his displeasure, as in *1 Cor.* xi. 30. yet it always fulfils the designs of his love, and conveys them into his own delightful presence: therefore as soon as we are absent from the body, we are said to be present with the Lord, *2 Cor.* v. 8. and when we depart from the flesh, it is to be with *Christ*, *Phil.* i. 23. Death was ordained at first to be a slave to *Satan*, by the righteous appointment of God, both death and the devil are executioners of his wrath; and *Satan* is said to have some power over death. *Heb.* ii. 14. But *Christ*, by dying, has subdued *Satan*, spoiled him of his destroying weapons, has made void his authority, especially with regard to believers; he has taken death out of his power, and manages it himself: and thus he delivers them who through fear of death were held in a long and painful bondage, ver. 15.

It is in such views as these that the apostle says to the *Corinthian* believers, all things are yours, things present, and things to come, this world in the joys or sorrows of it, life and death, all are yours, and ye are *Christ's*, *1 Cor.* iii. 22, 23. You have an interest and a share in the possessions and the power of *Christ* over all things so far as may promote your happiness: *Christ* makes all things, even death itself, work together

together for the good of his people, *Rom.* viii. 28. By death he puts an end to the body of sin, and frees the soul from all those ruffling passions, those inquietudes of the blood, and disorders of nature; those strong and perverse appetites that cost the christian so much toil to subdue, and brought him so often under guilt, darkness, and sorrow. By death he delivers the believer from the pains and infirmities of the body, the perpetual languishings of a weakly constitution, and the anguish of acute diseases. He constrains death to give the weary saint release from all the miseries of the present state, and to hide him from the fury of the oppresser. The grave is God's hiding place from the storms and tumults of the world; there the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling: and instead of consigning us over to the full malice of the devil, death is made a means to convey us away from all his assaults, and translate us into that country, where he has no power to enter. And when the soul is dismissed into the bosom of a reconciled God, by the ministry of death; the body is put to rest in the grave; the grave, which is sanctified into a bed of rest for all the followers of *Christ*, since their Lord and master has lain there.

In the gospel of *Christ*, the name of death is altered into sleep. *Christ*, who has subdued it, seems to have given it this new name, that it might not have a frightful sound in the ears of his beloved. Though it was sometimes called sleep in the Old Testament, yet that chiefly regarded the silence, and darkness, and inactivity of that state; whereas in the new testament, and in the xiith of *Daniel*, it is called sleep, to denote that there is an awaking-time. The ancient christians, upon this account, called the church-yard, where they buried the dead, *χαματηριον*, a sleeping-place. And though the grave may be termed the prison of death, yet death is not lord of the prison; he can detain the captives there but during the pleasure of *Christ*, for he who is alive for evermore, has the keys of death and hell, that is of the separate state, *Rev.* i. 18.

Now this is the true reason why christians have spoken so many kind things of death, which is the king of terrors to a natural man. They call it a release from pain and sin, a messenger of peace, the desired hour, and the happy moment. All this is spoken while they behold it with an eye of faith in the hands of *Christ*, who has subdued it to himself, and constrained it to serve the designs of his love to them.

3. When it has done all *Christ's* work, it shall be utterly destroyed. After the resurrection, there shall be no more dying. The saints shall rise immortal, and dwell in heaven for ever, in the complete enjoyment of all that is included in the name of LIFE. As the angel in prophecy lifts up his hand, and swears by him that lives for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer, *Rev.* x. 6. so *Christ Jesus*, the Lord of angels, shall, as it were, pronounce with a sovereign voice, that death shall be no more. He shall send the great arch-angel with the trumpet of God; it shall sound through the deepest caverns of the grave, and shall summon death from its inmost recesses. The tyrant shall hear and obey, and restore all his captives out of prison; the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God, and live, *John* v. 25, 28, 29. *They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.* After this our Lord has no employment for death, his slave; the bodies of men shall die no more: There shall be no more any state of separation between the flesh and spirit, *Rev.* xx. 14. *And death and hell, or Hades, were cast into the lake of fire;* that is, there shall be no more death, no grave, no separate state of souls, all these shall be for ever destroyed.

I. Reflexion. We may infer from this third general head, the great power and glory of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; we may learn the honour that is due to him from mortals;

mortals ; it is he that hath subdued death, and that by his own dying. A wondrous method of victory ! a surprizing conquest ! and he lives for ever to destroy it in his appointed time. How great and honourable must he be in the eyes of all mankind, who has vanquished so universal a conqueror ? How desirable is his person, and how delightful the sound of his name to every believer ! for he suppresses all their enemies and shall destroy them even to the last. How well does he fulfil the great engagement ? *Hosea* xiii. 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave : I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction ; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.* Let us salute him the prince of life, *Acts* iii. 15. and adore him under that character. He dispossesses death of all its dominions. He approves himself a complete saviour of all his saints, and a redeemer of his captive friends.

II. Reflexion. We may learn also from this head of discourse, the power and excellency of the gospel of *Christ*, for it discovers to us how this great enemy is vanquished, and when it shall be destroyed ; and thus it lays a foundation for courage at death, and gives us assurance of a joyful rising-day. Death being abolished by the mediation of *Christ*, immortality and life are brought to light by his gospel, *2 Tim.* i. 10. that is, there is a brighter discovery of the future state, and of everlasting happiness, than ever before was given to the world.

Here in the name of *Christ*, and of his gospel, we may give a challenge to all other religions, and say, which of them has borne up the spirit of man so high above the fears of death as this has done ? or has given us so fair, so rational, and so divine an account how death has been overcome by one man, and how by faith in his name we may all be made overcomers ? How vain are the trifles with which the heathen priests and their prophets amused the credulous multitude ? What silly and insipid fables do they tell us of souls passing over in a ferry-boat to the other world, and describe the fields of pleasure, and the prisons of pain in that country of ghosts and shadows, in so ridiculous a manner, that the wise men of their own nations despised the romance, and few were stupid enough to believe it all. If we consult the religion of their philosophers, they give us but a poor, lame, and miserable account of the state after death. Some of them denied it utterly, and others rave at random in mere conjectures, and float in endless uncertainties. The courage which some of their heroes professed at the point of death, was rather a stubborn indolence, than a rational and well-founded valour ; and not many arrived at this hardiness of mind, except those that supposed their existence ended with their life, and thought they should be dissolved into their first atoms. *Aristotle*, one of the greatest men amongst them, tells us that futurity is uncertain, and calls death the most terrible of all terribles.

If we search into the religion of the *Jews*, which was a scheme of God's own contrivance and revelation to men, we find the affairs of a future world lay much in the dark ; their consciences were not so thoroughly purged from the guilt of sin, but that some terrors hung about them, as appears from *Heb.* x. 1, 2, 3. and having so faint and obscure notices, of the separate state of souls, and of the resurrection, these were the persons, who in a special manner, *through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage*, *Heb.* ii. 15.

But christianity lays a fair and rational foundation for our confidence and triumph in the dying hour. It shews how guilt is removed by an all-sufficient sacrifice ; and makes it evident that no hell, no vengeance, no shadows of misery await the believer in that invisible world. This makes the christian venture into it with a certain boldness, and a becoming presence of mind. The doctrine of *Christ* shews us how the sting  
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of death is taken away, and calls us to fight with a vanquished enemy, a serpent without a sting: it gives us assurance that we shall rise again from the dust with bodies fresher and fairer, glorious in their frame, and their constitution immortal; for death shall be no more. Exalted by so sublime a hope, what is there in death sufficient to depress our spirits, if our faith were but equal to this admirable doctrine? The holy apostles are witnesses, the noble army of martyrs are witnesses, and many a faint in our day is a witness to this truth, and gives honour to this gospel. How many thousands have met death, and all its frightful attendants, with a steady soul, and a serene countenance; and have departed to heaven with songs of praise upon their lips, a smile upon their face, and triumph in their eyes? And this was not owing to any extravagant flights of enthusiasm, nor the fires of an inflamed fancy, but it has been performed often, and may be done daily by the force of a regular faith, on the most solid and reasonable principles; for such are the principles of the gospel of *Christ*.

## SECTION IV.

*Blessings gained by the destruction of death.*

**T**HE fourth and last general head of discourse, is an enquiry into the advantages which the saints receive by the destruction of this last enemy.

This is a large and endless field, for it includes a great part of the happiness of the final heaven. But I shall attempt to mention briefly a few of the benefits that attend my text, and that without a nice distinction of particulars.

When death is destroyed, we shall share in the joy and triumph of *Christ*, for absolute conquest over all his enemies; for there is scarce any glory given to *Christ*, considered as man, but the saints are said to be humble partners in it, or at least to enjoy the resemblance. Is he appointed the judge of all? It is promised also to the saints that they shall judge angels, and the twelve tribes of *Israel*. Do we suffer with him? we shall also reign with him. If we conquer death by faith, we shall rise and triumph. Here we labour and fight with many adversaries, and we think we have routed them, but they rally again, and give us fresh vexation, so that we hardly know how to attempt a song of victory on this side the grave. Besides, death still remains for our trial and conflict: but there we shall rejoice over all our enemies, subdued, destroyed, and abolished for ever.

Then God will be all in all to his saints. This is a consequent which *St. Paul* mentions in the verses where my text is: God will manage the affairs of his heavenly kingdom in a more immediate way, than he has managed his kingdom on earth. *Christ* having destroyed all the enemies of his church, and presented it safe before the father, has finished all those divine purposes for which the mediatorial kingdom was entrusted with him: then he shall resign his commission to the Father again; and the ever blessed God shall in a more immediate and absolute manner reign over all the creation. He shall more immediately impress devils and damned spirits with a sense of infinite wrath; and with a more immediate sense of his love and eternal favour, shall he for ever bless all the inhabitants of heaven. So much as this seems to be implied in the words of the apostle, *1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c.* But it is impossible that in this state we should know either the full extent, or the just limitations of that promise, God shall be all in all. Our honoured and departed friend had these words dwelling upon her heart; these were often in her lips in the days of her faith and

hope, and in the hours of her passage through the dark valley : She enjoys part of the pleasure of them in her present heaven, and with pleasure she expects the more absolute accomplishment, when the resurrection shall complete the blessedness of all the saints.

Another consequent of the destruction of death, is the employment of all the powers of human nature in the service of God, and they shall be neither weak nor weary. For all the inconveniences that attend mortality shall be swallowed up and lost for ever.

Alas how poor and imperfect is the service which our bodies yield to God in this world! How heavily do our souls complain of the clog of this flesh, and move onwards heavily in the discharge of duty! and in the grave the body is quite cut off from all service. But when death shall be dispossessed, when we shall arise from the dust, and put on bodies of glory; then with our whole natures and with all their powers, we shall do honour to God our creator, our redeemer, and our king. The time will come when we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; and the refreshments of sleep shall be no more necessary to support life. When death shall be destroyed, sleep, the image and picture of death, shall be destroyed too. There shall be nothing that looks like death in all that vital world, that world of immortality. We shall serve the Lord day and night in his temple; that is continually, for there shall be no night there, *Rev. vii. 15, 16. and xxi. 25.*

Then we shall taste all the true blessedness that human nature is capable of, and that without danger of excess or sin. When God first united these two pieces of his workmanship, the soul and body, and composed a man, he designed him the subject of various pleasures, wherein each part should have been subservient to the other, to render the felicity of the creature perfect. It is sin and death that have entered into our natures, and prevented this noble design in our present state: but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. And when he raises up the body from the grave, it shall leave all the seeds of death behind it. The faculties and the senses shall awake in all their original sprightliness and vigour, and our future heaven shall be furnished with objects suited to entertain those powers, and to convey intense pleasure to glorified minds without danger of satiety or weariness. When the time comes that there shall be no more death, God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; there shall be no sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain: for the former things are passed away, and he that sits upon the throne shall say, behold I make all things new! *Rev. xxi. 4, 5.*

Then shall we enjoy the constant society of our best friends, and dearest acquaintance; those that have arrived at the new *Jerusalem* themselves, and have assisted us in our travels thither. And we shall delightfully entertain, and be entertained with the mutual narratives of divine grace, and the wise and holy methods of providence, whereby we have been conducted safe through all the fatigues and dangers of the wilderness to that heavenly country.

And that which shall add an unknown relish to all the former blessings, is the full assurance that we shall possess them for ever. For every one of our enemies are then destroyed, and the last of them is death. Here on earth it is a perpetual pain to the mind to think, that those whom we love are mortal; the next moment may divide them from us far as the distance of two worlds. They are seized on a sudden from our eyes, and from our embraces; and this thought allays the delight that we take in their company, and diminishes the joy: but in that world all our friends are immortal, we shall ever be with the Lord, and ever with one another too, *1 Thess. iv. 17.*

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May I be permitted here to make a short reflexion on that mournful providence that has joined too lovely relatives in death\*, and given occasion for the sad solemnities of this day? The pious mother led the way to heaven but a few days before the pious daughter followed, each of them the parent of a reputable family, and the descendants from a progenitor †, whose name is in honour among the churches. As mutual affection joined their habitations in life, so the care of surviving friends has laid them to rest in their beds of earth together. We trust they are also joined in the world of blessed spirits on high, and they shall be joined again in the world of glorified saints in the morning of the resurrection. Death their common enemy has taken them both captives together; has bound in his chains the mother and the daughter: but they are prisoners of hope, and together they shall obtain a glorious release.

I would copy a line from that most beautiful elegy of *David*, and apply it here with more justice than the psalmist could to *Saul* and *Jonathán*, *2 Sam. i. 23. Lovely and pleasant, were they, in their lives, and in death they were not divided.* Silent were they, and retired from the world, and unknown except to their intimate friends: But God was a witness of their hours of divine retirement. The graces of christianity, and the virtues of domestic life, which are the proper ornaments of the sex, were the mark of their utmost aim and ambition: nor did they seek the flatteries of the court, or the city, nor affect the gaieties of a degenerate age. Humble they were, and averse from public shew and noise; nor will I disturb their graves by making them the subject of publick praise. In the hearts of their families, their memory, their image, and their example will live. O may the brightest and best part of their image and example live in the character and practice of, all that are left behind!

What a dreadful and overwhelming thought is it to suppose that any of that honoured and numerous household should be divided asunder at the last day! Give all diligence then, my worthy friends, to make your calling and your election sure; devote yourselves to the God of your predecessors; trust in the same favour; tread in the same paths of holiness; and pursue the same glory. What a joy will it be to that pious lady that is gone before, to find, that those that were dear to her as her own soul have overcome sin and death, and in a blessed succession arrive at the same heaven! Let me intreat you to give her this satisfaction, and not disappoint her prayers and her hopes. Let your venerable surviving parent, who is now confined at home under sorrows and sharp pains, obtain this pleasure. Let that dear partner of her joys and cares behold the power of religion appearing and reigning in all your hearts before his eyes are closed in death. Give both of them this consolation at the appearance of *Christ*, that they may say, "*Lord, here we are, and the children that thou hast given us. Here we are with our ancestors, and our offspring, and our kindred around us, adoring thy rich grace together, and entering together into the state of perfect glory which thou hast prepared.*"

It remains only that I should propose some reflexions on the last head of discourse for the meditation of this whole assembly, and especially for those that are engaged in the spiritual warfare, and proceed to daily conquests.

Shall death, with all its attendants, be destroyed for ever? And are these the blessings that shall succeed? Then enter into this joy beforehand by a lively faith, and begin

\* The lady *Hartopp*, daughter of *Charles Fleetwood*, Esq; and wife to Sir *John Hartopp*, of *Newington*, baronet, died *Nov. 9, 1711.* Mrs. *Gould*, their daughter, and wife to Mr. *Gould*, now Sir *Nathaniel Gould* of *Newington*, died six days after, *viz. Nov. 15.* and left their households behind them oppressed with double sorrows.

† *Charles Fleetwood* of *Norfolk*, Esq;

gin the song of triumph—*O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. *Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise;* Mic. vii. 8.

After you have fought many battles with *Satan*, subdued many sins, and encountered a thousand temptations with success, perhaps you find new adversaries still arising; look forward then to this joyful hour, and say, “But I shall one day be forever free from all these toils and labours of war, for all my enemies shall be overcome, since death the last of them shall be subdued.”

When you feel the infirmities of this mortal body hang heavy upon your spirits, and damp your devotion, read the words of this promise, and rejoice; “These pains and these languors of nature shall one day vanish and be no more; for death with all its train, must be destroyed.”

When some of your dearest friends are seized by this tyrant, and led away to the grave in his chains, while you are wounded to the very soul, remember, that *Christ* your captain, and your saviour, shall revenge this quarrel upon your last enemy; for he has appointed the hour of his destruction. Mourn not therefore for the dead, as those that sorrow without hope, for those that sleep in *Jesus*, the Lord shall bring with him when he comes; 1 *Thess.* iv. 13. And he shall join you together in a blessed and durable friendship, where it shall be eternally impossible for enemies to break in upon your peace; for death, the last of them shall be then destroyed. And the Lord has left us this comfort in the end of his sacred writings, surely I come quickly. Let each of us with a cheerful heart reply, even so come, Lord *Jesus*. Amen.

T H E

T H E

## HAPPINESS of separate spirits, &amp;c.

Attempted in a

FUNERAL DISCOURSE in memory of Sir  
JOHN HARTOPP, Bar<sup>t</sup>. deceased.

## The INTRODUCTION.

IT is a solemn and mournful occasion that has brought me to this place this day\*. Divine providence, and the will of surviving relatives, call me to pay the last sacred and pious respect to the memory of the deceased; a worthy gentleman, and an excellent christian, who has lately left our world in a good old age.

It is something more than ten years since I was engaged in the same service to the memory of his honoured and pious lady, when by a double and painful stroke the mother and the daughter were joined in death; when the two kindred families were smitten in the tenderest part, and each of them sustained a loss that could never be repaired †.

This town was the place which they had all honoured with their habitation, and spent the largest part of their lives amongst you; but they are now become inhabitants of the heavenly city, they dwell in the world of blessed Spirits, and I would lead your devoutest thoughts to follow them thither. Come then, let our meditations take their rise from those words of the great apostle, in

HEB. xii. 23.

-----*The spirits of just men made perfect.*

IT is a much sweeter employment to trace the souls of our departed friends into those upper and brighter regions, than to be ever dwelling upon the dark prospect, and fixing our eyes upon death, and dust, and the grave: and that not only because it gives us a comfortable view of the persons whom we mourn, and thus it relieves our most weighty and smarting sorrows; but because it leads us to consider our

\* Sir John Hartopp died April 1. 1722. in the 85th year of his age; and the substance of this discourse was delivered briefly at Stoke Newington, April 15, following

† See a particular account, pag. 149. of the foregoing discourse in the margin.

own best interest, and our highest hopes, and puts us in mind of the communion that we have with those blessed spirits in heaven, while we belong to the church on earth. We are come says the apostle, verse 22. We, in the gospel state, are come to mount *Zion*, to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

What sort of communion it is that good men here below maintain with those exalted spirits, is not my present business to describe; therefore I apply myself immediately to the words of my text, and confine myself to them only.

And here I shall consider these four things :

I. Who are particularly designed by the spirits of the just; and here I shall make it evident the apostle intends not merely the spirits of good men, but such good spirits as are dismissed from their mortal bodies.

II. We shall enquire, wherein consists the perfection to which they have arrived, and what are the excellencies in which they are made perfect.

III. What sort of perfection it is they enjoy, and what are the peculiar characters of it.

IV. How they arrive at this perfect state, and what influence the dismissal from their bodies has towards their attainment of it.

And then conclude with a few remarks for our instruction and practice, suitable to the present providence.

## S E C T I O N I.

### *Of the spirits of the just.*

**O**UR first enquiry is, whom are we to understand by the spirits of the just here spoken of?

The name of just or righteous men, taken in a large and general sense, as it is often used in scripture, signifies all those who fear and love God, and are accepted of him. In the new testament they are frequently called saints, believers, or children of God: but in both parts of the bible they are often described by the name of just, or righteous, and they are properly called so upon these three accounts.

I. Their persons are made righteous in the sight of God, having their sins forgiven, and their souls justified through the death and righteousness of *Jesus Christ*. So the word is used, *Rom. v. 19. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* They have seen themselves all guilty and exposed to the wrath of God, they have fled to lay hold on the hope set before them, they have mourned before God, and been weary of sin, they have received the great atonement, they have committed their case by a living faith to *Jesus* the righteous, the surety and the saviour of perishing sinners; and that God hath received them into his favour, and has imputed righteousness to them, even that God who is just, and the justifier of them that believe in *Jesus*. Now this sense cannot reasonably be excluded from the character of a saint, though the word righteous is more frequently taken in the following senses.

II. Their

II. Their natures are made righteous, and sanctified by the Spirit of grace. They have a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them; so the word signifies, *Eph.* iv. 24. The new man, which is created after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. They were once sinners, disobedient and unholy, as they were born into this world; but they are born again, and made new creatures by the grace of the holy Spirit. Their understandings are enlightened to see the dreadful evil of sin, and the divine beauty of holiness. Their wills are turned from folly and vanity, from the love of earth, and sense, and sin, to a holy contempt of the world, and a hatred of all that is sinful; from a neglect of religion to desires after God, and a delight in him; from a mere formal profession of the gospel, to the faith and love of *Christ*, and a zealous pursuit of holiness; and they place their highest hopes and their joys in things divine, spiritual and eternal.

III. Their lives are righteous, and conformable to the will of God revealed in his word. So the term righteous signifies, *1 John* iii. 7. *He that doth righteousness is righteous.* The just man makes it the business of his life to do works of righteousness, taken in the largest sense; to worship God, to seek his glory, to obey his will, which is the rule of righteousness; to do him all the service on earth that his station and circumstances admit of, and to deal faithfully and justly among men, and do them all the good that lies in his power.

These are the just men whose spirits are spoken of in my text.

Now it is evident the apostle here means their spirits which are in heaven, and departed from these mortal bodies, because the train of blessed companions, which he describes just before, leads our thoughts to the invisible world.

If we can suppose any part of these two verses to refer to earth, and our present state, it must be when he says, ye are come to mount *Zion*, to the city of the living God, that is, to the visible church of *Christ*, under the gospel dispensation. But then he adds, you are come also to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, which may probably include all the inhabitants of heaven in general; and descending to particulars, he adds, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in heaven: whereby we must understand the whole invisible church of God among men, if we do not confine it to those who are already of the church triumphant. And next he leads us to God the judge of all, and to spirits of just men made perfect; that is, spirits released from flesh and blood, who have stood before God their judge, and are determined to a state of perfection in heaven.

Besides, when *St. Paul* speaks of fellow-Christians here on earth, it is not his manner to call them spirits, but men, or brethren, or saints, &c. therefore by the naked and single term spirits, he distinguishes these persons from those who dwell in mortal bodies, and raises our thoughts to the world of blessed souls, released from the wretched ties and bondage of flesh and blood, the spirits of good men departed from this earth, and dwelling in the better regions of heaven.

I would here take notice also, that the apostle perhaps in this place chuses rather to call them just or righteous men, which is a term used frequently both in the old and new testament, that he might include the patriarchs and the Jewish saints as well as the souls of departed Christians. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Noab, Daniel, and David, Job, Moses and Elijab*, dwell in that happy world, with a thousand other spirits of renown in the ancient church, as well as the spirits of those that have seen the *Messiah*, and believed in *Jesus of Nazareth*. What a noble and wondrous assembly! What an amazing and blissful society of human souls, gathered from various

nations, and from all ages, and joined together in the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the family of God above!

I shall proceed now to the second thing I proposed.

## SECTION II.

### *Of their perfection in knowledge, holiness, and joy.*

**T**HE second enquiry is this, wherein consists the perfection at which these spirits are arrived?

The word perfect cannot be taken here in its most extensive, absolute, and sublime sense, for in that sense it can belong only to God; he is and must be the sum and centre of all perfection for ever; all excellency and all blessedness in a supreme degree meet in him; none besides him can pretend to absolute perfection.

Nor is the word used here in its most sublime sense, in which it may be applied to a creature; for when the spirits of just men are made never so perfect, the blessed soul of our Lord *Jesus Christ* will be more perfect than they; for *in all things he must have the pre-eminence*, Col. i. 18.

Perfection therefore is taken in a comparative sense here, as in many other places of scripture. So *St. Paul* calls those christians on earth perfect, who are advanced in knowledge and christianity far above their fellows; as in *1 Cor. ii. 6. I speak wisdom among them that are perfect.* *Phil. iii. 15. Let as many as are perfect be thus minded.* So that blessed souls above are only perfect in a comparative sense. They are advanced in every excellency of nature, and every divine privilege, far above all their fellow-saints here on earth.

I desire it also to be observed here, that

The word perfection doth not generally imply another sort of character than what a man possessed before; but a far more exalted degree of the same character which he was before possessed of.

The perfection then of the spirits of the just in heaven, is a glorious and transcendent degree of those spiritual and heavenly qualifications and blessings which they enjoyed here on earth in a lower measure; implying also, a freedom from all the defects and disorders to which they were here exposed, and which are inconsistent with their present felicity.

If I were to branch it into particulars, I would name but these three, *viz.* 1. A great increase of knowledge without the mixture of error. 2. A glorious degree of holiness without the mixture of the least sin. 3. Constant peace and joy without the mixture of any sorrow or uneasiness.

Let us consider them distinctly.

1. A great increase of knowledge, without the mixture of error; and in this sense it is perfect knowledge.

Part of the happiness of spirits consists in contemplation; and the more excellent the object is which we contemplate, and the more perfect our acquaintance with it, the greater is our happiness. Therefore the knowledge of God, the infinite and eternal Spirit, is the true felicity of all the ranks of created spirits in the upper and lower worlds. What unknown and unrivaled beauties are contained in the attributes of his nature! What a heavenly pleasure is it to lose ourselves amongst the boundless perfections of his self-sufficiency and eternal existence, his wisdom, his power, his justice,

justice, his holiness, his goodness, and his truth! And what a divine harmony amongst them all!

How does the philosopher entertain and feast himself with daily discoveries of new wonders amongst the works of God, and beholds the print of the hands of his creator on them all! What superior glories are seen by the inquiring christian amongst the greater wonders of his grace! and he receives the discovery of them with superior delight, for his eternal life is in them. *John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* To know the father and the son according to the revelation which they have given of themselves in the gospel, is not only the way to obtain life eternal, and consequently the business of the saints below; but the knowledge of this son and this father in their natural glories, in their personal characters, in their sublime and mysterious relations to each other, and in their most amazing contrivances and transactions for the recovery of lost sinners, may be matter of the most pleasing enquiry, and delicious contemplation, to the angels themselves, *1 Pet. i. 12.* These are the things which the angels desire to look into. And the spirits of the just made perfect are employed in the same delightful work; for which they have much more concern, and a dearer interest in it.

We know something of God by the light of nature. The reason that is within each of us, shines like a slender candle in a private room, and gives us some twinkling and uncertain notions of our creator. The notices that we obtain by the light of grace, or the gospel here on earth, are far brighter and surer, like the moon at midnight shining upon a dark world, or like the rise of the morning star, and the dawning of the day. But the knowledge which departed spirits obtain of their creator and their redeemer in the light of glory, is far superior to that of nature and grace, as the lustre of the meridian-sun exceeds the pale moon-beams, or the glimmering twilight of the morning,

This is what the apostle describes, *1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 11, 12. For we know but in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* The imperfection of our knowledge in this world consists much in this, that we are liable to perpetual mistakes. A thousand errors stand thick around us in our enquiries after truth, and we stumble upon error often in our wisest pursuits of knowledge; for we see but through a glass darkly, but then we shall know, even as we are known, and see face to face; that is, we shall have a more immediate and intuitive view of God and *Christ*, and of the holy Spirit, without such mediums as are now necessary for our instruction. We shall know them in a manner something a-kin to the way whereby God knows us, though not in the same degree of perfection; for that is impossible. Yet in these respects our knowledge shall bear some resemblance to the knowledge of God himself, *viz.* that it shall be not merely a rational knowledge, by inferences drawn from his works, not merely a knowledge by narration, or report and testimony; such as we now enjoy by his word; but it shall be such a sort of knowledge as we have of a man when we see his face, and it shall also be a certain and unwavering knowledge, without remaining doubts, without error or mistake. O happy spirits that are thus divinely employed, and are entertaining themselves and their fellow spirits with those noble truths and transporting wonders of nature and grace, of God and *Christ*, and things

heavenly, which are all mystery, intanglement and confusion to our thoughts in the present state!

II. This perfection consists in a glorious degree of holiness without the mixture of the least sin; and in this sense it is perfect holiness.

All holiness is contained and summed up in the love and delightful service of God and our fellow creatures.

When we attempt to love God here on earth, and by the alluring discoveries of grace try to raise our affections to things of heaven, what sinful damps and coldness hang heavy upon us? What counter-allurements do we find towards sin and the creature, by the mischievous influences of the flesh and this world? What an estrangement from God do the best of christians complain of? And when they get nearest to their favour in the exercises of holy love, they find perpetual reason to mourn over their distance, and they cry out often with pain at their hearts, "What a cursed enemy abides still in me, and divides me from the dearest object of my desire and joy!" But the spirits of the just made perfect, have the nearest views of God their father, and their favour; and as they see them face to face, so, may I venture to express it, they love them with a union of heart to heart: for he that is joined to the Lord in the nearest union in heaven, may well be called one spirit with him, since the apostle says the same thing of the saints on earth, *1 Cor. vi. 17.*

As our love of God is imperfect here, so is all our devotion and worship.

While we are in this world, sin mingles with all our religious duties: We come before God with our prayers and our songs, but our thoughts wander from him in the midst of worship, and we are gone on a sudden to the ends of the earth. We go up to his temple, and we try to serve him there an hour or two; then we return to the world, and we almost forget the delights of the sanctuary, and the God we have seen there. But the spirits of the just made perfect are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple, *Rev. vii. 15.* And though they may not be literally engaged in one everlasting act of worship, yet they are ever busy in some glorious services for him. If they should be sent on any message to other worlds, yet they never wander from the sight of their God: For if the guardian angels of children always behold the face of our heavenly father, *Matt. xviii. 10.* even when they are employed in their divine errands to our world; much more may we suppose the spirits of just men made perfect never lose the blissful vision, whatsoever their employments shall or can be.

And as our acts of worship on earth, and converse with God, are very imperfect, so is our zeal and activity for God extremely defective; but it shall be ever bright and burning in the upper world.

When we would exert our zeal for God on earth, how many corrupt affections mix with that zeal and spoil it! Dead flies, that cause that noble ointment to send forth a stinking savour! How much of self, and pride, and vain ambition too often mingles with our desires to serve *Christ*, and his gospel! Some have preached *Christ* out of vain-glory, or envy; and a mixture of those vices may taint our pious ministrations. When we seem to drive furiously like *Jehu* to the destruction of the priests and the worship of *Baal*, too often the wild-fire of our lusts and passions, our envy and wrath and secret revenge join together to animate our chariot-wheels. When we are ready to say with him, "come and see my zeal for the Lord," perhaps God spies in our hearts too much of the same carnal mixture; for *Jehu* exalted the true God, that he might establish himself a king, *2 Kings x. 16.* But the spirits of the just are perfect in zeal, and pure from all mixtures. Their very natures are like the angels, they are

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so many flames of sacred and unpolluted fire, the ministers of God that do his pleasure, and then hide their faces behind their wings; when they have done all for God, they fall down and confess they are nothing.

Temptation and sin have no place in those happy regions. These are the evils that belong to earth and hell; but within the gates of heaven nothing must enter that tempteth, nothing that defileth, *Rev. xxi. 27.* It is the mixture of sinful thoughts and idle words, sinful actions and irregular affections, that makes our state of holiness so imperfect here below. We groan within ourselves, being burdened; we would be rid of these criminal weaknesses, these guilty attendants of our lives: But the spirits above are under a sweet necessity of being for ever holy; their natures have put on perfection; the image of God is so far compleated in them, that nothing contrary to the divine nature remains in all their frame; for they see God in all the fairest beauties of his holiness, and they adore and love. They behold him without a veil, and are *changed into the same image, from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18.* If these words are applicable to the state of grace, much more to that of glory. They see *Christ* as he is, and they are made completely like him, *1 John iii. 2.* which is true concerning the state of separate spirits, as well as the hour of resurrection.

As their love to God is perfect, so is their love to all their fellow-saints.

We try to love our fellow-creatures and fellow-christians here on earth; but we have so many corrupt passions of our own, and so many infirmities and imperfections belong to our neighbours also, that mutual love is very imperfect. Love is the fulfilling of the law, *Rom. xiii. 10.* But we shall never fulfil that law perfectly till we are joined to the spirits of the just in glory, where there is no inhabitant without the flame of sacred love, no single spirit unlovely or unbeloved.

In those happy mansions there is no envy raised by the perfections or the honours of our neighbour spirits; no detracting thought is known there, no reproachful word is heard in that country; and, perhaps, no word of reproach is to be found in the whole heavenly language. Malice and slander, and the very names of infamy, are unknown in those regions; and wrath and strife are eternal strangers. No divided opinions, no party quarrels, no seeds of discord are sown in heaven. Our little angry jars and contentions have no place there, and the noise of war and controversy ceases for ever. There are no offences given, and none are taken in that world of love. Neither injury, nor resentment, is ever known or practised there, those bitter and fatal springs of revenge and blood. Universal benevolence runs through the whole kingdom; each spirit wishes well to his neighbour as to himself; and till we arrive there, we shall never be made perfect in love, nor shall we see the blessed characters of it described in the scriptures fully copied out in living examples.

In that holy world dwells God himself, who is original love; there resides our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is love incarnate; and from that sacred head flows an eternal stream of love through every member, and blesseth all the inhabitants of that land with its divine refreshments. Holiness is perfect among the spirits of the just, because love is perfect there.

Objection. But are there not several graces and virtues that belong to the saints on earth that are finished at death, and can have no room in heaven? How then can perfection of holiness in heaven consist in an increase of the same graces we practised on earth.

Answer. Yes, there are several such virtues and such graces, as faith and repentance, and godly sorrow, patience, and forbearance, love to enemies, and forgiveness of injuries, &c. But all these arise from the very imperfection of our present state, from the

the sins or follies of ourselves or our fellow creatures. Faith arises from the want of sight; repentance from the returns of guilt; godly-sorrow from the workings of sin in us: patience owes its very nature and exercise to the afflictions we sustain from the hand of God; and forbearance and forgiveness respects the injuries that we receive from our fellow creatures. But in heaven, faith, so far as it regards the absence of God and *Christ*, is lost in sight and enjoyment, as the light of a glimmering taper is lost in the blaze of sun-beams. Repentance of old sins, so far as it is attended with any painful or shameful passions, ceases for ever in heaven; and there is no new guilt for us to repent of: there shall be no evil working in us to give pain to the spirit; no affliction from God to demand a patient submission; no injuries from men to be borne or forgiven.

But there is the same pious temper still continues in the spirits of the just made perfect, which was the spring of those graces on earth; and could the objects or occasions of them return, every spirit there would exercise the same grace, and that in a more glorious and perfect manner, for their very natures are all over holy.

III. The last thing I shall mention, wherein the perfection of the saints above consists, is, their constant peace and exalted joy, without any mixture of sorrow or uneasiness; and this is joy and peace in perfection.

If our knowledge, our love, and our holiness are imperfect on earth, our joys must be so. The mistakes and the follies to which we are liable here below, the guilt that pains the conscience, and the sin that is restless and ever working within us, will bring forth fruits of present sorrow, where they do not produce the fruit of eternal death. A saint in this world will groan under these burdens; and it is divinely natural for him to cry out, *O wretched man!—who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

Thus there are many things that are within us, and that belong to us in this world, that forbid the perfection of our joys. And besides all these, we are attached and tied down to many other uneasinesses, while we dwell on earth.

This world is a fair theatre of the wisdom and power of God, but it is hung round and replenished with temptations to fallen man, proper for a state of trial; soft and flattering temptations, that by the senses are ever drawing away the soul from God and heaven, and breaking in upon its divine repose and joy: and while we are surrounded with a thousand dangers, we cannot be said to dwell in perfect peace. The follies and the crimes of others afflict the soul of a good man, and put him to pain, as the righteous soul of *Lot* was vexed in *Sodom* from day to day with their unlawful deeds, *2 Pet.* ii. 8. The greater vexations, and the little teasing accidents of life that attend us, disturb the sacred rest of the saint, and ruffle or wound his spirit. And the best of men on this account are sometimes ready to cry out with *David*, *Psal.* cxx. 5, 6. *Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar: My soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace. O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest;* *Psal.* lv. 6.

And sometimes God himself is absent from the soul that longs after him; he hides his face, and then who can behold it? We are smitten with a sense of sin, and the conscience is restless. We wander from thing to thing in much confusion of spirit; we go from providences to ordinances, from one word in the bible to another, from self-examination and inward guilt to the blood of *Christ*, and the mercy of the father; and it may be outward sorrows fall on us at the same time, guilt and judgment attend us at once: The deep of affliction calls to the deep of sin at the noise of the floods of divine anger, *Psal.* xlii. 7. We are kept in the dark for a season, and we see not  
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the light of his countenance, nor know our own interest in his love. We go forward, as *Job* did, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him, &c. All the comfort that a good man hath at such a season, is to appeal to God, that he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I humbly hope I shall come forth as gold, *Job* xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

But the spirits of the just made perfect, are in peaceful and joyous circumstances. They know God, for they see his face; they know that they love him, for they feel and enjoy it as the warmest and sweetest affection of their hearts: and they are sure God loves them too; for every moment they taste his love, and live upon it in all the rich varieties of its manifestation.

O what unknown and endless satisfactions of mind arise from the full assurance of the love of God! What tongue can express, or what heart can conceive the sacred pleasure that fills every soul in heaven, under the immediate impressions of divine love! When the poor trembling doubting believer, that knew himself to be infinitely unworthy of the favour of God, or of the meanest place in his house, shall be acknowledged as a son in the midst of his father's court on high, and amongst millions of congratulating angels!

No cloud shall ever interpose, no melancholy gloom, no shadow of darkness shall ever arise in those regions; for the countenance of God, like the sun in its highest strength, shall shine and smile upon them for ever. And through the length of all their immortality, there shall not be the least interruption of the sweet intercourse of love, on God's side, or on theirs.

In that world there is no sorrow, for there is no sin; the inhabitants of that city, of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, shall never say I am sick; for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity, *Isa.* xxxiii. 24. When the righteous are dismissed from this flesh, they enter into peace, their bodies rest in their beds of earth, and their spirits walk in heaven, each one in his own uprightnes, *Isa.* lvii. 2.

And as there is no sin within them to render them uneasy, so there is no troublesome guest, no evil attendant without them, that can give them fear or pain; no sinners to vex them, no tempter to deceive them, no spirit of hell to devour or destroy: *Isa.* xxxv. 9, 10. *No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

God himself shall never be absent, and then they cannot be unhappy, They behold his face in righteousness, and they are satisfied when they awake with his likeness, *Psal.* xvii. 15. When they leave this world of dreams and shadows, and awake into that bright world of spirits, they behold the face of God, and are made like him, as well as when their bodies shall awake out of the dust of death in the morning of the resurrection, formed in the image of the blessed *Jesus*. That glorious scripture in *Rev.* xxi. 3, 4. be the sense of it what it will, can never be fulfilled in more glory on earth than belongs to the state of heaven. *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.*

The saints above see their blessed Lord and favour in all his exalted glories, and they are with him where he is, according to his own prayer and his own promise, *John* xvii. 24. and xiv. 3. They are absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

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They have esteemed him on earth above all things, and longed after the sight of his face, whom having not seen they loved, 1 *Pet.* i. 8. but now they behold him, the dear redeemer that gave his life and blood for them, they rejoice with joy much more unspeakable and full of superior glory.

Thus have I shewn wherein this perfection of spirits in heaven consists. It is a high and glorious degree of all those excellencies and privileges they were blessed with on earth, without any mixture of the contrary evil. It is a perfection of knowledge, holiness and joy.

And canst thou hear of all this glory, O my soul, and meditate of all this joy, and yet cleave to earth and the dust still? Hast thou not often mourned over thy ignorance, and felt a sensible pain in the narrowness, the darkness, and the confusion of thy ideas, after the utmost stretch and labour of thought? How little dost thou know of the essence of God, even thy God, and how little of the two united natures of *Jesus* thy beloved saviour? How small and scanty is thy knowledge of thy self, and of all thy fellow-spirits, while thou art here imprisoned in a cottage of clay? And art thou willing to abide in this dark prison still, with all thy follies and mistakes about thee? Does not the land of light above invite thy longing and awaken thy desires; those bright regions where knowledge is made perfect, and where thy God and thy redeemer are seen without a veil?

And is not the perfect holiness of heaven another allurement to thee, O my soul? Dost thou not stretch thy wings for flight at the very mention of a world without temptation and without sin? How often hast thou groaned here under the burden of thy guilt, and the body of death? How hard hast thou wrestled with thy inbred iniquities? An hourly war, and a long toilsome conflict! How hast thou mourned in secret, and complained to thy God of these restless inward enemies of thy peace? And art thou so backward still to enter into those peaceful regions where these enemies can never come, and where battle and war are known no more, but perfect and everlasting holiness adorns the inhabitants, and crowns of victory and triumph?

O the shattered and imperfect devotion of the best saints on earth! O the feeble fluttering efforts of praise! What poor hallelujahs we send up to heaven on notes of discord, and as it were, on broken strings! Art thou not willing, O my soul, to honour thy God and thy saviour with sweeter harmony? And yet what a reluctance dost thou shew to enter into that world of joy and praise, because the dark shadow of death hangs over the passage? Come, awake, arise, shake off thy fears; and let the sense and notice of what the spirits of the just above enjoy, raise thy courage, and excite thee to meet thee first summons with sacred delight and rapture.

But I fear I have dwelt too long upon these three last particulars, because they are matters of more obvious notice, and more frequent discourse; yet they are so entertaining, that I knew not how to leave them. But I would not spend all my time on common topics, while I am paying honour to the memory of an uncommon christian.

I proceed therefore to the next general head.

## SECTION

## SECTION III.

*Of the various kinds and degrees of the employments and pleasures of heaven.*

HAVING shewn that by the spirits of just men in my text, we are to understand the souls of all the pious and the good that have left the body; and having described their perfection as a state of complete knowledge, holiness and joy; the third thing I am to consider, is, what sort of perfection this is, or what are some of the special characters of it. And here I beg your attention to some pleasing speculations which are agreeable to the word of God, and to the nature and reason of things, and which have often given my thoughts a sacred entertainment.

I. It is such a perfection as admits of great variety of employments and pleasures, according to the various turn and genius of each particular spirit. For the word perfection does not necessarily imply a state of universal and constant uniformity.

That the mind of every man here on earth has a different turn of genius, and peculiar manner of thought, is evident to every wise observer. And why should not every pious mind or spirit carry to heaven with it so much of that turn and manner, as is natural and innocent?

I grant it is a possible thing, that many different genius's of men on earth may perhaps be accounted for by the different constitution of the body, the frame of the brain, and the various texture of the nerves, or may be ascribed to the coarser or finer blood, and corporeal spirits; as well as to different forms of education and custom, &c. These may be able to produce a wondrous variety in the tempers and turns of inclination, even though all souls were originally the same: But I dare not assert that there is no difference betwixt the souls themselves, at their first creation and union with the body. There are some considerations would lead one to believe, that there are real diversities of genius among the spirits themselves in their own nature.

God, the great creator, hath seem'd to delight himself in a rich variety of productions in all his worlds which we are acquainted with. Let us make a pause here, and stand still and survey the overflowing riches of his wisdom, which are laid out on this little spot of his vast dominions, this earthly globe on which we tread; and we may imagine the same variety and riches overspreading all those upper worlds which we call planets or stars.

What an amazing multiplicity of kinds of creatures dwell on this earth? If we search the animated world and survey it, we shall find there are some that fly, some that creep or slide, and some walk on feet, or run: And every sort of animals cloathed with a proper covering; some of them more gay and magnificent in their attire than *Solomon* in all his glory; and each of them furnished with limbs, powers, and properties fitted for their own support, convenience and safety. How various are the kinds of birds and beasts that pass daily before our eyes! The fields, and the woods, the forests and the desarts, have their different inhabitants. The savage and the domestic animals, how numerous they are! and the fowl both wild and tame! What riches of dress and drapery are provided to cloath them in all their proper habits of nature? What an infinite number of painted insects fill the air, and overspread the ground? What bright spangles adorn their little bodies and their wings when they appear in their summer livery? What interwoven streaks of scarlet beauty,

mingled with green and gold? We behold a strange profusion of divine wisdom yearly in our own climate, in these little animated crumbs of clay, as well as in the animals of larger size. And yet there are multitudes of new strange creatures that we read of in the narratives of foreign countries: And what a vast profusion of entertainments for them all? How are the mountains and meadows adorned with a surprising plenty of grass and herbs, fruits and flowers, almost infinite, for the use of man and meaner animals?

In the world of waters a thousand unknown creatures swim and sport themselves, and leap with excess of life even in the freezing seas: Millions of inhabitants range through that liquid wilderness with swiftest motion, and in the wonders of their frame and nature proclaim the skill of an almighty maker. Others of the watry kind are but half alive, and are tossed from place to place by the heaving ocean. Think of the leviathan, the eel, and the oyster, and tell me if God has not shewn a rich variety of contrivance in them: And as various as their nature is, so various is the means of their life; proper beds of lodging are provided for them, and variety of food suited to uphold every nature.

Mankind is a world of itself, made up of the mingled or united natures of flesh and spirit. What an infinite difference of faces and features among the sons and daughters of men? And how much more various are the turns of their appetites, tempers, and inclinations, their humours and passions? And what glorious employment hath divine wisdom ordained for itself, in framing these millions of creatures with understandings and wills of so unconceivable a variety, so vast a difference of genius and inclination, to be the subjects of its providential government? And what a surprising harmony is there in the immense and incomprehensible scheme of divine counsels, arising from the various stations and businesses of men so infinitely diversified and distinct from one another, and centring in one great end the divine glory? An amazing contrivance, and a design worthy of God!

Now is the pure intellectual world alone destitute of this delightful variety? Is the nature of spirits utterly incapable of this diversity and beauty, without the aids of flesh and blood? Hath the wisdom of God displayed no riches of contrivance there? And must there be such a dull uniformity no where but in the country where spirits dwell, spirits the noblest parts of God's creation and dominion? Has he poured out all the various glories of divine art and workmanship in the inanimate and brutal or animal world, and left the higher sort of creatures all of one genius and one turn and mould, to replenish all the intellectual regions? Surely it is hard to believe it.

In the world of angels we find various kinds and orders. *St. Paul* tells us of thrones and dominions, and principalities, *Col. i. 16.* and *St. Peter* speaks of angels, and authorities, and powers, *1 Pet. iii. 22.* and in other parts of the word of God we read the names of an arch-angel, a seraph, and a cherub. And no doubt, as their degrees and stations in the heavenly world differ from each other, so their talents and genius to sustain those different stations are very various, and exactly suited to their charge and business. And it is no improbable thought, that the souls of men differ from each other as much as angels.

But if there were no difference at first betwixt the turn and genius of different spirits in their original formation, yet this we are sure of, that God designed their habitation in flesh and blood, and their passage through this world as the means to form and fit them for various stations in the unknown world of spirits. The souls of men having dwelt many years in particular bodies, have been influenced and habituated

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to particular turns of thought, both according to the various constitutions of those bodies, and the more various studies and businesses, and occurrences of life. Surely then we may with reason suppose the spirits departing from flesh to carry with them some bent and inclination towards various pleasures and employments.

So we may reasonably imagine each sinful spirit that leaves the body, to be more abundantly inflamed with these particular vices which it indulged here, whether ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or malice, or envy, or aversion to God, and to all goodnes: and their various sorts of punishments may arise from their own variety of lusts, giving each of them a peculiar inward torment.

And why may not the spirits of the just made perfect have the same variety of taste and pleasure in that happy world above, according as they are fitted for various kinds of sacred entertainments in their state of preparation, and during their residence in flesh and blood? *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, 2 Cor. v. 5.*

In the world of human spirits made perfect, *David* and *Moses* dwell: Both of them were trained up in feeding the flocks of their fathers in the wilderness, to feed and to rule the nation of *Israel*, the chosen flock of God. And may we not suppose them also trained up in the arts of holy government on earth, to be the chiefs of some blessed army, some sacred tribe in heaven? They were directors of the forms of worship in the church below under divine inspiration: And might not that fit them to become leaders of some celestial assembly, when a multitude of the sons of God above come at stated seasons to present themselves before the throne? Both of them knew how to celebrate the praise of their creator in sacred melody; but *David* was the chief of mortals in this harmonious work: And may we not imagine that he is or shall be a master of heavenly musick, before or after the resurrection, and teach some of the choirs above to tune their harps to the lamb that was slain?

But to come down to more modern times, is there not a *Boyle* (a) and a *Ray* (b) in heaven? Pious souls who were trained up in sanctified philosophy; and surely they are fitted beyond their fellow-saints, to contemplate the wisdom of God in the works of his hands. Is there not a *More* (c) and a *Howe*, (d) that have exercised their minds in an uncommon acquaintance with the world of spirits? And doubtless their thoughts are refined and improved in the upper world, and yet still engaged in the same pursuit. There is also a *Goodwin* (e) and an *Owen*, (f) who have laid out the vigour of their inquiries in the glories and wonders of the person of *Christ*, his bloody sacrifice, his dying love, and his exalted station at the right-hand of God. The first of these, with a penetrating genius, traced out many a new and uncommon thought, and made rich discoveries by digging in the mines of scripture. The latter of them humbly pursued and confirm'd divine truth; and both of them were eminent in promoting faith and piety, spiritual peace and joy, upon the principles of

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grace

(a) The honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq; a most pious enquirer into nature, and an improver of the experimental philosophy.

(b) *Mr. John Ray*, one of the ministers ejected for nonconformity 1662, he employed most of his studies afterwards in the cultivation of natural philosophy, in collections and remarks on the variety of plants, birds, beasts, fishes, &c. and writ several treatises to improve natural philosophy in the service of religion.

(c) *Dr. Henry More*, a great searcher into the world of spirits, and a pious divine of the church of *England*.

(d) *Mr. John Howe*, a name well known and highly honoured for his sagacity of thought, his exalted ideas, and converse with the spiritual world, as appears in his writings.

(e) *Dr. Thomas Goodwin*. And

(f) *Dr. John Owen*, two famous divines of prime reputation among the churches in the last century.

grace and the gospel. Their labours in some of these subjects, no doubt, have prepared them for some correspondent peculiarities in the state of glory. For though the doctrines of the person, the priesthood, and the grace of *Christ*, are themes which all the glorified souls converse with and rejoice in; yet spirits that have been trained up in them with peculiar delight for forty or fifty years, and devoted most of their time to these blessed contemplations, have surely gained some advantage by it, some peculiar fitness to receive the heavenly illuminations of these mysteries above their fellow-spirits.

There is also the soul of an ancient *Eusebius*, (g) and the later spirits of an *Usher* (b) and a *Burnet*, (i) who have entertained themselves and the world with the sacred histories of the church, and the wonders of divine providence in its preservation and recovery. There is a *Tillotson*, (k) that has cultivated the subjects of holiness, peace, and love, by his pen and his practice: There is a *Baxter*, (l) that has wrought hard for an end of controversies, and laboured with much zeal for the conversion of souls, though with much more success in the last than in the first.

Now though all the spirits in heaven enjoy the general happiness of the love of God and *Christ*, and the pleasurable review of providence; yet may we not suppose these spirits have some special circumstances of sacred pleasure, suited to their labours and studies in their state of trial on earth? For the church on earth is but a training-school for the church on high, and as it were a tiring-room in which we are dressed in proper habits for our appearance and our places in that bright assembly.

But some will reprove me here, and say, what must none but ministers, and authors, and learned men have their distinguished rewards and glories in the world of spirits? May not artificers, and traders, and pious women be fitted by their character and conduct on earth for peculiar stations and employments in heaven?

Yes doubtless, their zeal for the honour of God, their fervent love to *Christ*, their patience under long trials, and the variety of their graces exercised according to their stations on earth, may render them peculiarly fitted for special rewards on high: The wisdom of God will not be at a loss to find out distinguishing pleasures to recompense them all; though where the very station and business of this life is such as makes a nearer approach to the blessedness and business of heaven, it is much easier for us to guess at the nature of that future recompence.

Let me ask my own soul then, "soul what art thou busy about? What is thy chief employment during thy present state of trial? I hope thou art not making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof; for then thou art fit for no place in heaven, the doors will be for ever shut against thee. But what special works of the spirit art thou engaged in? Dost thou redeem what hours thou art able, from necessary businesses of life, to do more immediate service for God, to converse with things heavenly? Art thou seeking to gain a proper meetness for the sublimer employments of that upper world, and a relish of the most refined pleasures?"

But

(g) *Eusebius*, one of the fathers of the christian church, who wrote the history of the primitive ages of christianity.

(b) Dr. *John Usher*, in the last century archbishop of *Armagh*, whose chronological writings and his piety have rendered his name honourable in the world.

(i) Dr. *Gilbert Burnet*, late bishop of *Salisbury*, whose serious religion and zeal to promote it among the clergy, made him almost as famous as his *History of the English reformation*.

(k) The names of Dr. *John Tillotson*, late archbishop of *Canterbury*, and of

(l) Mr. *Richard Baxter*, a divine of great note among the protestant dissenters, need no further paraphrase to make them known.



But I proceed to the second particular.

II. The perfection of the spirits above, not only admits of a rich variety of entertainments, according to the various relish and inclination of the blessed, but it is such a perfection as allows of different degrees even in the same blessedness, according to the different capacities of spirits, and their different degrees of preparation. The word perfection does not always require equality.

If all the souls in heaven were of one mould, and make, and inclination, yet there may be different sizes of capacity even in the same genius, and a different degree of preparation for the same delights and enjoyments; therefore though all the spirits of the just were uniform in their natures and pleasures, and all perfect; yet one spirit may possess more happiness and glory than another, because it is more capacious of intellectual blessings, and better prepared for them. So when vessels of various size are thrown into the same ocean, there will be a great difference in the quantity of the liquid which they receive, though all might be full to the brim, and all made of the richest metal.

Now there is much evidence of this truth in the holy scripture. Our saviour intimates such differences of rewards in several of his expressions. *Matt. xix. 28.* he promised the apostles, that they *shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And it is probable this may denote something of superior honour or dignity above the meanest of the saints. And even among the apostles themselves he seems to allow of a difference; for though he would not promise *James* and *John* to sit next to him, on his right-hand and his left in his kingdom, *Matt. xx. 20, &c.* yet he does not deny that there are such distinct dignities, but says, *It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of his Father, ver. 23.*

Again our Lord says, *Matt. x. 41, 42.* he that receives a prophet, and entertains him as a prophet, shall have a prophet's reward; and he that entertains a righteous man, agreeable to his character, and from a real esteem of his righteousness, shall have a righteous man's reward: And even the meanest sort of entertainment, a cup of cold water given to a disciple, for the sake of his character, shall not go without some reward. Here are three sorts or degrees of reward mentioned, extending to the life to come, as well as to this life: Now though neither of them can be merited by works, but all are entirely conferred by grace, yet, as one observes here, "The Lord hath fixed a proportion between the work and the reward; so that as one has different degrees of goodness, the other shall have different degrees of excellency."

Our saviour assures us, that the torments of hell shall admit of various degrees and distinctions; some will be more exquisite and terrible than others: It shall be more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* in the day of judgment, who never sinned against half so much light, then it shall be for *Cborazin*, *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum* where *Cbrist* himself had preached his gospel, and confirmed it with most evident miracles, *Matt. xi. 21—24.* And the servants who did not the will of their Lord, shall be beaten with more or fewer stripes, according to their different degrees of knowledge and advantages of instruction; *Luke xii. 47, 48.* Now may we not, by a parallel reasoning, suppose there will be various orders and degrees of reward in heaven, as well as punishment in hell; since there is scarce a greater variety among the degrees of wickedness among sinners on earth, than there is of holiness among the saints?

When the apostle is describing the glories of the body at the great resurrection, he seems to represent the differences of glory that shall be conferred on different saints,  
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by the difference of the great luminaries of heaven : 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. *There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ; for one star differs from another in glory : So also is the resurrection of the dead.*

The prophet *Daniel* led the way to this description, and the same Spirit taught the apostle the same language : *Dan. xii. 2, 3. And many of them, that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt ; and they that be wise shall shine, with common glory, as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall have a peculiar lustre, as the stars, for ever and ever.* And if there be a difference in the visible glories of the saints at the resurrection, if those who turn many to righteousness shall sparkle in that day, with brighter beams than those who are only wise for their own salvation ; the same reason leads us to believe a difference of spiritual glory in the state of separate spirits, when the recompence of their labours is begun.

So, 1 Cor. iii. 8. *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.* If all be rewarded alike, the apostle would not have said, each man shall receive according to his own labour. Surely since there is a distinction of labours, there will be a distinction of rewards too.

And it is with this view that the same apostle exhorts the *Corinthians*, 1 epist. xv. 58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* Now that great labour and diligence, that steadfastness in profession, and that zeal in practice, to which the apostle exhorts them, might seem to be in vain, if those who were far less laborious, less zealous, and less steadfast, should obtain an equal recompense.

It is upon the same principle that he encourages them to holy patience under afflictive trials, 2 Cor. iv. 17. when he says, *our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not to the things that are seen, and temporal, but to the things invisible and eternal.* Now if the saint, who was called to heaven almost as soon as he was made a christian, and went through no sufferings, should possess the same weight of glory with the martyrs and confessors, under the long and tedious train of cruelties which they sustained from men, or painful trials from the hand of God ; I cannot see how their afflictions could be said to work for them a far more exceeding weight of glory.

He urges them also to great degrees of liberality from the same motive ; 2 Cor. ix. 6. *This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully, shall also reap bountifully.* Which words may reasonably be construed to signify the blessings of the life to come, as well as the blessings of the present life ; for this apostle speaking of the same duty of liberality, expresses the same encouragement under the same metaphors ; *Gal. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9. Let him, that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap : For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* When God distributes the riches of his glory amongst the saints in heaven, he pours them out in a large and bountiful manner upon those who have distributed the good things of this life bountifully to the poor ; but he rewards the narrow souled christian with a more sparing hand.

With the same design does the apostle encourage christians to great watchfulness against sin and heresy, as well as ministers to a solicitous care of their doctrine and preaching ;

preaching; 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15. If any man build gold, silver, or precious stones upon the true foundation *Jesus Christ*, and raise a glorious superstructure of truth and holiness, he shall receive a reward answerable to his skill and care in building; for his work shall stand, when it is tried by the fire of the judgment day: But if he build wood, hay, and stubble upon it, evil inferences, and corrupt practices, or trifles, fruitless controversies, idle speculations, and vain ceremonies, his works shall be burnt, and he shall suffer loss, shall obtain a far less recompence of his labour: Yet, since he has laid *Christ* for the foundation, and has taught and practised the fundamental doctrines and duties of christianity, though mingled with much folly and weakness, he himself shall be saved; yet in so hazardous a manner as a man that is saved by fire, who loses all his goods, and just escapes with his life.

When you hear *St. Paul* or *St. John*, speaking of the last judgment, they give hints of the same distinction of rewards, 2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Eph. vi. 8. *Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* Rev. xxii. 12. *And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* Though the highest and holiest saint in heaven can claim nothing there by the way of merit, for it is our Lord *Jesus Christ* alone, who has purchased all those unknown blessings, yet he will distribute them according to the different characters and degrees of holiness which his saints possessed on earth; and those larger degrees of holiness were also the free gift of God our saviour.

I have often represented it to my own thoughts under this comparison. Here is a race appointed; here are a thousand different prizes, purchased by some prince to be bestowed on the racers: And the prince himself gives them food and wine, according to what proportion he pleases, to strengthen and animate them for the race. Each has a particular stage appointed for him; some of shorter, and some of longer distance. When every racer comes to his own goal, he receives a prize in most exact proportion to his speed, diligence, and length of race: And the grace and the justice of the prince shine gloriously in such a distribution. Not the foremost of the racers can pretend to have merited the prize; for the prizes were all paid for by the prince himself; and it was he that appointed the race, and gave them spirit and strength to run: and yet there is a most equitable proportion observed in the reward, according to the labours of the race. Now this similitude represents the matter so agreeably to the apostle's way of speaking, when he compares the christian life to a race, 1 Cor. xi. 24, &c. Gal. v. 7. *Philip*. iii. 14. 2 *Tim*. iv. 7. *Heb*. xii. 1. that I think it may be called almost a scriptural description of the present subject.

The reason of man and the light of nature, entirely concur with scripture in this point. The glory of heaven is prepared for those who are prepared for it in a state of grace, *Rom*. ix. 23. It is God who makes each of us meet for our own inheritance among the saints in light, *Col*. i. 12. and then he bestows on us that inheritance.

As grace fits the soul for glory, so a larger degree of grace advances and widens the capacity of the soul, and prepares it to receive a larger degree of glory. The work of grace is but the means, the reward of glory is the end: Now the wisdom of God always fits and adjusts the means in a due proportion to answer the end he designs and the same wisdom ever makes the end answerable to the means he useth; and therefore he infuses more and higher glories into vessels more enlarged and better prepared.

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Some of the spirits in heaven may be trained up by their stations and sacred services on earth for more elevated employments and joys on high. Can we imagine that the soul of *David*, the sweet psalmist, the prophet, and the king of *Israel*, is not fitted by all his labours and trials, all his raptures of faith, and love, and zeal, for some sublimer devotion and nobler business than his own infant child, the fruit of his adultery? And yet our divines have generally placed this child in heaven, because *David* ceased to mourn for him at his death, and said that he himself should go to him? *2 Sam.* xii. 20, 23. *Deborah*, the prophetess, judged *Israel*, she animated her armies, and sung their victories: Is not *Deborah* engaged in some more illustrious employment among the heavenly tribes, than good *Dorcas* may seem to be capable of, whose highest character upon record is, that she was full of alms-deeds, and made coats and garments for the poor, *Acts* ix. 36, 39. And yet perhaps *Dorcas* is prepared too for some greater enjoyments, some sweeter relish of mercy, or some special taste of the divine goodness above *Rahab* the harlot; *Rahab*, whose younger character was lewd and infamous, and the best thing that we read of her is, that her faith under the present terror of the armies of *Israel* taught her once to cover and conceal their spies: And unless she made great advances afterward in grace, surely her place is not very high in glory.

The worship of heaven, and the joy that attends it, may be exceedingly different in degrees according to the different capacity of spirits; and yet all may be perfect and free from sinful defects. Does not the sparrow praise the Lord its maker upon the ridge of a cottage, chirping in its native perfection? And yet the lark advances in her flight and her song as far above the sparrow, as the clouds are above the housetop.

Surely superior joys and glories must belong to superior powers and services.

Can we think that *Abraham* and *Moses*, who were trained up in converse with God face to face, as a man converses with his friend, and who followed him through the wilderness and unknown countries in a glorious exercise of faith, were not prepared for a greater intimacy with God, and nearer views of his glory in heaven, than *Sampson* and *Jephthah* those rude heroes, who being appointed of God for that service, spent their days in bloody work, in hewing down the *Philistines* and the *Ammonites*? For we read little of their acquaintance with God, or converse with him, beside a petition now and then, or a vow for victory and for slaughter; and we should hardly have charity enough to believe they were saved, if *St. Paul* had not placed them among the examples of faith in his eleventh chapter to the *Hebrews*. Can we ever believe that the thief upon the cross, who spent his life in plundering and mischief, and made a single though sincere profession of the name of *Jesus* just in his dying hour, was prepared for the same high station and enjoyment in paradise, so near the right-hand of *Christ*, as the great apostle *Paul*, whose prayers and sermons, whose miracles of labour and suffering filled up and finished a long life, and honoured his Lord and saviour more than all the twelve apostles besides? Can we imagine that the child that is just born into this world under the friendly shadow of the covenant of grace, and weeps and dies, and is taken to heaven, is fit to be possessor of the same glories, or raised to the same degree there, as the studious, the laborious, and the zealous christian, that has lived above fourscore years on earth, and spent the greatest part of his life in the studies of religion, the exercises of piety, and the zealous and painful services of God and his country? Surely, if all these which I have named must have equal knowledge and joy in the future world, it is hard to find how such an exact equity

equity shall be displayed in the distribution of final rewards, as the word of God so frequently describes.

Objection. But in the parable of the labourers hired to work in the vineyard, *Matt. xx. 9—12.* does not every man receive his penny, they who were called at the first and third hour, and they who were called at the last? Were not their rewards all equal, those who had wrought but one hour, and those who had borne the burden and heat of the day.

Answer. It is not the design of this parable to represent the final rewards of the saints at the day of judgment, but to shew that the nation of the *Jews*, who had been called to be the people of God above a thousand years before, and had borne the burden and heat of the day, that is, the toil and bondage of many ceremonies, should have no preference in the esteem of God above the gentiles who were called at the last hour, or at the end of the *Jewish* dispensation; for it is said, *ver. 16.* the last shall be first, and the first last, that is, the gentiles, who waited long ere the gospel was preached to them, shall be the first in receiving it; and the *Jews* to whom it was first offered, from an inward scorn and pride shall reject it, or receive it but slowly: And *Christ* adds this confirmation of it, for many be called, but few chosen, that is, though multitudes of *Jews* were called to believe in *Christ*, that few accepted the call.

There is another reason why this parable cannot refer to the final rewards of heaven; because *ver. 11.* it is said, Some of them murmured against the good-man of the house. Now there shall be no envy against their fellow-saints, nor murmuring against God in the heavenly state. But the *Jews*, and even the *Jewish* converts to christianity, were ready often to murmur that the gospel should be preached to the gentile world, and that the heathens should be brought into privileges equal to themselves.

Thus it sufficiently appears from the frequent declarations of scripture, as well as from the reason and equity of things, that the rewards of the future world shall be greatly distinguished according to the different degrees of holiness and service for God, even though every spirit there shall be perfect; nor is there any just and reasonable objection against it.

Is it certain then that heaven has various degrees of happiness in it, and shall my spirit rest contented with the meanest place there, and the least and lowest measure? Hast thou no sacred ambition in thee, O my soul, to sit down with *Abram*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*? Or dost thou not aspire, at least, to the middle ranks of glorified saints, though perhaps thou mayest despair of those most exalted stations which are prepared for the spirits of chief renown, for *Abram* and *Moses* of ancient time, and for the martyrs and the apostles of the lamb? Wilt thou not stir up all the vigour of nature and grace within thee, to do great service for thy God and thy saviour on earth, that thy reward in heaven may not be small? Wilt thou not run with zeal and patience the race that is set before thee, looking to the brightest cloud of witnesses, and reaching at some of the richer prizes? Remember that *Jesus* thy judge is coming apace: He has rewards with him of every size, and the lustre and weight of thy crown shall most exactly correspond to thy sweat and labour.

But I must not dwell always on this head: I proceed therefore to the next.

III. The spirits of the just in heaven enjoy such a perfection as is consistent with perpetual changes of business and delights, even in the same person or spirit. They may be always perfect, but in a rich and endless variety.

It is only God who possesses all possible excellencies, and powers, and happinesses at once, and therefore he alone is incapable of change: But creatures must possess and enjoy their delights in a succession, because they cannot possess and enjoy all that they are capable of at once. And according to this consideration the heavenly state is represented in scripture in various forms both of business and blessedness.

Sometimes it is described by seeing God, *Matt. v. 8.* by beholding him face to face, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* by being present with the Lord, *2 Cor. v. 8.* by being where *Christ* is to behold his glory, *John xvii. 24.* Sometimes the saints above are said to serve him as his servants, *Rev. xxii. 3.* Sometimes they are represented as worshipping before the throne, as being fed with the fruits of the tree of life, and drinking the living fountains of water, *Rev. vii. 15, 17.* and *xxii. 1, 2.* and let it be noted that twelve manner of fruits grew on this tree, and they were new every month also. Sometimes they are held forth to us as singing a new song to God, and to the lamb, *Rev. xiv. 3.* And at another time they are described as wearing a crown of righteousness and glory, of sitting on the throne of *Christ*, of reigning for ever and ever, and ruling the nations with a rod of iron, *2 Tim. iv. 8.* *1 Pet. v. 4.* *Rev. xxii. 5.* *Rev. ii. 26, 27.* And in another place our happiness is represented as sitting down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* in the kingdom of heaven, *Matt. viii. 11.* Now surely this rich variety of language, whereby the heavenly state is proposed to us in scripture, must intend a variety of entertainments and employments, that may in some measure answer the glory of such expressions.

It is not only the powers of our understanding that shall be regaled and feasted in those happy regions with the blissful vision of God and *Christ*, but our active powers shall doubtless have their proper entertainments too. When angels are so variously and delightfully employed in service for God, in his several known and unknown worlds, we cannot suppose the spirits of just men shall be eternally confined to a sedentary state of unactive contemplation.

Contemplation indeed is a noble pleasure, and the joy of it rises high when it is fixed on the sublimest objects, and when the faculties are all exalted and refined. But surely such a sight of God and our dear redeemer as we shall enjoy above, will awaken and animate all the active and sprightly powers of the soul, and set all the springs of love and zeal at work in the most illustrious instances of unknown and glorious duty.

I confess heaven is described as a place of rest, that is, rest from sin and sorrow, rest from pain and weariness, rest from all the toilsome labours and conflicts that we endure in a state of trial; but it can never be such a rest as lays all our active powers asleep, or renders them useless in such a vital and active world. It would diminish the happiness of the saints in glory to be unemployed there. Those spirits who have tasted unknown delight and satisfaction in many long seasons of devotion, and in a thousand painful services for their blessed Lord on earth, can hardly bear the thoughts of paying no active duties, doing no work at all for him in heaven, where business is all over delight, and labour is all enjoyment. Surely his servants shall serve him there, as well as worship him. They shall serve him perhaps as priests in his temple, and as kings, or viceroys, in his wide dominions; for they are made kings and priests unto God for ever, *Rev. v. 10.*

But let us dwell a little upon their active employments, and perhaps a close and attentive meditation may lead us into an unexpected view and notice of their sacred commissions and embassies, their governments, and their holy conferences, as well as their acts of worship and adoration.

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That heaven is a place or state of worship, is certain, and beyond all controversy; for this is a very frequent description of it in the word of God. And as the great God has been pleased to appoint different forms of worship to be practised by his saints, and his churches under the different oeconomies of his grace; so it is possible he may appoint peculiar forms of sacred magnificence to attend his own worship in the state of glory. Bowing the knee, and prostration of the body, are forms and postures of humility practised by earthly worshippers. Angels cover their faces and their feet with their wings, and cry, holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! *Isa.* vi. 2, 3. But what unknown and illustrious forms shall be consecrated by the appointment and authority of *Christ*, for the unbodied or the bodied saints in heaven to adorn their sacred offices, is above our reach to describe or to imagine.

Let us consider now what parts of worship the blessed are employed in.

The various parts of divine worship that are practised on earth, at least such as are included in natural religion, shall doubtless be performed in heaven too; and what other unknown worship of positive and celestial appointment shall belong to the heavenly state, is as much above our present conjecture, as the forms of it are.

Heaven is represented as full of praises. There is the most glorious and perfect celebration of God the father and the saviour in the upper world: And the highest praise is offered to them with the deepest humility.

The crowns of glory are cast down at their feet, and all the powers and perfections of God, with all his labours of creation, his cares of providence, and the sweeter mysteries of his grace, shall furnish noble matter for divine praise.

This work of praise is also exhibited in scripture, as attended with a song and heavenly melody. What there is in the world of separate spirits to answer the representations of harps and voices, we know not. It is possible that spirits may be capable of some sort of harmony in their language, without a tongue, and without an ear, and there may be some inimitable and transporting modulations of divine praise without the material instruments of string or wind. The soul itself by some philosophers is said to be meer harmony; and surely then it will not wait for it till the body be raised from the dust, nor live so long destitute of all melodious joys, or of that spiritual pleasure which shall supply the place of melody, till our organs of sense shall be restored to us again.

But is all heaven made up of praises? Is there no prayer there? Let us consider a little: What is prayer, but the desire of a created spirit in an humble manner made known to its creator? Does not every saint above desire to know God, to love and serve him, to be employed for his honour, and to enjoy the eternal continuance of his love and its own felicity? May not each happy spirit in heaven exert these desires in a way of solemn address to the divine majesty? May not the happy soul acknowledge its dependence in this manner upon its father and its God? Is there no place in the heart of a glorified saint for such humble addresses as these? Does not every separate spirit there look, and long for the resurrection, when it is certain that embodied spirits on earth who have received the first fruits of grace and glory groan within themselves, waiting for the redemption of the body? *Rom.* viii. 23. And may we not suppose each holy soul sending a sacred and fervent wish after this glorious day, and lifting up a desire to its God about it, though without the uneasiness of a sigh or a groan? May it not under the influence of divine love breathe out the requests of its heart, and the expressions of its zeal for the glory and kingdom of *Christ*? May not the church above join with the churches below in this language, Father, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven? Are not the souls of the

martyrs that were slain, represented to us as under the altar, crying with a loud voice, how long, O Lord, holy and true? *Rev. vi. 9, 10.* This looks like the voice of prayer in heaven.

Perhaps you will suppose there is no such service as hearing sermons, that there is no attendance upon the word of God there. But are we sure there are no such entertainments? Are there no lectures of divine wisdom and grace given to the younger spirits there, by spirits of a more exalted station? Or may not our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself be the everlasting teacher of his church? May he not at solemn seasons summon all heaven to hear him publish some new and surprizing discoveries, which have never yet been made known to the ages of nature, or of grace, and are reserved to entertain the attention, and exalt the pleasure of spirits advanced to glory? Must we learn all by the mere contemplation of *Christ's* person? Does he never make use of speech to the instruction and joy of saints above?

*Moses* and *Elijah* came down once from heaven to make a visit to *Christ* on mount *Tabor*, and the subject of their converse with him was his death and departure from this world, *Luke ix. 31.* Now since our Lord is ascended to heaven, are these holy souls cut off from this divine pleasure? Is *Jesus* for ever silent? Does he converse with his glorified saints no more? And surely if he speak, the saints will hear and attend.

Or it may be that our blessed Lord, even as he is man, has some noble and unknown way of communicating a long discourse, or a long train of ideas and discoveries to millions of blessed spirits at once, without the formalities of voice and language; and at some peculiar seasons he may thus instruct and delight his saints in heaven.

Thus it appears there may be something among the spirits of the just above that is analogous to prayer and preaching, as well as praise.

O how gustful are the pleasures of celestial worship! What unknown varieties of performance, what sublime ministrations there are, and glorious services, none can tell. And in all this variety, which may be performed in sweet succession, there is no wandering thought, no cold affection, no divided heart, no listless or indifferent worshipper. What we call rapture and extasy here on earth, is perhaps the constant and uninterrupted pleasure of the church on high in all their adorations.

But let the worship of the glorified spirits be never so various, yet I cannot persuade myself that mere direct acts or exercises of what we properly call worship, are their only and everlasting work.

The scripture tells us, there are certain seasons when the angels, those sons of God, come to present themselves before the Lord, *Job i. 6. and ii. 1.* It is evident then, that the intervals of these seasons are spent in other employments: And when they present themselves before God, it does not sufficiently appear that mere adoration and praise is their only business at the throne. In the very place which I have cited, it seems more natural to suppose that these angelic spirits came thither rather to render an account of their several employments, and the success of their messages to other worlds. And why may we not suppose such a blessed variety of employment among the spirits of men too?

This supposition has some countenance in the holy scripture. The angel or messenger who appeared to St. *John*, and shewed him various visions, by the order of *Christ*, forbids the apostle to worship him, *for I am thy fellow servant*, said he, *and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book*, *Rev. xxii. 8, 9.* These words naturally lead one to think, that though he appeared as a messenger from *Christ*, and in the form of an angel, yet he was really a departed saint, a brother,  
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a fellow-prophet, perhaps the soul of *David*, or *Isaiab*, or *Moses*, who would count it an honour even in their state of glory to be thus employed by their exalted Lord; and they also keep or observe and wait for the accomplishment of the sayings of that book of the revelations, as well as the churches of their brethren, the saints on earth.

I freely allow immediate divine worship to take up a good part of their everlasting day, their sabbath; and therefore I suppose them to be often engaged, millions at once, in social worship; and sometimes acting apart, and raised in sublime meditation of God, or in a fixed vision of his blissful face, with an act of secret adoration, while their intellectual powers are almost lost in sweet amazement: Sometimes they are entertaining themselves and their fellow spirits with the graces and glories of the man *Christ Jesus*, the lamb that was slain in the midst of the throne: But at other times they may be making a report to him of their faithful execution of some divine commission they received from him, to be fulfilled either in heaven or in earth, or in unknown and distant worlds.

There may be other seasons also when they are not immediately addressing the throne, but are most delightfully engaged in recounting to each other the wondrous steps of providence, wisdom and mercy, that seized them from the very borders of hell and despair, and brought them through a thousand dangers and difficulties to the possession of that fair inheritance. When the great God shall unravel the scheme of his own counsels, shall unfold every part of his mysterious conduct, and set before them the reason of every temptation they grappled with, and of every sorrow they felt here on earth, and with what divine and successful influence they all wrought together to train them up for heaven, what matter of surprizing delight and charming conversation shall this furnish the saints with in that blessed world? And now and then in the midst of their sacred dialogues, by a sympathy of soul they shall shout together in sweet harmony, and join their exalted songs to him that sits upon the throne and to the lamb. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy power, to thy wisdom, and to thine abounding mercy, be renown and honour to everlasting ages."

Nor is it improper or unpleasant to suppose that among the rest of their celestial conferences, they shall shew each other the fair and easy solution of those difficulties and deep problems in divinity, which had exercised and perplexed them here on earth, and divided them into little angry parties. They shall look back with holy shame on some of their learned and senseless distinctions, and be ready to wonder sometimes what trifles and impertinences had engaged them in dark and furious disputes. Darkness and entanglement shall vanish at once from many of those knotty points of controversy, when they behold them in the light of heaven: And the rest of them shall be matter of delightful instruction for superior spirits to bestow upon those of lower rank, or on souls lately arrived at the regions of light.

In short, there is nothing written in the books of nature, the records of providence, or the sacred volumes of grace, but may minister materials at special seasons for the holy conference of the saints on high. No history nor prophecy, no doctrine nor duty, no command, nor promise, nor threatening in the bible, but may recall the thoughts of the heavenly inhabitants, and engage them in sweet conversation. All things that relate to the affairs of past ages and past worlds, as well as the present regions of light and happiness where they dwell, may give them new themes of dialogue and mutual intercourse.

And though we are very little acquainted whilst we are on earth, with any of the planetary worlds besides that which we inhabit, yet who knows how our acquaintance may

may be extended hereafter amongst the inhabitants of the various and distant globes? And what frequent and swift journeys we may take thither, when we are disencumbered of this load of flesh and blood, or when our bodies are raised again, active and swift as sun-beams? Sometimes we may entertain our holy curiosity there, and find millions of new discoveries of divine power and divine contrivance in those unknown regions; and bring back from thence new lectures of divine wisdom, or tidings of the affairs of those provinces, to entertain our fellow-spirits, and to give new honours to God the creator and the sovereign. So a pious traveller in our lower world visits *Africa* or both the *Indies*: At his return he sits in a circle of attentive admirers, and recounts to them the wondrous products of those climates, and the customs and manners of those distant countries: He gratifies their curiosity with some foreign varieties, and feasts their eyes and their ears at once: Then at the end of every story he breaks out into holy language, and adores the various riches and wisdom of God the creator.

To proceed yet one step farther. Since there are different degrees of glory, we may infer a variety of honours as well as delights prepared for the spirits of the just made perfect.

Some part of the happiness of heaven is described in scripture by crowns and thrones, by royalty and kingly honours: Why may we not then suppose that such souls, whose sublimer graces have prepared them for such dignity and office, may rule the nations, even in a literal sense? Why may not those spirits that have past their trials in flesh and blood, and come off conquerors, why may they not sometimes be appointed visitors and superintendants over whole provinces of intelligent beings in lower regions, who are yet labouring in their state of probation? or perhaps they may be exalted to a presidency over inferior ranks of happy spirits, may shine bright amongst them as the morning-star, and lead on their holy armies to celestial work or worship. The scripture itself gives us a hint of such employments in the angelick world, and such presidencies over some parts of our world, or of their own. Do we not read of *Gabriel* and *Michael*, and their management of the affairs of *Persia*, and *Greece*, and *Judab*, in the book of *Daniel*? And it is an intimation of the same hierarchy, when some superior angel led on a multitude of the heavenly host to sing an hymn of praise at *Bethlehem*, when the son of God was born there, *Luke* ii. 9, 13. Now if angels are thus dignified, may not human spirits unbodied have the same office? Our saviour, when he rewards the faithful servant that had gained ten pounds, bids him take authority over ten cities; and he that had gained five, had five cities under his government, *Luke* xix. 17, &c. So that this is not a mere random thought, or a wild invention of fancy, but patronized by the word of God.

Among the pleasures and engagements of the upper world, there shall be always something new and entertaining; for the works and the dominions of God are vast beyond all our comprehension. And what a perpetual change, what a glorious but improving rotation of businesses and joys shall succeed one another through the ages of eternity, we shall never know till we come amongst them. This thought leads me to the last particular, *viz.*

IV. The perfection which the blessed spirits enjoy, gives room for large additions and continual improvement.

Their knowledge and their joy may be called perfect, because there is no mixture of error or sorrow with it; and because it is sufficient every moment for the satisfaction of present desires, without an uneasiness of mind. But it may be doubted whether

whether any creature ever was, or ever will be so perfect, that it is not capable of addition or growth in any excellency or enjoyment.

The man *Christ Jesus*, in his present glorified state, has not such a perfection as this. He waits daily to see his Father's promises fulfilled to him; he waits till all things are put under him, and his enemies be made his actual footstool: But we know that all things are not yet put under him, *Heb. ii. 8.* that is, all the nations are not yet subject to his spiritual kingdom, nor become obedient to his gospel. As fast as his kingdom grows on earth, so fast his honours and his joys arise; and he waits still for the complete union of all his members to himself the sacred head: He waits for the morning of the resurrection, when he shall be glorified in the bright and general assembly of his saints, and admired in all them that believe, *2 Thess. i. 10.*

O that illustrious and magnificent appearance! That shining hour of jubilee, when the bodies of millions of saints shall awake out of the dust, and be released from their long dark prison! When they shall encompass and adore *Jesus* their saviour and their God, and acknowledge their new life and immortal state to be owing to his painful and shameful death: When *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *David*, and all his pious progenitors shall bow and worship *Jesus* their son and their Lord: When the holy army of martyrs, springing from the dust with palms of victory in their hands, shall ascribe their conquest and their triumph to the lamb that was slain: When he shall present his whole church before the presence of his own and his Father's glory, without spot, and faultless, with exceeding joy! Can we imagine that *Christ* himself, even the man *Jesus*, in the midst of all this magnificence and these honours, shall feel no new satisfaction, and have no relish of all this joy, above what he possessed while his church lay bleeding on earth, and this illustrious company were buried under ground in the chains of death? And yet you will say *Christ* in heaven is made perfect in knowledge and in joy, but his perfection admits of improvement.

Now if the head be not above the capacity of all growth and addition, surely the members cannot pretend to it. But I shall propose several more arguments for this truth in the following section.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the increase of the saints above in knowledge, holiness and joy.*

**T**HAT there is, and hath been, and will be continual progress and improvement in the knowledge and joy of separate souls, may be easily proved many ways, *viz.* from the very nature of human reason itself: from the narrowness, the weakness and limitations even of our intellectual faculties in their best estate: from the immense variety of objects that we shall converse about: from our peculiar concern in some future providences, which it is not likely we should know before they occur: and from the glorious new scenes of the resurrection.

1. We may prove the increase of knowledge amongst the blessed above, from the very nature of human reason itself, which is a faculty of drawing inferences, or some new propositions and conclusions, from propositions or principles which we knew before. Now surely we shall not be dispossessed of this power when we come to heaven. What we learn of God there, and the glories of his nature, or his works, will assist and incline us to draw inferences for his honour, and for our worship of him.

And if we could be supposed to have never so many propositions or new principles of knowledge crowded into our minds at the first entrance into heaven, yet surely our reasoning

reasoning faculty would still be capable of making some advance by way of inference, or building some superstructure upon so noble a foundation. And who knows the intense pleasure that will arise perpetually to a contemplative mind, by a progressive and infinite pursuit of truth in this manner, where we are secure against the danger of all error and mistake, and every step we take is all light and demonstration.

Shall it be objected here, that our reason shall be as it were lost and dissolved in intuition and immediate sight, and therefore it shall have no room or place in that happy world?

To this I would reply, that we shall have indeed much more acquaintance with spiritual objects by immediate intuition, than we ever had here on earth; but it does not follow thence, that we shall lose our reason. Angels have immediate vision of God and divine things; but can we suppose they are utterly incapable of drawing an inference, either for the improvement of their knowledge, or the direction of their practice? When they behold any special and more curious piece of divine workmanship, can they not further infer the exquisite skill or wisdom of the creator? And are they not capable of concluding, that this peculiar instance of divine wisdom demands an adoring thought? Thus intuition or immediate sight in a creature, does not utterly exclude and forbid the use of reason.

I reply again, can it ever be imagined, that being released from the body, we shall possess in one moment, and retain through every moment of eternity, all the innumerable ranks, and orders, and numbers of propositions, truths and duties, that may be derived in a long succession of ages by the use of our reasoning powers? But this leads me to the second argument, *viz.*

2. The weakness and narrowness of human understandings in their best estate, seems to make it necessary that knowledge should be progressive.

Continual improvement in knowledge and delight among the spirits of the just made perfect, is necessary for the same reason that proved their variety of entertainments and pleasures, *viz.* because creatures cannot take in all the vast, the infinite variety of conceptions in the full brightness and perfection of them at once, of which they are capable in a sweet succession. Can we ever persuade ourselves, that all the endless train of thoughts, and ideas, and scenes of joy, that shall ever pass through the mind of a saint through the long ages of eternity, should be crowded into every single mind, the first moment of its entrance into those happy regions? And is a human mind capacious enough to receive, and strong enough to retain such an infinite multitude of ideas for ever? Or is this the manner of God's working among his intellectual creatures? Surely God knows our frame, and pours in light and glory as we are able to bear it. Such a bright confusion of notions, images and transports, would probably overwhelm the most exalted spirit, and drown all the noble faculties of the mind at once. As if a man who was born blind, should be healed in an instant, and should open his eyes first against the full blaze of the noon-day sun; this would so tumultuate the spirits, and confound the organs of sight, as to reduce the man back again to his first blindness, and perhaps might render him incurable for ever.

3. This argument will be much strengthened, if we do but take a short view of the vast and incomprehensible variety of objects that may be proposed to our minds in the future state, and may feast our contemplation, and improve our joy.

The blessed God himself is an infinite being: His perfections and glories are unbounded: His wisdom, his holiness, his goodness, his faithfulness, his power and justice, his all-sufficiency, his self-origination, and his unfathomable eternity, have such

such a number of rich ideas belonging to each of them, that no creature shall ever fully understand. Yet it is but reasonable to believe, that he will communicate so much of himself to us by degrees, as he sees necessary for our business and blessedness in that upper world. Can it be supposed that we should know every thing that belongs to God all at once, which he may discover to us gradually as our capacities improve? Can we think that an infant-soul that had no time for improvement here, when it enters into heaven shall know every thing concerning God, that it can ever attain to through all the ages of it's immortality? When a blessed spirit has dwelt in heaven a thousand years, and conversed with God and *Christ*, angels and fellow-spirits during all that season, shall it know nothing more of the nature and wonderful properties of God than it knew the first moment of it's arrival there? \*

But I add further, the works of God shall doubtless be the matter of our search and delightful survey, as well as the nature and properties of God himself. His works are honourable and glorious, and sought out of all that have pleasure in them, *Psal.* cxi. 2, 3. In his works we shall read his name, his properties, and his glories, whether we fix our thoughts on creation or providence.

The works of God and his wonders of creation in the known and unknown worlds, both as to the number, the variety, and vastness of them, are almost infinite; that is, they transcend all the limits of our ideas, and all our present capacities to conceive. Now there is none of these works of wonder, but may administer some entertainment to the mind of man, and may richly furnish him with new matter for the praise of God in the long successions of eternity.

There is scarce an animal of the more complete kind, but would entertain an angel with rich curiosities, and feed his contemplation for an age. What a rich and artful structure of flesh upon the solid and well compacted foundation of bones! What curious joints and hinges, on which the limbs are moved to and fro! What an unconceivable variety of nerves, veins, arteries, fibres, and little invisible parts, are found in every member! What various fluids, blood and juices, run through and agitate the innumerable slender tubes, the hollow strings and strainers of the body! What millions of folding doors are fixed within, to stop those red or transparent rivulets in their course, either to prevent their return backwards, or else as a means to swell the muscles and move the limbs! What endless contrivances to secure life, to nourish nature, and to propagate the same to future animals! What amazing lengths of holy meditation would an angel run upon these subjects! And what sublime strains of praise would a heavenly philosopher raise hourly to the almighty and all-wise creator! And all this from the mere brutal world!

But if we survey the nature of man, he is a creature made up of mind and animal united, and would furnish still more numerous and exalted materials for contemplation and praise; for he has all the richest wonders of animal nature in him, besides the unknown mysteries of mind or spirit. Surely it will create a sacred pleasure in happy souls above, to learn the wonders of divine skill exerted and shining in their own formation, and in the curious workmanship of those bodily engines in which they once dwelt and acted.

Then let them descend to herbs and plants. How numerous are all the products of earth upon her green surface, and all within her dark bowels! All the vegetable

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\* God himself hath infinite goodness in him, which the creature cannot take in at once; they are taking of it in eternally. The saints see in God still things fresh, which they saw not in the beginning of their blessedness. *Dr. T. Goodwin.*

and the mineral kingdoms! How many centuries would all these entertain a heavenly enquirer!

The worlds of air, and the worlds of water, the planetary and the starry worlds, are still new objects rich with curiosities; these are all monuments of divine wisdom, and fit subjects for the contemplation of the blessed. Nor can we be supposed to have for ever done with them all when we leave this body; and that for two reasons. One is, because God has never yet received the honour due to his wisdom and power, displayed in the material creation, from the hands or tongues of men. And the other is, because the spirits of the just shall be joined to bodies again, and then they shall certainly have necessary converse with God's material works and worlds; though perhaps they have more acquaintance with them now in their separate state, than we are apprized of.

And besides all these material works of God, what an unknown variety of other wonders belong to the world of pure spirits, which lie hid from us, and are utterly concealed behind the veil of flesh and blood! What are their natures, and the reach of their powers! What ranks and orders they are distributed into! What are their governments, their several employments, the different customs and manners of life in the various and most extensive regions of that intellectual world! What are their messages to our earth, or the other habitable globes, and what capacities they are endowed with to move or influence animate or inanimate bodies! All these, and a thousand more of the like nature, are made known doubtless to the inhabitants of heaven. These are things that belong to the provinces of light and immortality, but many of them are mysteries to us who dwell in these tabernacles; they lie far beyond our ken, and are wrapt up in sacred darkness, that we can hardly do so much as shoot a guess at them.

Now can we suppose that the meanest spirit in heaven has a full and entire survey of all these innumerable works of God, from the first moment of its entrance thither, throughout all the ages of immortality, without the change of one idea, or the possibility of any improvement? This would be to give a sort of omniscience to every happy spirit, which is more than is generally allowed to the man *Christ Jesus*. And if there be such a thing as degrees of glory among the saints above, we may be well assured that the lowest rank of blessed spirits is not advanced to this amazing degree.

Is there no new thing, neither under nor above the sun, that God can entertain any of his children with in the upper world, throughout the infinite extent of all future ages? Are they all made at once so much like God, as to know all things? Or if each of them have their stinted size of knowledge, or their limited number of ideas at their first release from the body, then they are everlastingly cut off from all the surprizes of pleasure that arise from new thoughts, and new scenes, and new discoveries. Does every saint in heaven read God's great volume of nature through and through the first hour it arrives there? Or is each spirit confined to a certain number of leaves, and bound eternally to learn nothing new, but to review perpetually his own limited lesson? Dares he not, or can he not turn over another leaf, and read his creator's name in it, and adore his wisdom in new wonders of contrivance? These things are improbable to such a high degree, that I dare almost pronounce them untrue.

The book of providence is another volume wherein God writes his name too. Has every single saint such a vast and infinite length of foreknowledge given him at his first admission into glory, that he knows beforehand all the future scenes of providence, and the wonders which God shall work in the upper and lower worlds? I thought the  
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lion of the tribe of *Judab*, the root and the offspring of *David*, had been the only person in heaven or earth that was worthy to take the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof, *Rev. v. 5.* Surely the meanest of the saints does not foreknow all those great and important counsels of God, which our Lord *Jesus Christ* is intrusted with. And yet we may venture to say, that the spirits of the just in heaven shall know those great and important events that relate to the church on earth, as they arise in successive seasons, that they may give to God, and to his son *Jesus Christ*, revenues of due honour upon this account, as I shall prove immediately.

And indeed if the limits of their knowledge in heaven were so fixed at their first entrance there, that they could never be acquainted with any of these successive providences of God afterwards, we here on earth have a great advantage above them, who see daily the accomplishment of his divine counsels, and adore the wonders of his wisdom and his love; and from this daily increase of knowledge, we take our share in the growing joys and blessings of *Zion*.

But this thought leads me to the fourth argument for the increase of knowledge in heaven.

4. There have been, and there are many future providences on earth, and transactions in heaven, in which the spirits of the just have a very great and dear concernment, and therefore they must know them when they come to pass; and yet it is by no means probable, that they are known in all their glorious circumstances beforehand by every spirit in heaven.

Let us descend a little to some particular instances, and see whether we cannot make it appear from scripture, with most convincing evidence, that the saints in heaven obtain some additions to their knowledge, by the various new transactions in heaven and in earth.

When our blessed Lord had fulfilled his state of sorrows and sufferings on earth, and ascended into heaven in his glorified human nature, with all the scars of honour, and the ensigns of victory about him; when the lamb appeared in the midst of the throne with the marks of slaughter and death upon him, and presented himself before God in the midst of angels and antient patriarchs, with the accomplishment of all the types and promises about him written in letters of blood; did not those blessed angels, did not the spirits of those patriarchs, learn something more of the mysteries of our redemption, and the wonderful glories of the redeemer, than what they were acquainted with before? And did not this new glorious scene spread new ideas, new joys and wonders through all the heavenly world? Can the principalities and powers in heavenly places gain by the church on earth any farther discoveries of the manifold wisdom of God? *Eph. iii. 10.* And can we believe that when *Christ*, the head of the church, entered into heaven in so illustrious a manner, that these powers principalities and blessed spirits, got no brighter discoveries of divine wisdom? To what purpose do they look and pry into these things, *1 Pet. i. 12.* if after all their searches they make no advances in knowledge? And must angels be the only proficients in these sublime sciences, while human spirits make no improvement? Can it be supposed that those ancient fathers, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, to whom the promises were made, that all the nations should be blessed in their seed, had no transporting pleasures when they first beheld that promised seed crowned with all his glory? When they saw their son *Jesus* ascending on high, and leading captivity captive, and the chariots of God that attended him were twenty thousand, even an innumerable company of angels, *Psalms lxxviii. 17, 18.*

If upon this occasion we may talk in the language of mortals, may we not suppose those ancient fathers raising themselves on high, and overlooking the walls of paradise, to gaze downward upon this ascending triumph? May we not imagine them speaking thus to each other in the holy transport? "And is this our great descendant? Is this our long-expected offspring? How divine his aspect? How god-like his air? How glorious and adorable all the graces of his countenance? Is this, saith holy *David*, my son and my Lord? the king of glory, for whose admission I called the gates of heaven to be lifted up, and opened the everlasting doors for him in an antient song? Is this the man, whose hands and whose feet they pierced on earth, as I once foretold by the spirit of prophecy? I see those blessed icars of honour; how they adorn his glorified limbs! I acknowledge and adore my God and my saviour. I begun his triumph once on my harp in a lower strain, and I behold him now ascending on high: Awake my glory, he comes, he comes with the sound of a trumpet, and with the pomp of shouting angels; sing praises, all ye saints, unto our God, sing praises, sing praises unto our king, sing praises. Is this, saith *Isaiab*, the child born, of whom I spoke? Is this the son given, of whom I prophesied? I adore him as the mighty God, the father of ages, and the prince of peace. I see the righteous branch, adds the prophet *Jeremy*, the righteous branch from the stem of *David*, from the root of *Jesse*. This is the king whom I foretold should reign in righteousness: The Lord my righteousness is his name, I rejoice at his appearance, the throne of heaven is made ready for him. This, saith *Daniel*, is the *Messiah*, the prince, who was cut off, but not for himself: The seventy weeks are all fulfilled, and the work is done. He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and hath brought in everlasting righteousness for all his people. But was this the person, saith *Zachary* the prophet, whom they sold for thirty pieces of silver? Vile indignity and impious madness! Behold he now appears like the man who is fellow, or companion to the Lord of hosts. It is he, saith *Malachi*, it is he, the messenger of the covenant, who came suddenly to his own temple. There I held him in my withered arms, saith aged *Simeon*, and rapture and prophecy came upon me at once, and I expired in joy and praises."

And we hope our mother *Eve* stood up among the rest of them, and beheld and confessed the promised seed of the woman. "O blessed saviour, that didst break the head of the serpent, though thy heel was bruised, and hast abolished the mischief that my folly and his temptation had brought into thy new created world!"

Now could we ever suppose all this to be done in the upper regions, with no new smiles upon the countenances of the saints, no special increase of joy among the spirits of the just made perfect? God himself stands in no need of the magnificence of these transactions: *Christ Jesus* receives the new honours, and all the old inhabitants of heaven taste new and unknown satisfaction in the honours they pay to their exalted saviour.

Some of the antients were of opinion, that the souls of the fathers before the ascension of *Christ* were not admitted into the holy of holies, or the blissful vision of God; but that it was our Lord *Jesus*, our great high-priest at his ascent to the throne, led the way thither: He rent the veil of the lower heaven, and carried with him the armies of patriarchal souls into some upper and brighter, and more joyful regions, whereas before they were only admitted into a state of peace and rest. Whether this be so or no, the scripture does not sufficiently declare: But whatsoever region of heaven they were placed in, we may be well assured from the very nature of things, that such transactions as the triumphant ascent of *Christ*, could never pass through any



any of the upper worlds without enlarging the knowledge and the joy of the blessed inhabitants.

When our Lord *Jesus Christ* sat down at the right-hand of God, he prevailed to open the book of divine counsels and decrees, *Rev. v. 5.* and to acquaint himself with all the contents: And this was necessary that he might manage and govern the affairs of the church and the world in the several successive ages according to the counsels of the Father. He therefore, and he alone among creatures, knows the end from the beginning, as I hinted before. But as the seals of this book are opened by degrees, and the counsels of God are executed in the lower world, doubtless the angels that are ministers of the providence of *Christ*, carry tidings to heaven of all the greater changes that relate to the church; and *Jesus* the son of God, the king of saints and of nations, receives the shouts and honours of the heavenly world, as fast as the joyful tidings arrive thither.

Nor is this spoken by mere conjecture, for the scripture informs us of the certainty of it. We have frequent accounts in the book of *Revelations*, of new special honours that were paid to him that sits upon the throne, and to the lamb at certain special periods of time.

When he first took upon him the execution of his Father's decrees, the living creatures and elders fell down before the lamb, and they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; and ten thousand times ten thousand angels echoed to the song with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain, &c. *Rev. v. 8, 9, 11.* So when the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads, the innumerable multitude of saints shouted salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb, *Rev. vii. 3, 9, 10.* So when the seventh angel sounded, there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his *Christ*, and he shall reign for ever and ever; and the four and twenty elders fell upon their faces, and worshipped and gave thanks, *Rev. xi. 15, 16.* Again, when the old dragon and his angels were cast out of heaven, there was a loud voice, saying, now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his *Christ*: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, *Rev. xii. 9, 10.* So upon the fall of *Babylon*, chap. xiv. and the victory of the saints, chap. xv. and the final destruction of *Antichrist*, chap. xix. there are new honours done by the saints to God the Father, and his son *Jesus*. There are new songs addressed to them at these surprizing revolutions on earth, these wonderous turns of judgment on the world, and mercy to the church; all which supposes that the heavenly inhabitants are acquainted with them, and thus their knowledge and their joys increase.

Objection. But does not the prophet *Isaiab* say in the name of the church of *Israel*, *Abraham* is ignorant of us, and *Israel* acknowledges us not? *Isa. lxiii. 16.*

Answer 1. The words knowledge and acknowledgment often signify a friendly and beneficial care manifested in special acts of kindness and benefits conferred. Therefore the tribe of *Levi* is said neither to have seen his father, or his mother, nor to acknowledge his brethren, nor to know his own children, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* because the sons of *Levi*, slew every man his brother, and every man his neighbour, to execute the vengeance of the Lord upon them, *Exod. xxxii. 26—29.* So *Abraham* and *Israel*, in heaven, in the same sense know not their posterity on earth, when they approve of the anger of God let out upon them, and afford them no defence. This interpretation perfectly agrees with the context. But it does not follow that *Abraham* and *Israel* were utterly unacquainted with all the greater events of providence towards the

the *Jewish* nation, though perhaps they might not know the lesser and more minute circumstances of their afflictions or their deliverances.

Answer 2. If we could suppose that the souls of the ancient patriarchs were ignorant of the affairs of their posterity before the coming of the *Messiah*, yet since *Christ* in our nature now dwells in the midst of them, and has taken the book of divine counsels into his own hands, since the great God-man rules all things in the upper and the lower worlds, it is not probable that *Abraham* and *Israel* are so ignorant of the affairs of the church, as they were in the days of *Isaiab*.

And not only the greater and more extensive dispensations that attend the church on earth, are made known to the spirits of the just made perfect; but even some lesser and particular concerns are very probably revealed to them also.

Is it not said, that when one sinner on earth repents, there is joy among the angels in heaven? *Luke xv. 7, 10*. For every such convert is a new trophy of divine grace. And when the spirits of the just in heaven shall in successive seasons behold one and another of their old relatives and acquaintance on earth entering in at the gates, and received into heaven, can we imagine there is no new joy amongst them? Do the pleasures of angels increase when they see a man brought into the state of grace, and shall not the souls of men testify their exultation and delight, when they see one of their fellow-souls, perhaps a dear and intimate friend, translated to the state of glory? Surely every increase of that happy world shall diffuse increasing joy through the holy ones that dwell in it; and those shall have the sweetest taste of this joy, that had the dearest concern in it. O the transporting and celestial gratulations that pass between two souls of intimate endearment at their first meeting there!

The last argument that I shall use, and it is also the last instance I shall mention, wherein the knowledge and the pleasure of glorified saints must receive addition and improvement, is, the great resurrection-day.

The spirits of men are formed on purpose for union with bodies, and if they could attain complete happiness in the highest degree without them, what need would there be of new-creating their bodies from the dust? Upon this supposition the resurrection itself must seem to be almost in vain. But it is evident from the word of God, that the spirits of the just, with all the perfections that belong to a separate state, wait yet for greater perfection when their bodies shall be restored to them; for as they suffered pain and agony in the body, they shall have a recompence of pleasure too. All the days of their appointed time they wait, till this blessed change shall come, *Job. xiv. 14*. God shall call, and the dust of the saints shall answer: God the creator will have a desire again to the work of his own hands, *verse 15*. and the happy souls will have a desire to be rejoined to their old companions.

O glorious hour! O blessed meeting-time! A magnificent and divine spectacle, worthy to attract the eyes of all the creation! When the long-divided parts of human nature shall be united with unknown powers and glories! When these bodies shall be called out of their long dark dungeon, all fashioned a-new, and all new dressed in immortality and sun-beams! When these spirits shall assume and animate their limbs again, exulting in new life and everlasting vigour!

Now can we suppose it possible that all this vast and amazing change shall be made by the conflagration of the earth and the lower heavens, by the awful and illustrious splendors and solemnities of the last judgment, by the bodies of millions of saints and sinners rising into a painful or joyful immortality, and yet no new ideas hereby communicated to the happy spirits; no increase of their knowledge, or improvement of their joys?

Shall

Shall the apostles and the prophets, the confessors and the martyrs, stand at the right-hand of *Christ*, and be owned and acknowledged by him with divine applause in the sight of the whole creation, and yet have no new transports of pleasure running through their souls? Shall they be absolved and approved by the voice of God, with thousands of applauding angels, in the face of heaven, earth and hell, and all this without any advancement of their knowledge, or their blessedness? Shall St. *Paul* meet the *Thessalonian* converts in the presence of his Lord *Jesus*, those souls who were once his labour and his hope, and shall they not at that day appear to be his glory and his joy? Does not he himself tell them so in his first epistle, *chap. ii. ver. 19, 20*? And can we believe that he or they shall be disappointed? Shall that great apostle see the immense fruits of his labours, the large harvest of souls which he gathered from many provinces of *Europe* and *Asia*, all appearing at once in their robes of light and victory, and shall he feel no new inward exultations of spirit at such a sight? And doubtless many thousand souls, whom he never knew on earth, shall be made known to him at that day, and own their conversion to his sacred writings. And shall all this make no addition to his pleasures? The very mention of so absurd a doctrine refutes and condemns itself.

The saints at that day shall, as it were, be brought into a new world, and he that sits upon the throne shall make all things new; and as he crowns his happy followers with new and unknown blessings, so shall he receive the homage of new and unknown praises. This is a new heaven and a new earth indeed, beyond all our present apprehensions; and the magnificent language of prophecy shall be fulfilled in its utmost force and brightness.

Doubtless there are pleasures to be enjoyed by complete human nature, by imbodyed souls, which a mere separate spirit is not capable of. Is it not part of the blessedness of human spirits to enjoy mutual society, and hold a pleasing correspondence with each other? But whatsoever be the means and methods of that correspondence in a separate state, surely it wants something of that complete pleasure and sensible intimacy, which they shall be made partakers of, when they shall hold noble communion in their bodies raised from the dust, and refined from every weakness. Is it not the happiness of the saints in heaven to see their glorified saviour? But even this sight is and must be incomplete, till they are endued with bodily organs again. What converse soever the spirits of the just have with the glorified man *Jesus*, while they are absent from the body, yet I am persuaded it is not, nor can it be so full and perfect in all respects, as it shall be at the general resurrection. They cannot now see him face to face in the literal sense, and they wait for this exalted pleasure, this immediate and beatific sight. *Job* himself yet waits, though the worms have destroyed his body, till that glorious hour, when in his flesh he shall see God, *Job xix. 26.* even God, his redeemer, who shall stand at the last day on the earth, *ver. 25.*

Not only all the saints on earth who have received the first-fruits of the spirit, wait for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body, *Rom. viii. 23.* but the saints in heaven also live there, waiting till the body be redeemed from the grave, and their adoption shall appear with illustrious evidence: Then they shall all look like the sons of God, like *Jesus*, the first-beloved and the first-born. The spirits above, how perfect soever they are in the joys of the separate state, yet wait for those endless scenes of unknown delight that shall succeed the resurrection.

And there is abundant reason for it, to be drawn from the word of God; for the scripture speaks but very little concerning the blessedness of separate souls, in comparison of the frequent and large accounts of the glory and triumph that shall attend

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the sound of the last trumpet, and the great rising-day. It is to this blessed hour that the apostles in their writings are always directing the hope of the saints. They are ever pointing to this glorious morning, as the season when they shall receive their reward and their prize, their promised joy and their crown; as though all that they had received before in their state of separation, were hardly to be named in comparison of that more exceeding and eternal weight of additional glory.

What new kinds of sensations shall entertain us in that day, what a rich variety of senses we shall enjoy, what well appointed and immortal organs we shall be furnished with, instead of our present feeble eyes and ears, and what glorious and transporting objects shall surround us in those unknown worlds, and fill the enlarged powers of the soul with sensible as well as intellectual delights: These are wonders too sublime even for our present conjecture, and are all reserved in the counsels of God, to complete the final felicity of the saints.

Thus we have made it appear, that the knowledge and joy that belongs to the spirits of the just made perfect, may admit of large increase\*.

But can their holiness be increased too? Can perfect holiness receive any improvement?

I will not assert any thing in this matter, lest the manner of expression should offend weaker minds: But I desire leave to enquire, whether those who know most of God, do not love him best? Whether those who have the brightest and fullest visions of him, are not most transformed into his image, and made most nearly like to him? Now if the separate spirits in heaven are advanced to different degrees of divine knowledge, may they not in this sense have different degrees of holiness too? Is it not possible that one saint should love God more intensely than another, and be more impressed with his likeness, as he beholds more of his beauty? Is it not possible that a soul shall grow in the strength and fervour of it's love and zeal for God, and be more exactly assimilated to him, as it gets nearer to God, and grows up into higher measures of acquaintance with him? Has not the angel *Gabriel*, the apostle *Paul*, and the glorified human nature of *Christ* in any respect more of holiness or love, or likeness to God, than the meanest saint or angel in heaven? Is not their sublimer knowledge and nearness to God attended with proportionable rays of divine sanctity and glory? Is not the divine image in these exalted saints more complete than in the very lowest?

And yet we may boldly assert, that the meanest saint or angel there is so perfect in holiness, as to be free from all sin: There is nothing to be found in any spirit there, contrary to the nature or the will of God. So a soul released from the body may perhaps grow in likeness and love to God perpetually, and yet it may have no sinful defects either in it's love or conformity to God from the first moment of it's entrance into heaven.

I shall first illustrate this by two similitudes, and then propose a rational and clear account of it in a way of argument.

When the distant morning-sun shines on a piece of polished metal, the metal reflects the face of the sun in perfection, when the sun first rises on it. But the same instruments coming directly under the meridian sun-beams, shall reflect the same image brighter and warmer: And yet every moment of this reflection from the morn-

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\* There is a little treatise, called, *The future state, displaying the progressive knowledge of the blessed in heaven*, written by a country gentleman, published in 1683, wherein are many ingenious thoughts on this subject.

ing to the highest noon, shall be perfect, that is, without spot, without blemish, and without defect. Such perhaps is the holiness of all the saints in heaven.

Or shall I rather borrow a similitude from scripture, and say, the holiness of the spirits in heaven is compared to fine linen? *Rev. xix. 8.* The fine linen clean and white is the righteousness of the saints, *τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων.* Now though a garment may be perfectly clean without the least spot or stain, yet fine linen may grow whiter hourly, as it is bleached by the constant influence of the heavens. So though every spirit be perfectly cleansed and purified from all sin and defilement, yet it is not impossible that the degrees of it's grace and holiness, or conformity to God, may grow brighter, and much improve by nearer approaches to God, longer acquaintance with him, and the continued influences of his majesty and love.

Now let me propose a rational account of this matter to the consideration of those whose minds are raised above common prejudices.

The holiness of an innocent creature consists in attaining the knowledge of the nature and will of God, according to the utmost of its own present capacity, and the means of discovery which it enjoys, and in the various exercises of love to God in an exact proportion to it's knowledge: or to express it briefly thus, an innocent creature is perfectly holy, when it knows and loves God to the utmost reach of it's present powers. If this be done, there is no sinful defect, no guilty imperfection; and yet there may be almost an infinite difference in the various degrees of power and capacity, of knowledge and love, amongst innocent spirits: One spirit may be formed capable of knowing much more of his maker than another, and may be favoured with richer discoveries. Now if every new divine discovery raise an equal proportion of love in the soul, then it is possible that any soul might be perfectly holy at it's first entrance into heaven, and yet may make sublime advances in holiness hourly.

Can we suppose that innocent *Adam*, at his very formation in paradise, knew all the wonders of divine wisdom and goodness, that ever he was designed to attain, had he lived sinless and immortal? And then can we believe since his knowledge of his maker's goodness and wisdom was to receive continual advances, that he should admire him no more, and love him no better after a thousand years converse with him, than he did at his first creation? Now the case of the saints in heaven is much the same. The rule and measure of their duty is their knowledge, and the rule and measure of their knowledge is their own capacity, and their means of discovery. They never fall short of their duty, and therefore they have no sin: And thus their holiness may be every moment perfect, and yet perhaps every moment increasing, as their capacities are enlarged, and receive new discoveries, through all the ages of their immortality.

Happy souls, whose aspiring knowledge, and love, and zeal, move onward hourly, and get still nigher to their God! Surely while they behold his face in the unveiled beauties of his holiness, they shall love him with warmer zeal, and be more abundantly satisfied with his likeness, *Psal. xvii. 15.*

After all that I have said on this subject, some will insist on this objection, *viz.* Can there be any such thing as imperfection in heaven? Is it not said to be a perfect state? Now if the spirits above be always growing in excellency and holiness, then they are always defective and eternally imperfect; which is very hard to suppose concerning the saints in glory, and contrary to the very expression and letter of my text.

The answer to this is very easy, to all that will give their reason leave to exercise itself upon just ideas, and to think and argue beyond the chime of words.

Perfection, as I told you before, is not to be taken here in an absolute, but in a comparative sense: Nothing is absolutely perfect but God; and in comparison of God, the highest and most exalted of all creatures is, and will be eternally imperfect and defective: The heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charges his angels with folly, *Job* iv. 18. Even the man *Christ Jesus* shall for ever fall short of the perfection of the divine nature to which he is united, and in this sense will be imperfect for ever.

But where any creature has attained to such exalted degrees of excellency as are far superior to what others have attained, it is the custom of the scripture to call them perfect, and that with a design to do honour to their character: So *Noah* was a just man, and perfect in his generation, *Gen.* vi. 9. *Job* also has this honour done him, he was perfect and upright, *Job* i. 1. And the saints on earth are called perfect in many parts of the word of God, even while they are here on earth, and have many defects and imperfections. So though it be literally true, that the saints in heaven are continually imperfect in comparison of God and *Christ*, and of what they themselves shall further attain; yet the scripture, which delights to do honour to them, chuses rather to call them perfect, because of the sublime degree of excellencies they possess above their fellow-saints on earth: And it is not fit for us to degrade them in our common language by the diminishing and abasing names of defect and imperfection, though their present perfection and excellency admits of everlasting increase.

If any man, after he has read this treatise thus far, and has duly weighed all the former arguments, can see force enough in this last objection to baffle or destroy them all, or can find terror enough in the mere sound of the word imperfect to forbid his assent; I desire he may not be disturbed in the possession of his own sentiments, till the sweet and surprizing sensations of evergrowing felicity convince him, that heaven is a place of glorious improvement.

This shall suffice for the third general head of my discourse, wherein I have shewn, that the perfection of the spirits of the just is such a perfection as admits of a rich variety of employments and pleasures, according to the various taste and inclination of the blessed; it allows of their different degrees of felicity, according to their different capacities and preparations: It furnishes each blessed spirit with a frequent change of pleasures, and it gives room for perpetual increase.

## SECTION V.

### *Of the means of attaining this perfection.*

**M**Y fourth and last enquiry is this, how do these good spirits of just men arrive at this perfection.

I answer, by the death of the body, and their departure from flesh and blood.

You will ask what reasons are there, why their departure from the body should bring them into this perfect state? I will content myself to mention these four.

I. Because at death their state of trial is ended, and the time of recompence begins by divine appointment: Now all their imperfections must end with their state of trial.

This is the account of things in the scripture, *Heb.* ix. 27. It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment. At the hour of death those words are spoken aloud in the most dreadful or most delightful language, *Rev.* xxii. 11. He that is unjust or filthy, let him be so still: He that is righteous and holy, let him be so

so still. And then upon the determination of the state, the reward or recompence follows, *ver. 12. My reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.*

Many inconveniences and imperfections, and difficulties, are proper for a state of trial, and by these methods we are trained up for glory. *Christ* himself was ignorant of many things in the day of his trial; his knowledge on earth was imperfect, and his joys were so too: for he grew in wisdom and knowledge, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he suffered, and the captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings: *Heb. v. 8. and ii. 10.* But when the time of probation and suffering ceases, then perfection is come, and glory appears.

Hail, blessed spirits above, who have passed your state of trial well! You have run the laborious race under many burdens, and you have received the prize. You have fought with mighty enemies, you have overcome a thousand difficulties, and you enjoy the crown. No more shall you complain of the mixture of error with your knowledge, no more shall you groan under the perplexities of thought, the tumults of passion, the burdens of indwelling iniquity, nor cry out because of oppressing enemies or sorrows. The hour of your trial is finished. You have been sincere and faithful in your imperfect services, and you are arrived at the world of perfection.

II. At the hour of death the spirits of the just leave all the natural and the sinful infirmities of flesh and blood behind them, which are the causes and springs of a thousand imperfections.

The very natural circumstances and necessities of the body, and the inconveniences that attend it in this frail state, do very much embarrass and clog the spirit in its pursuit of knowledge, or holiness, or divine joy.

The flesh is a dark covering to the soul; it beclouds our ideas, confuses our conceptions, and prevents a clear and distinct knowledge of a thousand objects. It is a dull dark tabernacle for a spirit's residence. It has windows indeed to let in light, but those very windows, like painted or curled glass, too often discolour the objects, or distort the shape of them. These very senses of ours frequently impose upon us in the searches after truth, and represent things not as they are in themselves, and in their own nature, but as they are useful and hurtful to us; and often we pass a false judgment on the nature of things by their influence, and are led into many mistakes in our enquiries after knowledge.

Our fancy or imagination raises up false images of things, and we forsake the solid and real truth, to follow the shapes, and colours, and appearances of it painted upon fancy.

From our very infancy, our souls are imposed upon by the animal; we draw in early many false judgments, and establish them daily. We are nursed up in prejudice against a hundred truths both in the philosophical, the moral, and the religious life; and it is the labour of an age even for a wise and good man to wear off a few of them and to judge with any tolerable freedom, evidence and certainty.

A great part of our life is spent in sleep, wherein the soul is bound up from exerting any regular thoughts, confined every night to a periodical delirium, subjected to all the fluttering tyranny of the animal spirits, and dragged away into all the wild wanderings of dreaming nature; and indeed the thoughts of many of us always, and of all of us sometimes, even when we are awake, are but little better, because

we perpetually dance after the motions of passion and fancy, and our reason seldom judges without them. Alas! how imperfect is the best of us in knowledge here!

But knowledge is not the only good, of which the body deprives the spirit. The necessities of the body, hunger and thirst, weakness and weariness, and drowsy spirits, sit very heavy upon the soul, and hinder it in the pursuit of holy and heavenly thoughts, break off many a divine meditation, and interrupt and spoil many a delightful piece of worship. In sickness or in old age, what long and weighty troubles, what tiresome infirmities clog the soul, and what restless pains of nature overwhelm the spirit, and forbid the lively exercises of devotion!

And then also the sinful appetites and perverse affections of nature are very much seated in flesh and blood: So much, that the apostle in many places calls the principles of sin by the general name of flesh. Read the latter end of the seventh chapter of his epistle to the *Romans*. How doth he complain of the flesh and members of the body, which are fatal instruments of sin and *Satan*! Read the black catalogue of iniquities, *Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.* and hear them called the works of the flesh. Pride and malice, and envy, and lust, and covetousness, and wrath, and revenge, are found secretly working in flesh and blood. O how much are the springs of these sinful evils seated in the very composition of depraved animal nature! And how is the poor labouring spirit of a saint dreadfully betrayed thereby into frequent actual guilt, even notwithstanding all its care and watchfulness! O wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us! Blessed be God, there is a time of release.

And as our knowledge and our holiness are rendered very imperfect, by reason of these sensible and corrupt engines of flesh and blood, so are the joys and satisfactions of the soul perpetually impaired and diminished hereby. The heart of the saint is in pain to feel sin working in it, and the conscience complains under the anguish of guilt. Blessed be God for the balm that is found in the blood of *Christ* to ease the anguish of conscience!

Besides, what spirit can enjoy perfect peace, while it is tied to so many thousand nerves, each of which may become an instrument of intense pain and torture? And the body itself has sharp humours enough in it to corrode those nerves, and fill the indwelling spirit with agonies. What millions of seeds of painful disease lurk in animal nature, that render this body a most uncomfortable dwelling! And how many thousand strokes and accidents are we liable to from abroad, whence new pains and sorrows are derived to the soul! The wind and the weather, the rain and the hail, and the scorching sun, the air, the water, and fire, and every element, may afflict the animal, and pain the unhappy spirit.

But O happy souls, that are free from all the cumbersome and mischievous influences of flesh and blood! from these instruments of iniquity, and springs of deadly guilt and torment! Happy souls, that are released from sick and languishing bodies, from feeble and burdensome limbs, and all the tiresome and painful disorders of dying nature! that are raised beyond the reach and injury of all these lower elements, these mediums of disease and pain! Rejoice and triumph, ye prisoners newly discharged; ye feel the pleasurable truths that we guess at, but ye feel and enjoy them with a relish of sublime pleasure beyond all our conjectures. Rejoice and exult in your new liberty, like a bird released from the imprisoning cage, and sing with sweetest notes to the praise of your redeemer. O worship and serve him in the full freedom of all your active powers; attend at his feet with intense delight, and love him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

III. By



III. By the death of the body, and their release from it, these spirits of the just are free from all the tempting powers and the sinful influences of earth and hell.

This world of sensible allurements, and this world of sinful men, hath a mighty influence on the spirits of the saints while they dwell in flesh and blood. How often are we deceived into practices of iniquity by the enticing vanities of this life? How often tempted by evil companions, by flattering mischiefs and ensnaring circumstances? And many times too the fear of men, and the terror of their threatenings, fright us to a neglect of duty, or hurry us into the commission of some active iniquity. Sometimes the pleasing enjoyments of life tie our hearts to the creature by the bands of excessive love; and sometimes the injuries and reproaches we receive from them, kindle our fiery passions, and rouse up our sinful wrath and revenge.

This world also is much under the evil influences of the prince of darkness; he is called the God of this world: It is greatly given up to the ravages of the roaring lion; and he worries the spirits of the saints while they dwell within his territories, though he is not suffered to destroy and devour them.

But at the moment of death the happy spirit is released from the senses, and thereby from the impressions of all sensible things. All the flattering vanities of this lower world have no more power to entice the soul, than the grossest sensualities could entice a pure angel. Sinful companions can no more invite, and threatening tyrants have no more power to terrify.

The spirit is then got out of the territories of *Satan*; he is prince of the power of the air, but his dominion reaches no farther. The heaven where *Christ* is, never admits him. *Michael* with his angels hath cast out the old dragon and his angels, and there is no more place found for them there. Happy spirits, delivered and secured from the devil and the world at once, and from all their tempting and destructive influences!

Now when a sanctified soul is thus released both from its union to sinful flesh and blood, and from all possible assaults of the powers of earth and hell, it may be worth our enquiry, whether this release be not sufficient of itself to render the work of sanctification complete, and bring it to a state of perfection, supposing still the ordinary concurrence or influence of the sanctifying spirit? Or whether there must be any immediate, almighty and present change wrought in the soul by a new and extraordinary influence of the blessed Spirit at the very moment of death, by which sanctification is at once completed. Which of these is true I know not. I confess this last has generally been the opinion of our protestant writers; and perhaps it may be the truth: But the scripture is silent.

Who can tell therefore whether a holy soul, that hath received the divine seed of grace, which is called the divine nature, and is regenerated, and renewed, and sanctified by the holy spirit, hath not all its remaining sins and imperfections owing to its bonds of sinful flesh and blood? And whether its compliance with so many temptations, is not to be attributed to its close attachments to corrupt animal nature and sensible things? And therefore whether this sanctified nature would not become completely free from sin, when it is freed from all the influence of a tempting body and a tempting world? Whether the divine bent and bias that is given it by the Spirit of God at first conversion, and by which it maintains continual opposition to sinful flesh, would not make its own way toward perfection without new and extraordinary operations? Whether this would not be sufficient to cause the soul for ever to ascend naturally toward God in desire, and love, and delight, when all clogs and embarrassments are removed? So a vessel filled with upper air, and dragged down by  
some

some heavy weight to the bottom of the sea, labours and wrestles with the uneasy burden, and hath a perpetual tendency toward this upper region: But if the weight be once taken off, it immediately of itself rises through the water, and never ceases it's motion till it come to the surface.

I confess this is a nicer speculation, and of doubtful evidence; though when St. *Paul* lays his sinful compliances and captivity so much to the charge of his flesh and members in the vii. chapter to the *Romans*, and in other places of his writings, one would be ready to think St. *Paul* was of this opinion. However, this we are sure of, that a sanctified soul released from the body, shall be made free from every sin, and it's absence from flesh and the world have a large, if not a sufficient influence to effect this freedom.

And if we should grant it, that a soul just dismissed from this world is not perfectly sanctified by the mere influence of this release; yet this perfection is sufficiently secured by it's dismissal from flesh; for when absent from the body, it is present with the Lord: And this leads me to the next particular, *viz.*

IV. At death the spirits of the just released from bodies, enter into another state, a different world, where they have a thousand advantages for improvement in knowledge, and advances in holiness and joy, vastly beyond what any thing in this world could furnish them with.

They see God, and are for ever with him. They behold him face to face, as I have before explained it, in a more immediate and intuitive manner; and doubtless such a sight fills the spirit with a clearer and brighter idea of the nature and attributes of God, than all the former lessons it had learned in the books of nature and of scripture could ever give it.

They see our Lord *Jesus Christ*, our glorified saviour, in such a way and manner as glorified separate spirits can converse with spirits imbodyed; and one such view as this will perhaps lead us into more intimate acquaintance with his human nature and his united godhead, than many years of converse with him by all the mediums of ordinances, those divine glasses wherein we see him darkly, as the apostle speaks, and whereby God and *Christ* represent and manifest themselves to saints on earth.

And as our knowledge shall receive immense and surprizing improvements by these new methods of discovery, so I think it shall in due proportion advance our holiness or conformity to God the Father, and his brightest image *Christ Jesus*: for we cannot behold them in such a manner without a glorious transformation into their likeness, as I have hinted already.

When a soul, that hath a new nature given it by sanctifying grace, is placed in the immediate view and presence of God the most holy, it will ever be growing into a greater degree of nearness and love, and it will be powerfully changed more and more into the likeness of God himself, as a needle when placed within the reach of a loadstone's attractive power, ceases not it's motion till it be joined in perfect union, and itself acquires the virtues of that wonderful mineral.

Nor is it possible in heaven that we should advance in knowledge and holiness without an equal improvement in felicity and joy. On earth indeed we are told, he that will live godly, shall suffer persecution; and he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow, 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. and *Eccles.* i. 18. But as heaven is high above the earth, so are the customs and the blessings of that state superior to this; for there are no present sorrows to be known, nor any future to be feared: And holiness has no enemy there. All things round the saint, shall have a tendency to promote his blessedness.

The

The spirit of a good man released from the body, and ascending to heaven, is surrounded with thousands and ten thousands of blessed spirits of the human and angelic order: When it gets within the confines of the heavenly country, it sweetly and insensibly acquires the genius and temper of the inhabitants; it breathes, as it were, a new air, and lives, and thinks, and acts just as they do. It shines and burns with new degrees of knowledge, zeal and love, and exults in the transporting communications of the same joy.

How vastly shall our understandings be improved by the kind narratives and instructions of the saints that arrived at heaven before us, and by converse with the ministering angels.

You will say perhaps, that we shall have no need of their teaching when we get to heaven, for we shall be near to God himself, and receive all immediately from him.

But hath the scripture any where excluded the assistance of our fellow-spirits? God can teach us here on earth immediately by his own spirit, without the use of books and letters, without the help of prophets and ministers, men of like passions with ourselves; and yet he chuses rather to do it in an instrumental way, and makes his creatures in the lower world the means of our instruction under the superior influence of his own spirit: and why may he not use the same methods to communicate knowledge to the spirits that newly arrive at that upper world?

There we shall see the patriarchs of the old world, and prophets of the old dispensation, as well as the apostles and evangelists of *Christ* and his gospel. There we shall be conversant with those blessed angels whom he has used as ministers of his vengeance, or his mercy, to persons and churches, families and nations: and they will not be unwilling to inform us of those great and surprizing transactions of God with men.

There we shall find a multitude of other eminent saints before and after *Christ*.

*Adam* doubtless will take a peculiar pleasure in acquainting all his happy posterity with the special form and terms of the covenant of innocency; he shall tell us the nature of the trees of knowledge and of life, and how fatally he fell, to the ruin of his unborn offspring. Unhappy father, deriving iniquity and death down to his children! But with what immense satisfaction and everlasting surprize he views the second *Adam*, his son and his saviour, and stands in adoration and transport, while he beholds millions of his seed that he once ruined, now raised to superior glories above the promises of the law of works, by the intervening influence of a mediator? *Enoch*, the man that walked with God, and *Elijah*, the great reformer, shall instruct us how they were translated to heaven, and passed into a blessed immortality without calling at the gates of death. *Noah* will relate to his sons among the blessed, what was the wickedness of the old world before the flood, that provoked God their maker to drown them all; he shall entertain us with the wonders of the ark, and the covenant of the rainbow in all its glorious colours. *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, shall talk over again with us his familiar converse with God and angels in their frequent apparitions to him, and shall tell us how much the promised seed transcends all the poor low ideas he had of him in his obscure age of prophecy. For we cannot suppose that all intimate converse with our father *Abraham* shall be forbidden us, by any of the laws or manners of that heavenly country, since heaven itself is described by our sitting down as at one table with *Abraham*, and dwelling in his bosom, *Matt.* viii. 11. and *Luke* xiv. 15. and xvi. 23.

There *Paul* and *Moses* shall join together to give us an account of the *jewish* law, and read wonderful and entertaining lectures on the types and figures of that economy,

mony, and still lead our thoughts to the glorious antitype with surprizing encomiums of the blessed *Jesus*. *Paul* shall unfold to us the dark places of his own writings, better than he himself once understood them; and *Moses* shall become an interpreter of his own law, who knew so little of the mystery and beauty of it on earth himself.

There we shall acquaint ourselves with some of the antient fathers of the christian church, and the martyrs, those dying champions of the faith and honours of the christian name. These will recount the various providences of God to the church in their several ages, and shew the visions of *St. John* in the book of the *Revelation*, not in the morning twilight of prophecy, but as in the light of noon, as a publick history, or as an evening rehearsal of the transactions of the day. The witnesses themselves shall tell us how they prophesied in sackcloth, and were slain by the man of sin; how they rose from the dead in three days and a half, and how the church was at last reformed from the popish mysteries of iniquity and superstition. *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, *Calvin* and *Luther*, and the rest of the pious reformers, shall make known to us the labours and sufferings of their age, and the wonders of pure christianity rising as it were out of the grave, and throwing off the chains, the darkness and defilements of *Antichrist*: And those holy souls who laboured in the reformation of *Great-Britain*, while they relate the transactions of their day, shall perhaps enquire and wonder why their successors put a stop to that blessed work, and have made no further progress in a hundred and fifty years.

Did one of the elders near the throne give notice to the apostle *John* concerning the martyrs, *Rev. vii. 14.* *These are they which came out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb*; and shall we not suppose that the happy spirits above tell one another their victories over sin and temptation, and the powers of this world? Shall not the martyrs who triumphed in their own blood, and overcame *Satan* and *Antichrist* by the blood of the lamb, and the word of their testimony, shall they not make it known to the inhabitants of the upper world, and tell it to the honour of *Christ*, their captain and their king, how they fought, and died, and conquered? Methinks I hear these noble historians rehearsing their sacred tragedy; how they entertain a bright circle of listening angels and fellow-spirits with their own glorious and dreadful story, dreadful to suffer, and glorious to relate!

Shall it be objected here, that all the glorified saints cannot be supposed to maintain immediate discourse with those blessed ancients? Can those ancients be imagined to repeat the same stories perpetually afresh, to entertain every stranger that is newly arrived at heaven?

I answer, that since one single spirit dwelling in flesh can communicate his thoughts immediately to five or six thousand hearers at once by his voice, and to millions more successively by books and writings, it is very unreasonable to suppose, that spirits made perfect and glorified have not a power of communicating their thoughts to many more thousands by immediate converse: and it is past our reach to conceive what unknown methods may be in use amongst them, to transmit their ideas and narratives in a much swifter succession, than by books and writings, through all the courts of heaven, and to inform all the new comers, without putting each happy spirit to the everlasting labour of a tiresome repetition.

Though every saint in heaven should not be admitted to immediate and speedy converse with these spirits of renown in past ages, yet doubtless these glorious minds have

have communicated their narratives, and the memoirs of their age, to thousands of that blessed world already, and from them we may receive a repetition of the same wonders with faithfulness and exact truth. History and chronology are no precarious and uncertain sciences in that country.

It is very probable indeed, that we shall have more intimate nearness to and more familiar communion with those spirits that were of the same age and place with ourselves, and of the same church or family; for we can more delightfully expatiate in our converse with them about the same providences and the same methods of grace, and agreeably entertain and improve each other with notices of the affairs of the upper and lower worlds.

Nor must we suppose such sort of historical converse among the blessed spirits is merely designed to fill the mind with new and strange ideas. This pleasure considered by itself, is not sacred enough for the spirits of the just made perfect. There is not a narrative in the world, but shall disclose some wonderful instances of divine wisdom or mercy, power or faithfulness, patience and forgiveness, or wrath and justice: The speaker shall feel the workings of all proper reverence, zeal and love; and every hearer shall be impressed with correspondent affections, and join in adoration and holy wonder.

And while we speak of the means and advantages that glorified spirits enjoy for their improvement in all the parts of their felicity, surely we may expect the greatest and the best assistances, even those of the holy Spirit, to render all these means more effectual. Is he not promised to abide with us, to be in us, and dwell with us for ever? *John* xiv. 16, 17. Is he not represented as dwelling in the spirits of the just made perfect, when it is said, the Spirit that dwelleth in them shall raise their mortal bodies from the dead? *Rom.* viii. 11. May we not then reasonably infer, That that glorious Spirit, who hath been our enlightener, our comforter, and our sanctifier on earth, will be our perpetual enlightener, our eternal sanctifier, and our everlasting comforter; He that hath so wonderfully begun the divine work in us, and laid foundations of joy in knowledge and holiness, will he not finish and perfect his own work, and add the top-stone to crown the heavenly building?

O blessed state of spirits discharged from the prison of flesh and this world! this wicked world, where *Satan* the evil spirit has so wide a range, and so poisonous an influence, and where sinful men swarm on every side, and bear the largest sway! What divine advantages are you possessed of, for the improvement of all your sacred excellencies and joys! When we can raise our thoughts a little, and survey your privileges, we feel somewhat of an inward wish to dwell among you, and send a breathing meditation, or a glance of warm desire towards your world and your society. We poor prisoner-spirits, when we hear such tidings from the country at which you are arrived, we stretch our wings a little, and are ready to wish for the flight. But God our sovereign must appoint the hour; he sees that we are not yet refined enough. Keep our souls, O Father, in this erect posture, looking, reaching and longing for the celestial world, till thou hast completely prepared us for the promised glory, and then give us the joyful word of dismissal.

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear on what accounts a dismissal from the body is both the season when, and the means whereby the spirits of the just arrive at this perfection. Their state of trial is ended at death, and therefore all inconveniences and imperfections must cease by divine appointment: By death the soul is released from all the troublesome and tempting influences of flesh and blood; it

is delivered from this sinful world, it is got beyond the reach of *Satan* the tempter and the tormenter ; and it is surrounded with a thousand advantages for improvement in knowledge, holiness and joy.

## S E C T I O N VI.

*Remarks on the foregoing discourse.*

REMARK I. **A**RE the spirits of the just made perfect at the death of the body? Then we may be assured that they neither die nor sleep; for sleep and death are both inconsistent with this state of perfection which I have described.

The dead saints are not lost nor extinct. They are not perished out of God's world, though they are gone from ours. They are no more in the world that is enlightened by the sun and moon, and the glimmering stars; but they themselves shine gloriously, like stars of different magnitude, in the world where there is no sun, nor is there any need of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God enlightens it, and the lamb is the everlasting light thereof, *Rev. xxi. 23.* They are lost from earth, but they are found in heaven. They are dead to us at present, but they are alive to God their Father, and to *Jesus* their saviour; they are alive to the holy angels, and all their fellow-saints in that upper world.

If there had been any such thing as a soul sleeping or dying, our saviour would never have argued thus with the *Sadducees*, *Luke xx. 37, 38.* nor have proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the doctrine of the separate state of souls: It is as if he had said, *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* are dead long ago; but God is the God of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* still. Now God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; therefore the souls of those patriarchs are yet alive, for they all live to God in the separate state, and they shall appear in their complete human nature, soul and body, at the resurrection. This is the language and the force of our saviour's argument, and therefore I must believe the soul of *Abraham* is alive now.

When *Jesus* promises the penitent thief upon the cross, *Luke xxiii. 43.* This day shalt thou be with me in paradise; can we persuade ourselves that he intended no more than that the thief should be with him in the grave, or in a state of indolence and insensibility? Does he not assure him in these words, that there is a state of happiness for spirits dismissed from the body, whither the soul of our Lord *Jesus* was going, and where the dying penitent should find him?

So when the infidel *Jews* stoned *Stephen* the first martyr, *Acts vii. 59.* while he expressed his faith and hope in these words, Lord *Jesus*, receive my spirit: was this spirit of his to be laid asleep till the resurrection? Can we suppose the dying saint would have made such a request upon so lethargic a principle, and in the view of such a stupid state? No, surely; for he expected, and desired, and prayed to be received to dwell where *Christ* is, and to behold that glory which he had a glimpse of in the agonies of death.

Would the apostle *Paul* have been so willing to be absent from the body, where he did much service for his saviour, if he had not a joyful view of being present with the Lord? As he expresses it, *2 Cor. v. 8.* What doth he mean by this blessed language of presence with the Lord, if his soul was to lie asleep in a senseless and unactive state till the second coming of *Jesus*? Or would he have told the *Philippians*, chap. i. verse 23. that he had a desire to depart, and to be with *Christ*,  
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which is far better, if he had hoped for no advantage for his spirit by it, but a mere stupid indolence and rest in the silent grave?

Besides, we are told of rebellious Spirits that are in prison. 1 *Pet.* iii. 19, 20. and of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, *Jude*, verſe 7. Whether this be material fire, or merely a metaphor to expreſs torment, is not neceſſary to enquire here: But ſurely we can never imagine that the juſtice of God has provided the priſon of hell and fiery torments for the ſouls of the wicked, ſeparate from bodies, and yet that the mercy and goodneſs of God has provided no heaven of happineſs for the ſpirits of thoſe that have loved, honoured and obeyed him all the days they dwelt in the fleſh. There is then, there is certainly a ſtate of happineſs prepared for holy ſouls immediately after death.

When we think of our pious friends departed, our fooliſh imagination is too ready to indulge and improve our ſorrow. We ſit ſolitary in the parlour and the chamber, we miſs them there, and we cry, "They are loſt." We retire melancholy to the cloſet, and bewail a loſt father, or loſt mother, or perhaps a nearer and dearer relative. We miſs them in our daily converſation, we miſs them in all their friendly offices, and their endearing ſenſible characters, and we are ready to ſay again, "Alas! they are loſt." This is the language of fleſh and blood, of ſenſe and fancy. Come let our faith teach us to think and ſpeak of them under a more chearful and a juſter representation: They are not utterly loſt, for they are preſent with *Chriſt* and with God. They are departed our world, where all things are imperfect, to thoſe upper regions where light and perfection dwell. They have left their offices and ſtations here among us, but they are employed in a far diviner manner, and have new ſtations and nobler offices on high. Their places on earth indeed know them no more, but their places in heaven knew them well, even thoſe glorious manſions that were prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Their place is empty in the earthly ſanctuary, and in the days of ſolemn aſſembly, but they appear above in the heavenly *Jeruſalem* as fair pillars and ornaments in the temple of God on high, and ſhall for ever dwell with him there.

It is a very natural enquiry now, but where are theſe places of bleſſed ſpirits? What part of the creation is it, in which they have their reſidence? Is it above or below the ſun? Is their habitation in any of the planetary or ſtarry worlds? Or are they fled beyond them all? Where is the proper place of their preſence?

Let me propoſe a brief answer to theſe curious queſtions in a few propoſitions.

1. The chief properties of ſpirits are knowledge and activity; and they are ſaid to be preſent there, where they have an immediate perception of any thing, and where they lay out their immediate activity or influence. So our ſouls are ſaid to be preſent with our bodies, becauſe they have immediate conſciouſneſs or knowledge of what relates to the body, and they move it, and act upon it, or influence it, in an immediate manner.

2. God, the infinite Spirit, has an immediate and univerſal preſence; that is, he is immediately conſciouſ of, and acquainted with every thing that paſſes in all the known and unknown parts of the creation, and by his preſerving and governing power manages all things. Whereſoever he diſplays his glory to ſeparate ſpirits, that is heaven; and where he exerts his vengeance, that is hell.

3. Finite ſpirits have not ſuch an immediate and univerſal preſence. Their knowledge and their activity are confined to certain parts of the creation: And whereſoever they are, if they are under the immediate influences of divine glory, they are in heaven; if of his vengeance, they are in hell.

4. They are usually represented as having some relation to a particular place or places ; because while we dwell in flesh and blood, we know not how to conceive of their presence so well any other way : and therefore they may be described in scripture or in common discourse, as being in heaven, and above the heavens, and in the third heaven, and as coming down to earth, &c. according as they are supposed to put forth any actions there or to have an immediate cognizance of things that are done in those places : for the chief notion we have of the presence of spirits is their immediate consciousness, and their immediate agency.

5. But if they are provided with any subtle etherial bodies, which are called vehicles, in and by which they act as soon as they leave flesh and blood, then they may properly be said to reside in those places where their vehicles are, even as our souls at present are said to be in a room, or a closet, or a field, because our bodies are there, in and by which they act.

6. There must be some place where the glorified body of *Christ* is, and the souls of departed saints are, in some sense, with him. There *Enoch* and *Elijah* are in their immortal bodies, and other saints who rose at the resurrection of *Christ*. They may be, for ought we know, in or among some of the planets, or amongst the stars, though the distance of the stars is so prodigious and amazing, according to the exactest calculations of the new philosophy, that if the motion of a spirit or glorified body were no swifter than that of a cannon-bullet, they would not get so far as the stars in a thousand ages ; nor would the journey of so swift a traveller to any of the planets, except the moon, cost less than the labour of several years.

7. These things are so puzzling to our reason, so confound our imagination, and so far transcend the reach of our present faculties to enquire and determine, that it is sufficient for us to know and believe, that the spirits of the just made perfect have an existence under the blissful influences of the grace and glory of God. And though we freely speak of them, and the scripture leads us to conceive of them, as dwelling in a world of light, and in some special place of magnificence and apartments of glory, or as moving from one place to another ; yet perhaps it is to be understood chiefly in condescension to the weakness of our present capacities, or in relation to vehicles to which they may be united. But our ignorance in these matters shall be no hinderance to our arrival at heaven, if we tread the paths of faith and holiness, though we know not in what part of the creation it lies.

I proceed to the second remark.

REMARK II. If all the spirits of the just that depart from this world are made perfect, then there is much better company above than there is below. The society in heaven is much more agreeable than the best society on earth.

Here we meet with a multitude of sinners ; they are ready to mingle in all the affairs of life, and sometimes hypocrites join with us in the sacred ordinances of the sanctuary. The apostle himself hath told us, that in the civil concerns of this life we cannot avoid them ; for if we will keep no company with sinners, we must have nothing to do in this world, we must needs go out of it, *1 Cor. v. 10*. But in the world above there are nothing but saints ; no inhabitant there but what is holy. There are no persons there that will tempt or defile us, or lead us astray from the paths of purity or peace. Holiness to the Lord is inscribed on every soul there ; nor is there one *Canaanite* in that upper house of the Lord of hosts. *Zech. xiv. 21*.

But this is not all. For there many of the saints themselves here on earth that make but very indifferent companions. Some of them are shamefully ignorant, imprudent and foolish ; and we have much ado to bear with their folly. Some of them  
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are morose and contentious, captious and peevish, envious and censorious, and ready to take offence on the slightest occasions; a look or a smile placed wrong shall disoblige them, a mistaken word shall affront them for a month, and it is very hard work to humour and please them: Or we ourselves perhaps are foolish and imprudent, we are peevish and resenting, and our fellow christians have as much to do to bear with us or to please us. There are some persons, concerning whom we have reason to hope, that their hearts in the main are right with God, but either by the iniquity of their animal natures, or the power of their temptations, they look so like the men of this world, that it is hard to distinguish them, and their society is dangerous, or at least very unprofitable and undesirable. Some of us fall into gross mistakes, and lead our friends into error, and hand in hand we forsake the truth. Some of us are melancholy, and sit in darkness; then we spread a gloom and heaviness over all our conversation, and banish all the joys of earth and heaven: or at best, it may be, and in our sprightly days, we fill up the visiting hour with trifles and impertinencies, and there is little of heavenly and divine conversation among us. Poor low groveling subjects furnish our tongues, and entertain our ears, because we are so very imperfect here on earth in knowledge, in holiness, or in divine joy.

But what a glorious difference is there in the society above, where we may be secure from all mistake and falshood, from all impertinence and folly in the longest discourse or conference! for every spirit there is so perfect in knowledge, as to be free from error, and has so divine a turn of mind, that nothing relishes but what is holy and heavenly. No quarrels, no complaints are found there to imbitter our converse, to diminish the pleasure of society, or to draw the heart away from God.

If we would know what the society of heaven is, let us renew the memory of the wisest and holiest, the kindest and the best companions that we were ever acquainted with here on earth; let us recollect the most pleasing hours that we ever enjoyed in their society; let us divest them of all their mistakes and weaknesses, of all their sins and imperfections; and then by faith and hope let us divest ourselves of all our own guilt and follies too: let us fancy ourselves engaged with them in delightful discourse on the most divine and most affecting subjects, and our hearts mutually raising each other near to God, and communicating mutual joys: This is the state of the blessed, this the conversation of heaven, this and more than this shall be our entertainment when we arrive at those happy regions.

This thought would very naturally lead me to the mention of our honoured and departed friend, but I withhold myself a little, and must detain your expectation till I have made a remark or two more.

REMARK III. Are the spirits of the just, who are departed from earth, made perfect in heaven; then they are not the proper subjects for our perpetual sorrows and endless complaints. Let us moderate our grief therefore, for that very providence that has fixed them in perfect holiness and joy.

We lament their absence, and our loss indeed is great; but the spirit of christian friendship should teach us to rejoice in their exaltation. Is it no pleasure to think of them as released from all the bonds of infirm nature, from pains of mortality, and the disquietudes of a sinful world? Is it not better to lift our eyes upward, and view a parent or a beloved friend adorned with perfect grace and complete in glory, exulting in the fulness of joy near the throne of God, than to behold him labouring under the tiresome disorders of old age, groaning under the anguish  
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and torment of acute distempers, and striving with the troublesome attendants of this sinful and painful state? Do we profess fondness and affection for those that are gone, and shall we not please ourselves a little in their happiness, or at least abate our mourning? Doth not faint *Paul* tell the *Corinthians*, this is what we wish, even your perfection? 2 *Cor.* xiii. 9. and should not saints, in the lower world, take some satisfaction, when a fellow-saint is arrived at the sum of his own wishes, even perfect holiness and joy on high?

But I correct myself here; nature must have its way and be indulged a little; let it express it's sensible pain at the loss of such endearments. A long separation from those who are so near a-kin to us in flesh and blood, will touch the heart in a painful place, and awaken the tenderest springs of sorrow. The sluices must be allowed to be held open a little; nature seems to demand it as a debt to love, and grace does not utterly forbid it: When *Lazarus* died, *Jesus* groaned and wept *John* xi. 33, 35.

Yet let not sorrow triumph and reign, and like a flood break over all its bounds; rather give the stream of it a little diversion into a better channel. Come, let us take the advice which our blessed saviour gives to the daughters of *Jerusalem*, who attended him to his cross with tears, *Luke* xxiii. 28. Weep not for me, but if you must weep, do it for yourselves and your children; because you are still left in the valley of sin and sorrow, while the saints departed are arrived at the land of peace, and their feet stand upon the mountains of paradise.

Could the voice of those blessed spirits made perfect reach our ears, we should hear them speak in the language of their Lord, "Weep not for us, but for yourselves; you are still encompassed with temptations and difficulties, we have surmounted them all: You are wrestling with many errors, and intangled in dark and noisy controversies; we are perfect in knowledge, and see divine mysteries in a divine light: You are labouring in the race; we are crowned, and have received the prize: You are striving in the field of battle, and we well remember the toilsome and painful conflict; we pity you, and call you rather to weep for yourselves than for us; we have finished all the war through divine grace, and are secure in the city of triumph: You are yet travelling through the valley of tears, we are refreshing ourselves in the gardens of pleasure, and on hills of everlasting gladness. Hold on with courage, and faith, and patience; there are mansions of joy prepared for you also, and we wait your happy arrival."

REMARK IV. Are the Spirits of just men in heaven made perfect, in the same excellencies and privileges which they possessed on earth? Then if our curiosity, or our love, has a mind to know what are the circumstances of our pious friends departed, or how they are employed above, let us review what they were here below, and how they employed themselves when they were with us; for, as I told you, in this life, we are trained up for the life of glory: We shall then be advanced to a glorious and transcendent degree of the same graces; and there will be something in the future state of rewards answerable and correspondent to the present state of labour and trial.

This thought necessarily calls our meditations backward a little to take a short survey of some peculiar characters of our excellent friend departed, that we may learn to rejoice in the present perfection of his graces and glories.

## SECTION VII.

*The character of the deceased.*

WHEN I name Sir JOHN HARTOPP, all that knew him will agree that I name a gentleman, a scholar, and a christian : and neither of these characters, in the best and most valuable sense of them could forsake him at his entrance into heaven.

He shone with eminence among persons of birth and title \* on earth ; while his obliging deportment and his affable temper rendered him easy of access to all his inferiors, and made him the delight of all his friends. Though he knew what was due to his quality in this world, yet he affected none of the grandeurs of life, but daily practised condescension and love, and secured the respect of all, without assuming a superior air.

Then surely he carried this temper with him to the upper world, where gentleness and goodness reign in the highest perfection ; and doubtless he practises now all the same graces of conversation among the blessed spirits there, but in a far superior manner, according to the unknown laws and customs of that region of light and love.

He had a taste for universal learning ; and ingenious arts were his delight from his youth. He pursued knowledge in various forms, and was acquainted with many parts of human science. Mathematical speculations and practices were a favourite study with him in his younger years ; and even to his old age, he maintained his acquaintance with the motions of the heavenly bodies, and light and shade whereby time is measured.

And may we not suppose that there are entertainments amongst the works of God on high to feast the spirits of such a genius ? May they not in that upper region look down and survey the various contrivances of divine wisdom, which created all things in these lower worlds in number, weight and measure ? May not our exalted friend give glory there to his maker, in the contemplation of the same heavenly bodies, though he dwells in the region where night and shadows are never known, and above the need or use of sun-beams.

But the book of God was his chief study, and his divinest delight. His bible lay before him night and day ; and he was well acquainted with the writers that explained it best. He was desirous of seeing what the Spirit of God said to men in the original languages. For this end, he commenced some acquaintance with hebrew when he was more than fifty years old : And that he might be capable of judging of the true sense of any text in the new testament, he kept his youthful knowledge of the greek language in some measure even to the period of his life.

But earthly languages are of little use in heaven. There are too many defects and ambiguities in them to express the bright, the complete, and the distinct ideas of separate spirits. We may allow our learned friend therefore to be divested of these when he dropt mortality. Now he is out of the body, and caught up to dwell in paradise where saint *Paul*, made heretofore a short visit, 2 *Cor.* xii. 2, 4. he hears and he speaks those unspeakable words, it is not possible for a mortal tongue to utter. The things of heaven are not to be expressed in any foreign language.

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\* His grandfather, Sir *Edward Hartopp*, was created a baronet by King *James I.* 1619. which was but a few years after the first institution of that order.

Among the various themes of christian contemplation, he took peculiar pleasure in the doctrines of grace, in the display of the glories of the person of *Christ*, God in our nature, and the wonderful work of redemption by his cross. He adored him as his Lord and his God: And while he trusted in his righteousness as the great mediator, and beheld him as his crucified saviour, he was ever zealous to maintain the honours due to his divine nature and majesty.

And we may be sure this is a study in which he is still engaged, and he spends the days of his eternity in the pleasurable contemplations of his glorified redeemer, and the sacred mysteries of his cross, and his throne, which things the angels desire to pry into.

His practice in life was agreeable to his christian principles, for he knew that the grace of God, that brings salvation to men, teaches them to deny all ungodliness, and to live sober, righteous and religious lives, that in all things they may adorn the doctrine of God their saviour.

Now that this part of his character is continued and exalted in the region of the blessed spirits, is too evident to need any amplification or proof; for holiness in every part of it is made perfect there, and all under the sweet constraint of love.

His conversation was pious and learned, ingenious and instructive: He was inquisitive into the affairs of the learned world, the progress of arts and sciences, the concerns of the nation, and the interest of the church of *Christ*: And upon all occasions was as ready to communicate as he was to enquire. What he knew of the things of God or man, he resolved not to know them only for himself, but for the benefit of all that had the honour of his acquaintance. There are many of his friends that will join with me to confess, how often we have departed from his company refreshed and advanced in some useful knowledge. And I cannot but reckon it among the blessings of heaven, when I review those five years of pleasure and improvement, which I spent in his family in my younger part of life; and I found much instruction myself, where I was called to be an instructor.

Nor can I think such enquiries and such communications as are suitable to the affairs of the upper world, are unpractised among the spirits of just men made perfect there; for man is a sociable creature, and enjoys communion with his fellow-saints there, as well as with his maker and his saviour. Nor can the spirit of our honoured and departed friend, be a stranger to the pleasures of society amongst his fellow-spirits in those blessed mansions.

His zeal for the welfare of his country, and of the church of *Christ* in it, carried him out to the most expensive and toilsome services in his younger and his middle age. He employed his time, his spirits, his interest and his riches for the defence of this poor nation, when forty years ago it was in the utmost danger of popery and ruin\*.

And doubtless the spirits of the just in heaven are not utterly unacquainted with the affairs of the kingdom of *Christ* on earth. He rejoices and will rejoice among his fellow-saints, when happy tidings of the militant church, or of the religious interests of *Great-Britain*, are brought to the upper world by ministering angels. He waits there for the full accomplishment of all the promises of *Christ* to his church, when it shall be freed from sins and sorrows, from persecutions and all mixtures of superstition, and shall be presented to the Father a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, in perfect beauty and joy.

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\* He was three times chosen representative in parliament for his county of *Leicestershire*, in those years when a sacred zeal for liberty and religion strove hard to bring in the bill of exclusion, to prevent the duke of *York*, afterwards king *James II.* from inheriting the crown of *England*.

His doors were ever open, and his carriage always friendly and courteous to the ministers of the gospel, though they were distinguished among themselves by names of different parties; for he loved all that loved our Lord *Jesus Christ* in sincerity.

He chose indeed to bear a part in constant public worship with the protestant dissenters, for he thought their practice more agreeable to the rules of the gospel: He joined himself in communion with one of their churches, which was under the pastoral care of the reverend Dr. *John Owen*, where he continued an honourable member under successive pastors till the day of his death. Nor was he ashamed to own and support that despised interest, nor to frequent those assemblies, when the spirit of persecution raged highest in the days of king *Charles* and king *James* the second. He was a present refuge for the oppressed, and the special providence of God secured him and his friends from the fury of the oppressor. He was always a devout and diligent attendant on public ordinances till these last years of his life, when the infirmities of age growing upon him, confined him to his private retirements.

But if age confined him, death gave him a release. He is exalted now to the church in heaven, and has taken his place in that glorious assembly, where he worships among them before the throne: There he has no need to relieve his memory by the swiftness of his pen, which was his perpetual practice in the church on earth, and by which means he often entertained his family in the evening worship on the Lord's day with excellent discourses; some of which he copied from the lips of some of the greatest preachers of the last age: There his unbodied spirit is able to sustain the sublimest raptures of devotion, which run through the worshippers in that heavenly state; though here on earth I have sometimes seen the pious pleasure too strong for him: and while he has been reading the things of God to his household, the devotion of his heart has broken through his eyes, has interrupted his voice, and commanded a sacred pause and silence.

He enjoyed an intimate friendship with that great and venerable man Dr. *Owen*; and this was mutually cultivated with zeal, and delight on both sides, till death divided them. The world has already been acquainted, that it is to the pious industry of Sir JOHN HARTOPP, that we are indebted for many of those sermons and discourses of the doctor, which have been lately published in folio. A long and familiar acquaintance enabled him also to furnish many memoirs, or matters of fact, toward that brief account of the doctor's life, which is prefixed to that volume, though it was drawn up in the present form, with various enlargements, by another hand.

Now can we suppose two such souls to have been so happily intimate on earth, and may we not imagine they found each other among the brighter spirits on high? May we not indulge ourselves to believe, that our late honoured friend hath been congratulated upon his arrival by that holy man that assisted to direct and lead him thither?

Nor is it improbable that he has found other happy souls there, who were numbered among his pious acquaintance on earth. Shall I mention that excellent man Sir THOMAS ABNEY, who was his late forerunner to heaven, and had not finished two months there before Sir JOHN HARTOPP's arrival? Happy spirits! May I congratulate your meeting in the celestial regions! But the world and the churches mourn your absence; and the protestant dissenters lament the loss of two of their fairest ornaments and honours.

And is there not the same reason to believe, that our departed friend hath by this time renewed his sacred endearments with those kindred spirits, that were once related to him in some of the nearest bonds of flesh and blood? There they rejoice together in unknown satisfaction, they wait and long for the arrival of those whom they left

behind, and for whose immortal welfare they had a solicitous concern in the state of their mortality.

This thought opens my way to address the posterity, the kindred, and the friends of the deceased, in the fifth remark.

## S E C T I O N VIII.

### *An address to the friends and relatives of the deceased.*

REMARK V. **I**F the perfection of blessed spirits above consists in a glorious increase of those virtues and graces which were begun below, let us see to it then, that those graces and those virtues are begun in us here, or they will never be perfected in us hereafter. If our spirits have nothing of that divine righteousness wrought in them on earth, we can never be admitted into the company of the spirits of the righteous made perfect in heaven.

It is an old saying among divines, but it is a most rational and a certain truth, that grace is glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected. The saints above have the same divine nature, the same sanctified inclinations, and are engaged in many of the same sacred employments with the saints below, but all in a superior degree, and in a more transcendent manner.

As for you, my friends, who have the happiness and honour to be descended from such parents, or to be nearly related to such saints, you have seen the virtues and graces, the exemplary character and piety of them who are gone before: you have had many bright and shining examples in your family; you are the children of the blessed of the Lord, and may you for ever be blessed with them! and in order to it, see that you are made like them now, that ye may be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

This is a proper season to examine yourselves, and call your souls to account in such language as this: My father, my mother, my honoured and superior kindred are gone to glory: Their graces are perfected; and are not mine begun? What, have I no evidences for heaven yet ready? no exercises of faith, of love, of repentance, of true holiness? Are they arrived at heaven, and am I not yet travelling in the same road?

They were convinced of sin, and the danger of eternal death, so as to give themselves no rest till they found salvation. Have I ever been convinced of the sin of my nature, and the guilt of my life? Have I beheld myself exposed to the anger of God, and in danger of everlasting misery, so as to cry out with myself, What shall I do to be saved?

They have seen *Jesus* the son of God, the all-sufficient saviour, and have committed their souls by humble faith into his hands, to obtain pardon for the sake of his atonement, to be justified through his righteousness, to be renewed and made holy by the grace of his Spirit, and to be preserved to eternal glory. Now what have I seen of the excellency, or all-sufficiency, or necessity of *Christ* as a mediator? Have I been persuaded to trust in him for my acceptance with God, to give my soul up to him as my guide, guard and ruler, to be formed after his image, and to venture all my immortal concerns with him to be brought safe to heaven? Have I ever received him as my Lord and my saviour, under those condescending characters and offices which he sustains for a sinner's salvation?

They have believed in him while he was unseen, and they loved him, though they saw him not; they rejoiced in him as their all, and they knew not how to live with-

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out him. How is it with my soul in this respect? Do I love *Jesus* the Lord? Is he the desire of my heart, and the delight of my life?

Though they were kept by the grace of God from the pollutions of the world, and upheld their unblemished character to the last, yet they found sin to be their most dangerous enemy; they have felt it bitter and painful to their souls, and they long groaned under it as their daily burden. What is my grief? what my chief sorrow? Do I groan in this tabernacle being burdened, because of this inward enemy? And do I long to be rid of it? Are my sinful affections like a pain at my heart, and do the workings of sin within me awaken my continual repentance?

They maintained a sacred tenderness of conscience, and were afraid to indulge themselves in that company, in that practice, and in those liberties of life which have often proved a dangerous snare to souls. Now can I appeal to God, who sees my heart, that I am cautious and watchful against every snare, that I stand afar off from every temptation, and abstain from all appearance of evil?

They took sweet pleasure in retirement, in prayer, and other holy exercises: This was the refreshment of their hearts, and the throne of grace was their refuge under every distress and difficulty. Let me ask my heart, what is my pleasure, my inward delight? Do I find a sweet relish in devotion? And when outward troubles perplex me, do I make the mercy-seat my speedy and constant refuge?

They lived upon their bible, they counted the gospel their treasure, and the promises and the words of God written there, were more valuable to them than all their outward riches. But what is my life? What is my treasure? What is my hope? Do I count heaven and the gospel my chief inheritance? Do I converse much with my bible, and find food and support there? Do I look at things unseen and eternal, and feed and rest upon the promised glories of another world, when I meet with disappointments here?

They had a large share of christian experiences, a rich stock of divine and spiritual observations by much converse with God and with their own souls. What have I got of this kind for the support of my soul? or are all these strange things to me?

Believe me, my dear and honoured friends, these are matters of infinite importance; I am sure you will think so one day: And I trust and persuade myself, you think them so now. I cannot give myself leave to imagine that you put these thoughts far from you. Some of you have made it appear that they lie next your heart, and that your souls are deeply engaged in the ways of God and goodness. O that every one of you would give the same comfort and joy to your friends! Be not satisfied with a mere negative holiness, an unspotted character in the eyes of the world; but let the world know that you dare be religious, and profess universal piety in a degenerate age. Let those that honour the memory of your parents, and love your souls, rejoice in your public christianity. Let them know, that there are the foundations of heavenly glory laid within you all, and the blessed work begun on earth, that shall surely be made perfect among the spirits of the just in heaven.

And methinks I would not have you contented with the lowest seat there; but stir up yourselves to a most unwearied pursuit of holiness in the sublimer degrees of it. And thus labouring in the christian race, contend for some of the brighter prizes, some of the richer crowns of glory. Be not satisfied to sit at a great distance below your parents departed, even in the heavenly country: But strive with a holy ambition that you may come near them, that the whole family together may arrive at some superior degrees of blessedness. And O may divine grace grant me the pleasure to be a witness to your exalted stations, and to worship and rejoice amongst you there! Amen.





**T H E**  
**STRENGTH and WEAKNESS**  
**O F**  
**H U M A N R E A S O N :**  
**O R T H E**  
**IMPORTANT QUESTION**  
**ABOUT THE**  
**Sufficiency of R E A S O N**  
To conduct mankind to  
**RELIGION and FUTURE HAPPINESS,**  
Argued between an  
**Inquiring Deist and a Christian Divine :**  
**A N D**  
The **D E B A T E** compromised and determined to the satisfaction  
of both,  
By an impartial **M O D E R A T O R .**

1918

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 551

LECTURE NOTES

BY

ROBERT H. DICK

1918

T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**I**N free and familiar conferences it is never required that such a just accuracy of sentiment or language should be observed, or that men should be confined to such exactness of method, as in a set and studied treatise on any appointed theme. Occasional incidents frequently arise, and turn the conversation aside into an unexpected channel: Or sometimes, perhaps, we recal the same subject, and the same sense may be repeated again. And in the warmth of discourse some freedoms of thought and expression may break out, which stand in need of the candour of those that hear them, and it is ever allowed in such cases.

Let it be noted also, that when persons of different characters are introduced in a free discourse, the narrator is not bound to defend all that one or any of the parties present happen to utter: He will not pretend to support every thing that PITHANDER urges in vindication of the insufficiency of human reason in matters of religion; nor dares he venture to make all the concessions on the side of its sufficiency, nor advance all the suppositions that SOPHRONIUS the moderator hath done in this dispute.

But, upon the whole, if there be any thing suggested in these conferences which may occasion LOGISTO and his companions, who are under temptations to infidelity, to bethink themselves a little; if it may awaken any of them so far as to raise some doubts about the sufficiency of their boasted reason, and lead them to see and confess the necessity of divine revelation, in order to reform the world, and to restore mankind to true religion and the favour of God, the writer hath attained his chief design, and shall rejoice in the success.

There is no objection which the author has found in any public writing raised against this book, but such as are already expressly and in plain language both proposed by LOGISTO, and answered by PITHANDER or SOPHRONIUS. And he intreats such opponents to read the book over before they write against it, before they treat it with insult, and pronounce victory and triumph on their own side.

The chief objection which the author has heard of, that hath been raised in conversation against these conferences, is, that the deist does not argue so strenuously as he might have done, nor pursue his cause with sufficient vigor and constancy; but that he seems to be too soon and too easily convinced by the reasoning of his antagonist or the moderator, in several of the subjects of controversy between them; whereas our modern infidels would have scorned to have dropt the argument or yielded up the cause without more contest.

To this the author asks leave to reply, that if he had cited the books whence he drew LOGISTO's arguments, the objectors, perhaps, would think better of them;  
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for they are not borrowed from the meanest writers. Nor has he ever represented LOGISTO falling under conviction, but where he thinks the arguments of PITHANDER or SOPHRONIUS carry sufficient weight and convincing power with them: He confesses indeed, that if he had drawn the teasing saw of controversy further, and prolonged a wrangling dialogue beyond this point, perhaps it would set the writers on that side in a juster view, agreeable to their own practice; but still it would have been mere cavilling, instead of disputing, it would have rendered the reading tiresome, and have swelled the volume too much.

Besides, the character of LOGISTO is an inquiring deist, not a resolved and obstinate unbeliever; and if he had been represented and supported in all the windings and turnings of a sophistical caviller, who avoids the light, and who would never be satisfied, this would have thrown LOGISTO quite out of his character. However, if any of the modern disbelievers of revelation complain that the author has represented them as too fair disputants, as feeling the force of an argument too soon, and as yielding to just conviction beyond what they are in reality, he hopes he may obtain an easy pardon for this sort of injury, from gentlemen who make such high pretences to a sincere search after truth, and a ready submission to the power of reason.

As for any improvements that are made in this second edition, they chiefly consist in some additional force given to particular arguments, some further illustrations of what might appear less evident, and other small corrections interspersed through the whole work.

T H E

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T H E

S T R E N G T H and W E A K N E S S

O F

H U M A N R E A S O N argued.

I n F O U R C O N F E R E N C E S.

The F I R S T C O N F E R E N C E.

**T**HE declining sun had abated the heat of the day, when SOPHRONIUS took his customary walk through the fields which bordered on his own estate. Having roved onward, in meditation, to a greater distance than he first designed, it came into his thoughts that he had not paid a visit for two months before to his neighbour LOGISTO: So he called in at his door, to pass away an hour with him in friendly discourse, as they were sometimes wont to do, upon any profitable theme that might offer in the vast and unlimited range of religion or learning.

LOGISTO was a young gentleman of much larger circumstances; and as he had a sprightly genius, so he had taken some care to cultivate it, and was a great admirer of human reason. He had often of late fallen into company with some of our modern infidels, and for want of due caution, and better acquaintance with the true grounds of christianity, he had unhappily imbibed too many of their opinions. Yet the man had a candid soul, and seemed to be sincerely desirous of truth: He was ever inquiring after some further evidences of the christian doctrine, and as heartily attentive to the objections that were made against it. He had now seen somewhat more than thirty years of life, and he thought it was high time to settle his belief and his practise in matters of religion, on a foundation that might justify his conduct to his own conscience, and to God his judge. He was willing to receive an argument from the lips of laity or clergy, and could converse freely with a christian minister, in hopes to borrow light and instruction from him: Nor would he treat that rank of men with those disdainful airs which are become so fashionable among the pretenders to infidelity. LOGISTO had appointed to spend that very evening in a set conference with PITHANDER, the rector of the parish where he dwelt, upon that important point of controversy, "Whether human reason were sufficient to guide and conduct mankind to future happiness?"

PITHANDER was a man in years, but of vigorous parts, nor yet declining in his reasoning powers: A person of a grave and manly deportment, and a pious life, becoming his character: He was a warm advocate for the christian faith: He preached the gospel with zeal and diligence, to the edification of his flock, and had lately read some writings of his excellent diocesan, drawn up in an epistolary way, upon the subject of the present designed debate, wherein the insufficiency of human reason in matters of religion, was strongly maintained. He publicly recommended these pastoral letters to the diligent and serious perusal of all his parish; for he was charmed with these writings, as the best vindication of our holy religion, which he had ever met with in so few pages, and highly valued it as a noble defence of christianity worthy of a christian bishop.

PITHANDER had just entered LOGISTO's house, in order to fulfil their mutual appointment, and they were gone down to an elegant summer-house at the lower end of the garden, before SOPHRONIUS knocked at the gate. When he was admitted, he chose to take a turn on the grass-plot, while the servant went to give notice to his master. LOGISTO espied him afar off; for he was of a tall and comely stature, which, together with his grizzled hair, had rendered his person more distinguished and conspicuous. "See here, saith he to PITHANDER, a proper moderator for our intended debate, if you please to allow SOPHRONIUS to bear a part in the conversation of the evening."

"I have some knowledge of him, replied PITHANDER; he is a gentleman of good reading, and generally a pretty fair reasoner: Were it not for one thing, I should like him very well for a moderator; for I think he is in the main an honest man: But he indulges such a latitude of thought on some subjects, that I expect he will too easily allow reason to be a sufficient guide to lead heathens to heaven; for he not only speaks favourably of the presbyterians, but I myself once heard him say, that he believes even the papists and the quakers may have some good things among them, and some good men too?"

"Good sir, said LOGISTO, when shall we have done with all these party distinctions, and this narrowness of spirit? Must charity be always a dangerous thing? If you know SOPHRONIUS, you know a man of ingenuity and honour; he hath a certain sagacity with him, whereby he spies the force of an argument at once; and knows the vast difference there is betwixt disputing and cavilling: He can tell you immediately where an objection pinches hardest, and is so honest as to feel and confess it, even when it is urged against his own opinions. He goes generally to church, and I take him to be a very sincere believer in his bible; and upon this account, my good friend, I have more reason to say, he is unfit for a moderator in our present dispute, than you can have to think him so, on account of his moderation and his generous charity. I am well assured, that he is no bigot, that he never runs into any extremes, nor follows any opinion for the sake of party: I think we may safely take him for a moderator between us; and I shall be glad to have him not only shew us what he observes of strength or weakness in each of our arguments, but shall request his final sentiments on the theme of our controversy."

Upon this PITHANDER soon agreed to the proposal: "Let him, then, said he, hear our present debates, if you please, and pronounce at last on the subject."

By this time LOGISTO's servant had got down to the summer-house, and having told his master of his new-come guest, he was ordered immediately to wait on him down the long myrtle walk, and let him know how much his company was desired.

When they had paid mutual salutations, LOGISTO informed SOPHRONIUS of the intent of their meeting, of the subject of their intended conference, and of the office

vice to which they had both appointed him; and they joined to intreat his consent. After a few becoming excuses, SOPHRONIUS chose rather to obey their order, than to disappoint the design of the evening: And see, said he, the sun grows low, therefore let your debate commence.

Upon this, LOGISTO began.

LOG. My business, PITHANDER, is to prove, that "human reason, without any revelation from heaven, is sufficient to guide and conduct mankind in a way of religion, to the favour of God, and future blessedness." Now that we may understand one another perfectly, and keep up the same ideas of the terms we use, throughout the whole dispute, I will try first whether we cannot settle the sense of them to our mutual satisfaction.

PITH. Then let us hear, sir, your explication of the terms.

LOG. I question whether I can do it better than a late writer on this subject has done: I will make use of his words therefore, which are contained in the first page of his book: I have just bought it: Here it lies by me in the summer-house, and I will read the lines to you, sir, with a very little alteration.

"By reason I understand that faculty or power of the mind by which men discern and judge of right and wrong, of good and evil, of truth and error, and the like. By matters of religion, I understand not merely the practises of piety toward God, but of virtue and sobriety with regard to our neighbours and ourselves, and in general all those things which men are accountable for to the maker and governor of the universe; and thereby render themselves the proper objects of reward or punishment. By guidance and conduct in matters of religion, I understand an ability or capacity, if carefully and faithfully exercised, to discover what are these duties of piety and virtue, or what it is which man in reason and equity is accountable for, and which will render him the proper object of divine favour or displeasure; and likewise a capacity to discover such motives to enforce the practice of these duties, as will be a balance to all those temptations which the present constitution of things unavoidably subjects him to. And by a sufficiency to guide and conduct a man in matters of religion, I understand such a capacity or power in man, when duly exercised, as is sufficient to answer these purposes without any thing super-added; and which will render him, in justice and equity, inexcusable if he miscarries."

Give me leave to add this one thing, that by mentioning future blessedness in my state of the question, you see I intend to declare my profession of the immortality of the soul, and a state of rewards and punishments to be dispensed in the other world, by God the righteous governor and the judge of all, according to our behaviour in the present state. Well, PITHANDER, do you agree to this account of the terms we shall use in this dispute?

PITH. Yes, I think I do, sir; for I see nothing necessary to be objected against it at present.

LOG. Then, since we have settled the meaning of the question, I will now enter upon the argument, and endeavour to prove the sufficiency of human reason to guide and conduct men to happiness, in a way of religion, though they have no revelation.

PITH. I think, sir, it will be necessary for us still to enquire, and agree yet more particularly, how far this idea of religion reaches, what are the chief articles it comprehends; that is, what are those truths which are necessary to be known and believed, upon which these duties depend; and what are those duties which are necessary to be practised to obtain the favour of God, and happiness in another world?

LOG. I perfectly approve of your proposal, sir; and when we have settled these articles, let us see first, whether reason be not sufficient to guide or instruct us in the knowledge of them all; and afterward we will debate, whether the same reason cannot by them conduct us to heaven; that is, whether reason has not a sufficient natural power by proper motives to enforce the practice of the duties which it teaches us, and bring us thereby to happiness. These are the two things which I mean by guiding and conducting.

PITH. I consent to this method, sir; and since perhaps you and I shall hardly agree at once upon all the articles of this necessary religion, I dare venture to propose that SOPHRONIUS may be desired to reckon them up, as an impartial person between us. I hope he will not fail to do justice in this part of the argument.

LOG. Pray, SOPHRONIUS, please to take this trouble upon you: It will be no difficult matter for you, who are so well acquainted with these disputes, to tell us at so short a warning, what mere reason makes necessary for man to believe and practise, if ever he would hope to obtain the favour of God.

SOPHRO. Since you both request it, gentlemen, I comply, and venture to give my thoughts in this matter: and I hope I shall mention only such articles as you will both assent to the necessity of them, and such as I hope also you will both believe to be sufficient, where there is no divine revelation.

Doubtless man must know and believe, in the first place, that there is a God, and that this God is but one; for God is too jealous of his honour and his dignity, and too much concerned in this important point, to lavish out happiness and his heavenly favours on any person who makes other Gods to become his rivals, or who exalts a creature, or a mere chimera, into the throne of God. He must believe also, that God is a being of perfect wisdom, power, and goodness, and that he is the righteous governor of the world.

Man must also know, that he himself is a creature of God, furnished with a faculty of understanding to perceive the general difference between good and evil, in the most important instances of it; and endowed with a will, which is a power to chuse or to refuse the evil or the good: That he is obliged to exert these powers or faculties in a right manner, both toward God and toward himself, as well as his neighbour. I do not insist upon it, that he must know those propositions explicitly, and in a philosophical manner; but he must have some sort of consciousness of his own natural powers, to know and distinguish, to chuse or to refuse good or evil, and must be sensible of his obligations to inquire and practise what is good, and to avoid what is evil.

As for the duties that relate to God, man is obliged to worship him with reverence, to honour him in his heart and life, on the account of his wisdom and power manifested in the world; to fear his majesty, to love him, and hope in his goodness, to give him thanks for what instances of it he partakes of, to seek to him for what blessings he wants, and to carry it toward him in all things as his maker, his lord, and his governor.

He must know also, that since God is a righteous governor, if he does not make good men happy in this world, and the wicked miserable, then there must be another world, wherein he will appoint some happiness for the good, and misery for the wicked; or in general, that he will some time or other distribute rewards and punishments to all persons, according to their behaviour: For this has a very considerable influence into all holiness of life, and every part of morality, which will hardly be practised without these motives.

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As for the duties which relate to other men, every man must know and believe, that as he is placed here amongst a multitude of fellow-creatures of his own species or kind, he is bound to practise truth or veracity, justice and goodness toward them according to the several relations in which he may stand, as a father, brother, son, husband, neighbour, subject, master, servant, buyer, seller, &c.

And with regard to himself, he must know that he is bound to exercise sobriety and temperance, and to maintain a due government over his appetites and passions, that they run not into excess and extravagance.

And finally, since every man will frequently find himself coming short of his duty to God and man, and betrayed into sin by the strength of his temptations, his appetites and passions, in the various occurrences of life, he must repent of his sins, be sincerely sorry for what he has done amiss, humbly ask forgiveness of God, and endeavour to serve and please him in all things for the time to come, and he must exercise a hope or trust in the mercy of God, that upon repentance and new obedience, God will forgive sinners, and take them again into his favour.

PITH. I grant that these articles seem to be the sum and substance of natural religion, and the most important and necessary parts of it: And I thank you SOPHRONIUS, for so particular an enumeration of them: Though if I had a mind to dispute, I would enquire, whether there were not some more particulars necessary to complete true religion; I mean, the religion of sinning creatures, in order to obtain the favour of God; and if I should strenuously insist upon these things, LOGISTO, perhaps you would find it hard to exclude them utterly from such a religion as shall be effectual to salvation.

LOG. And if I had a mind, PITHANDER, to dispute too, I would say, here are several more articles brought together than I thought of, and our friend SOPHRONIUS hath named rather too many fundamental articles for a heathen to believe and practise. But in the main, I confess, I know not well how to reject them with justice; and, to avoid contention, for the present I will submit to this enumeration, and we will argue upon them.

SOPHRO. Gentlemen, I would fain have this matter well adjusted and agreed between you in the very beginning of your debate, that there may be no altercation about it afterward. If you please therefore, I will very briefly give you my reasons, why I suppose these articles of belief and practice to be sufficient, where there is no revelation, to lead men into the favour of God, and also why I can allow of very little abatement of them; though I am satisfied, many persons, since the world began, and even some of the christian faith, have been saved without any formal knowledge of them in a regular scheme of propositions.

First then, I can hardly think that a God of holiness and justice will require less than what I have represented, in order to obtain his favour, and future happiness: For those persons must be very unfit inhabitants for heaven, where happiness consists in the knowledge and love of God, who have never learned on earth to know, and love, and honour the only true God, or who do not acknowledge him as governor of the world, nor hope nor fear any rewards or punishments from his hands, or who bear no true love to their neighbour, nor govern themselves by any rules of sobriety, but allow and practise injustice and intemperance, or who never repent of former sins, nor ask God to forgive them.

On the other hand, those who know and fear, who love and honour the only true God, and are desirous to know his will, and to obey it as far as they know it, who are sober with regard to their own conduct, and just and merciful with regard to their neighbours,

neighbours, who are sensible they often fail in their duty, and sincerely repent of sin, who implore forgiveness of God, and hope in his mercy; these persons, I say, must certainly be in the main approved of God, notwithstanding their many failings. And I think God is too merciful a being to condemn such persons to everlasting punishment, or finally to reject those who sincerely love and obey him, though in strict justice their many sins and failings may deserve it. PITHANDER will please to remember also, that God himself has told us by the apostle *Peter*, *Acts* x. 35. *In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him*, though it is not supposed that any man can do it in full perfection.

LOG. Well, PITHANDER, what have you to say against these reasonings? For my part, I think they carry great force with them; and we may both readily give our assent. I will therefore begin my argument, if you please?

PITH. I am very unwilling to oppose what SOPHRONIUS has said: But I hope he will not take it ill, if I ask the favour of an answer to one question, before I give my complete assent to it, and before our debate begin.

SOPHRO. With utmost freedom, sir, propose any objection, and I will either give a fair answer to the difficulty you propose, or submit to the force of it, and retract my opinion in this matter; for I am always ready to learn and receive instruction from any man, and particularly from gentlemen of your cloth; though I dare subject my understanding and conscience to no master but *Christ*.

PITH. Then, sir, since you thus roundly profess yourself a christian, I would take the freedom to inquire, whether in every discovery of grace and mercy which God has made to sinful mankind, he hath not always enjoined some positive institution and duty, over and above the mere duties which the light of nature or reason could dictate to innocent or sinful man? When he gave our first parents any hope of favour after their sin, did he not enjoin sacrifices, at least as a shadow or token of atonement? Did he not appoint some faith or hope in a mediator or saviour, *viz.* the seed of the woman, that should break the head of the serpent, or destroy the works of the devil? Was not this positive institution of sacrifices continued also to *Noah* and to *Abraham*, together with some clearer accounts of a *Messiah* given to *Abraham*, and a demand of hope or trust in him? Were not the same positive institutions and requirements of sacrifice and trust in a *Messiah*, a saviour, given to *Moses* and the *Jews*, together with many other rites and ceremonies, in order to their acceptance with God? And when *Jesus Christ* came into the world, a faith or trust in this *Messiah*, or trust in the mercy of God through him, was made a necessary qualification of our acceptance with God, besides repentance and new obedience, and an humble desire of forgiveness of past offences.

I grant indeed, that the ordinances which were given to *Abraham*, to the *Jews*, and to the gentiles to whom the gospel of *Christ* was preached, were not required of all the world. The special rules given to *Abraham* obliged the family of *Abraham*; those given to *Moses* obliged only the *Jews*; the particular and positive duties of christianity could oblige no families or nations but those to whom they were once made known: But the positive institution of sacrifices, and the hopes of some promised saviour were appointed to *Adam* and *Noah*, and their families, and these appointments therefore belongs to all nations of mankind, for they were given to them all in those two general fathers of the world. My query now is, whether or no any nations under heaven, who never heard of *Christ*, can have any comfortable hopes of acceptance with God if they practise not these positive duties of revelation,

revelation, *viz.* sacrifices and trust in some mediator or saviour, over and above the natural duties of repentance, asking pardon of God, and new obedience, which the light of nature requires of every sinner?

SOPHRO. Your query, PITHANDER, is of great importance in this controversy; and I am glad you started it, that I may clear the stage for your further dispute, and make your work the easier on both sides.

I will not dispute with you about the divine institution of sacrifices after the sin of *Adam*, for this is very probable, though not expressly revealed: And I will readily grant, that in every further discovery of divine mercy to sinful men, there hath been generally something of such positive institutions required, as well as the natural duties of repentance and future obedience, &c. But let us consider these few things, *viz.*

First, That God is a being of infinite goodness and holiness in himself, and delights in it in his creatures, and therefore must delight to exercise some mercy toward those who are holy, who return sincerely to his fear, and love, and holiness, and are so far partakers of his likeness, even though they happen to be ignorant of all positive institutions.

Let us consider, in the second place, that the duties of repentance, the fear and love of God, and new obedience, and a humble seeking of pardon at the hands of God, are much more proper and more important qualifications to fit a soul for the favour of his maker, and for heavenly blessedness, than any positive rites or appointments whatsoever.

And let us, in the third place, consider yet further, that God hath made this the avowed rule of our duty and of his dealings with men, that he loves and values mercy more than sacrifice; that is, that he esteems and prefers the natural duties of morality and piety above any positive rules or rites; and this he hath frequently manifested in the old testament and the new, as well as the light of nature teaches it.

Now upon all these considerations, I think, we may be bold to say, that if these duties of true repentance, humble requests of forgiveness, and endeavours after new obedience, be performed according to the present utmost capacity of a sinful creature, who is not acquainted with any positive duties of divine institution, God will surely shew himself well pleased with such an humble penitent: We may, I think, infer with some assurance, that God will never utterly exclude such a person, and finally banish him from his favour merely for want of his practice of some positive duties or institutions which he himself never heard of by any revelation, and which he could never come to the knowledge of by the best exercise of his reason.

Besides, sir, if we consider the accounts which scripture has given us of those who were the beloved servants of God in antient ages, even his chief favourites, such as *Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, &c.* you find them indeed offering sacrifice according to the positive institutions of God, but you find very little of their own personal trust in a mediator or saviour, or in the mercy of God through a mediator: much less do we find an account of the actual exercise of their faith in any atoning sacrifice of a *Messiah* to come. But besides their duties of repentance, asking pardon, and new obedience, &c. their hope seems generally to have been fixed on the mercy of God himself, without so particular an exercise of faith through a mediator, so far as we can learn by their devotional writings, or the history of their own transactions with God: I do not say, they did never place their hopes in such a *Messiah*, or saviour to come; for I believe some of them had such a fiducial regard to him:

him: But I may venture to say, that we find very little of this in their own devotions, even though several of them had this future saviour revealed to them from heaven, and to the world by their lips or writings.

As for the doctrine of atonement for sin by the death of this saviour, though I suppose it to be the real ground and foundation of all the pardoning grace that ever was dispensed to mankind, and though I conceive it to be a most important, if not a necessary part of the religion of *Christ*, where the gospel is fully published, yet St. *Peter* did not know it a little before *Christ's* death, *Matth.* xvi. 22. when his fondness for the person of *Christ* would have forbid his sufferings: And *Cornelius* was accepted of God before he was taught the doctrine of *Christ* or his atonement: his prayers and alms, his piety and charity came up before God and were graciously accepted; *Acts* x. 4, 25.

Upon the whole view of things, I think, from scripture and reason together we may justly conclude, that where *Christ* and the gospel are published, all humble sincere penitents, asking pardon of God, and hoping his mercy, though they know nothing of the particular way or method wherein it is, or hath been, or shall be revealed, shall not fail of pardon and acceptance with God at last, nor miss of some tokens of his favour. This grace hath *Jesus* procured, and God will bestow it.

PITH. Your way of arguing, sir, carries so much light and conviction in it, that I cannot well deny your argument. And I am inclined to believe, that my excellent diocesan, the present bishop of *London*, in his second pastoral letter, was much in this sentiment when he expressed himself, p. 46. in these words. "As to the heathens, though the light of reason is but dim, yet they who have no better light to walk by, and who honestly make use of that as the only guide God hath given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite justice and goodness.

LOG. I am very glad the reasoning of SOPHRONIUS is so happily supported by the authority of the bishop, and both together have persuaded you to yield up this point, that God, will accept of penitent sinners without their actual trust in sacrifices, or any positive rites of worship.

PITH. I am not ashamed to confess, sir, that I pay great honour and deference to the sentiments of my superiors in the church; yet I would willingly see good reason also for what I believe: And I declare now, that I can give my assent in the main to what SOPHRONIUS hath delivered. If any little scruple remain, it will be adjusted in the course of our debate.

But before you begin your argument, sir, I intreat you to remember both the precise point of question, and the extent of it; and that is, "whether human reason, in the present state of things, be sufficient to guide all mankind to such a degree of the knowledge and practice of religion," as our friend has described, "such as may intitle them to the favour of God and future happiness." Permit me therefore, sir, to mention four particulars, which are to be excepted or excluded from the present dispute, as not being the proper and precise subject of it.

LOG. Let us hear, PITHANDER, what are the four things you exclude from our debate?

PITH. In the first place, sir, be pleased to observe, that we are not inquiring, whether the reason of man, in its original powers of innocency and perfection, could find out all the necessary parts of natural religion, *viz.* the knowledge of his maker, and his duty to him and his fellow-creatures, as SOPHRONIUS has described them, so far as to secure to himself the love of his maker in that innocent state: But whether man, in his present corrupt and degenerate circumstances, who is ready to mistake

error

error for truth, whose reason is much blinded and byassed by the prevailing influences of flesh and sense, and perpetually led astray by appetites and passions, and so many thousand prejudices which arise from things both within him and without him; I say, whether human reason, in this degenerate state of man, be sufficient to teach him such a religion, as will restore a sinner to the favour of God, secure to him everlasting felicity, and render his immortal soul happy in the love of his creator.

LOG. Pray PITHANDER, let us hear no more of this old dull story of the degenerate and corrupt state of man. It is a notion, indeed, that has prevailed for almost seventeen hundred years among christians, and even among the *Jews* long before them: but I can see little foundation for it. I think man is a very excellent being, as he was at first, and his reason, and his other faculties of soul, are noble powers, and have always been, and always will be, sufficient to direct and bring him to the happiness for which his nature was made, notwithstanding all your pretences of a bruise gotten by some antient fall, which, as you say, reached all mankind in their powers, and weakened them even to this day.

SOPHRO. Forgive me, LOGISTO, if I presume to interpose a word here, when I find you speaking with such spirit and warmth against an opinion which is not peculiar to the *Jews* and christians; for several of the heathen philosophers acknowledged and maintained it by the mere influence of the light of nature and reason.

*Antoninus*, the philosophic emperor, confesses, that we are born mere slaves, that is, in the sense of the *Stoics*, slaves to our vicious inclinations and passions, destitute of all true knowledge and true reason. Book XI. Sect. 27. The *Platonists* are well known to believe a pre-existent state wherein all souls sinned, and they lost their wings whereby they were once capable of ascending upward, and so they sunk into these bodies, partly as a punishment for former follies. This was called in their form of speech, *αλεπούνησις*, or a moulting of their wings.

Their daily experience in themselves, and their wise observation of the world, convinced them, that all mankind come into the world with propensity to vice rather than virtue, and that man is not such a creature now as he came from his maker's hand, but is some way or other degenerated from his primitive rectitude and glory, though they indulged strange guesses at the cause of it, and indeed they were utterly at a loss to find how it came to pass. This is only revealed in the bible.

LOG. I thank you, SOPHRONIUS, for your gentle reproof. It is not at all improper for you to interpose, when you find any thing too keen and pungent escape from either of our lips in the course of disputation. This is one part of a moderator's office, and I beg PITHANDER's pardon.

But without more compliments, we will pursue the point in hand. Let the heathens, *Jews*, and christians of elder times say what they please of this degeneracy, some of your own writers now adays, who are in greatest credit amongst you, if they do not suspect the reality of the story of *Adam* and *Eve*, and the serpent, yet at least they deny such fatal effects of it as you have generally ascribed to the fall of man. To say the truth, they are almost grown weary of maintaining so harsh and so unreasonable a doctrine. Your learned Dr. *Clarke* tells us, "that in *Solomon's* days, as well as in ours, God made man upright; and notwithstanding all that can be said of the meanness and frailness of our nature, notwithstanding all the disadvantages we can allege ourselves to lie under in consequence of sin having been brought into the world, yet God hath made man upright; man, that is, the species or whole race of men. The uprightness therefore that *Solomon* speaks of in *Eccles.* vii. 29. cannot be

the original uprightness which was forfeited by the sin of our first parents, but that continued uprightness with which every man comes into the world notwithstanding the fall." See Dr. Clarke's serm. XIV. printed in his life-time.

PITH. I am sorry to find a christian writer talk at the rate this learned author does in that sermon. And indeed if the corruption of human nature be so small, and it's present powers so sufficient for the purposes of religion and virtue, as he represents them in that discourse, I wonder how he could speak of so universal a depravation amongst mankind, as he does in his excellent book of revealed religion, Prop. v, vi, vii. which made revelation so necessary. But I wave this point at present, lest it should draw us aside too soon from our intended subject into another debate, viz. about original sin.

I would therefore only take notice to you, LOGISTO, and I suppose you will easily grant, that man in his present condition, is liable to many mistakes in his search of truth and duty; and that he often fails in practice of the rules of duty when they are known; and that there is something more that is necessary to be known and practised, that a sinful creature may recover the love and favour of his maker when he is offended, than there was for an innocent creature in order to keep himself in the love of God; and that is, as our friend SOPHRONIUS has expressed it, the duty of repentance on our part, and the grace of forgiveness on the part of God.

LOG. This is not to be denied, sir, and therefore I readily allow it. But what then? Is not the reason of man sufficient to find out these things?

PITH. Give me leave, sir, to say again, that we are not inquiring, whether human reason, in its best estate, could find out the religion of an innocent creature, whereby he might continue in his maker's love; but whether, under all present disadvantages, prejudices, mistakes, passions, &c. his reason be sufficient to find out all things necessary for a guilty creature to obtain forgiveness of his offended creator, and to procure to himself immortal happiness in a future state, notwithstanding his past offences.

LOG. I approve of your accuracy, my friend, in this point, and I affirm, that the reason of man, in his present state, though he often errs, and often offends God, is yet sufficient to instruct and lead him into all that is needful to obtain pardon and happiness. Well, what is the next thing you would except out of our dispute?

PITH. In the second place then I would observe, that we are not to debate, whether we, who have been educated in a christian nation, and have been trained up from our infancy to hear and learn a thousand things which the ignorant heathens never hear of; I say, whether we, by our force of reason, can draw out a connected scheme of religion in the several truths and duties of it, which might lead a sinner to obtain the favour of God: but whether one who was born and brought up in the dark regions of heathenism, and never had any happy hints given him by tradition or by conversation, could find out by his own reasoning powers such a scheme of virtue and godliness, as would be sufficient to bring him to the divine favour, and the felicity of another world?

We are greatly mistaken in supposing that the understanding of a heathen would lead him into all those well-connected sentiments concerning God and man, virtue and piety, which are found even among common persons educated under the bright influence of christianity.

Mr.

Mr. *Locke*, in his reasonableness of christianity, page 269. says, "That if christian philosophers have much outdone the heathens in their systems of morality;" he ascribes it to their knowledge of revelation. "Every one, says he, may observe a great many truths which he receives at first from others, and readily assents to, as consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard, or perhaps beyond his strength, to have discovered of himself. Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we who have it delivered ready dug and fashioned to our hands, are apt to imagine."

Permit me to add, sir, with all just difference and respect to your bright genius and your happy reasoning powers, I can hardly imagine, that you yourself would have been able, with utmost study, to draw up such an accurate and comprehensive scheme of natural religion, as SOPHRONIUS has now given extempore, if you had been so unhappy as to be born and bred among none but heathens. I believe it will be granted by all, that neither *Plato*, nor *Aristotle*, nor *Seneca*, nor *Epicletus*, nor *Cicero*, nor the greatest names and wits of antiquity, have left us so clear, and rational and compendious a system of religion and virtue, as our friend SOPHRONIUS has set before us in the present conversation.

LOG. I allow this further limitation of the question, PITHANDER, though I can hardly admit your reason for it. I am therefore free to assert, that even in heathen countries, where not the least ray of christianity has shined, their own reason of itself has light enough to guide men in their way through this world to a better.

PITH. I proceed then, sir, in the third place, to say, we are not inquiring at present, what degree of knowledge here and there a heathen philosopher may possibly arrive at, who gave himself up to retirement and study, under the advantages of a learned education; but what acquaintance with religion the bulk of mankind in the heathen countries could acquire by their own reason, many of whom have but a low genius, poor natural parts, and those uncultivated, and whose views are very narrow, and their powers of reasoning exceeding feeble? What could they do to find out the rules of religion and virtue for themselves, who are continually busied in the affairs of life, to provide meat, drink, and cloathing for themselves and their household, or pursuing the grandeurs, honours, or pleasures of life with impetuous appetite and constant application? Could human reason, sir, as it is found in these busy people, especially in the low ranks of life, or in persons of low parts, frame such a religion for themselves, and such rules of virtue, as to intitle them to their maker's favour.

Mistake me not, LOGISTO, as if I here granted, that the philosophers, even in *Rome* or *Athens*, the brightest and the best of them, did ever find out such a scheme of religion as would lead mankind to heaven and eternal happiness, or such a system as could be effectual to reform the world, or were ever like to do it. Dr. *Clarke* himself has sufficiently shewn to the contrary in his treatise of revealed religion. See his v. and vi. propositions, which he hath abundantly proved at large. The learned Mr. *Millar* in that excellent work, his history of the propagation of christianity, has made it plain beyond all just exception, vol. I. page 36—50. Edit. 3. This book is cited with honour by the bishop of *London*, in his second pastoral letter, which hath set this matter also in a strong light, from page 7. to page 38. Mr. *Locke* himself, whom all the world admires as a master of reason, and who allowed as much power to human reason as one could well desire, asserts in his reasonableness of christianity, page 268. "Natural religion, in it's full extent, was no where, that I

know of, taken care of by the force of natural reason. It should seem by the little that hath hitherto been done in it, that it is too hard a thing for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts upon its true foundations with a clear and convincing light."

You see, LOGISTO, what great names I produce to you, even among modern and rational writers, who will not allow the heathen philosophers to be able to furnish the world with a good scheme of religion and virtue. But suppose these virtuosos had done it with much labour and fatigue of thought, yet can you imagine the unlearned and vulgar part of the world, the labourers for daily bread, could ever frame such a scheme for themselves? Could human reason, in the poor and busy part of cities, towns, and villages, find out such a religion as would lead them into the favour of God? The grand inquiry is not, whether reason could possibly conduct a few bright and studious men to religion and happiness; but whether it is sufficient, as the case of human nature and the circumstances of human life now stand, under so many weaknesses and prejudices, so many businesses and cares of life, to reform the bulk of the world, or to guide them into such a reformation as might bring them to heaven.

LOG. Well, I grant this point also and affirm the sufficiency of reason in heathen blacksmiths, in cobblers and milk-maids, in the followers of the plough, and the drudges of the mill, to find out and practise religion sufficient to save them.

PITH. Then, dear sir, I will try your patience but with one exception more, and that is, that though human reason in the busy tribes of the world, as well as philosophers, should have been capable of learning religion and virtue in such a city as *Rome* or *Athens*, in *Europe*; as *Pekin* in *China*; as *Smyrna* or *Ephesus*, in the lesser *Asia*, and other polite countries, where they are aided by their converse with learned men and philosophers\*, yet are the reasoning powers of the savage nations in *Africa* and *America* sufficient for this purpose? For I conceive this is the present point of our debate, whether all mankind, even the meanest figures of it, in the darkest, the most barbarous and uncultivated nations of the earth, have in themselves such a principle of reason as is a sufficient light to guide them to happiness.

LOG. Well then, I hope we have now settled the point with great exactness; and I declare I am of this mind, that every rational being, in all the regions and quarters of the world, has such principles of understanding and will within him, if he will but use them aright, as are sufficient to lead him into the knowledge and practice of religion and virtue, so far as to procure for him a happy immortality: That his reason is able to lead him into such an acquaintance with his maker's will, and obedience to it, as to engage the favour of his benevolent maker towards him, or to recover his favour when at any time he has sinned, and exposed himself to his anger. And indeed, if man has not sufficient powers for this purpose, I should think God had dealt worse with mankind, who, as you all say, was made after his maker's image, than he has with any  
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\* Yet let it be observed here, that the common people and the gentlemen, even in polite countries, received their religion rather from their priests and their rulers, than from the lectures and reasonings of their philosophers: They much more easily, willingly, and universally learned and practised all the impious and shameful idolatries and superstitions of their country, than ever they would hearken to the lectures of their philosophers, whose moral dictates of virtue and mortification, and whose abstracted reasonings on the chief good, were neither suited to their taste nor to their understanding: and especially when many of these philosophers neglected to practise their own rules of virtue, and all of them complied with the religions of their country, vile and abominable religions and superstitious rites which tended to corrupt all their moral principles, and to destroy their virtue, if ever the seeds of it began to appear; as I shall shew afterward.



of the lower ranks of creation, even the insects and the poor creeping things of the earth.

PITH. The equity of the great God in dealing with his creatures may perhaps be debated another time ; but I think we have now fully selected and distinguished the plain argument that lies directly before us ; and that which you so often assert is this, that the light of reason in every man in the world is sufficient to find out his way to the favour of God, and happiness by religion and virtue : And what these articles of virtue and religion are, what these doctrines and duties which are so necessary for this purpose, SOPHRONIUS has just now informed us, I entreat you, sir, proceed now to the proof of your assertion according to the particular articles SOPHRONIUS has proposed.

And to save time, I will not insist upon your proof of all of them, but only those that seem most difficult : And first, be pleased, sir, to tell us, how a wild heathen would find out that there is but one God ?

LOG. As reason very easily discovers to us that there is a God who has made all things by the evident tokens of wisdom and power which appear in the works of his hands, so the ingenious Dr. *Clarke* informs us in his sermon of the unity of God, that "The doctrine of the whole world being under the government of one God, is the natural notion which the light of reason itself has universally implanted in the minds of men : For the plain connexion and dependence of one thing upon another, through the whole material universe, through all the parts of the earth, and in the visible heavens, the disposition of the air, and sea, and winds, the motion of the sun, and moon, and stars, and the useful vicissitudes of seasons for the regular production of the various fruits of the earth, has always been sufficient to make it evidently appear, even to mean capacities, had they not been perpetually prejudiced by wrong instruction, that all things are under the direction of one power, under the dominion of one God, to whom the whole universe is uniformly subject." Thus far Dr. *Clarke*. And do you not think this argument would lead mankind to the unanimous belief that there is but one true God ?

PITH. No, sir, by no means : I can never think it could convince ignorant heathens, of the unity of God, if it should ever happen to come into their minds : for I think it hath hardly evidence enough to give conviction to a common reasoner in the christian world. The force of it does not appear so very plain and clear to demand a ready assent and submission : I do not think the union of all beings in the universe under one Lord, is so very manifest and so obvious a thing. And indeed, I should have expected to find a much stronger argument for the unity of God, from a writer of such fame and reputation, and especially in a sermon that was written expressly on that subject, which he every where maintains with peculiar zeal.

But suppose this argument should be thought strong and evident, to a person who is before convinced of the unity of God : yet an *American* in the north would tell you, as they have told other inquirers, that the *Europeans*, &c. who live beyond the great sea, that is, the ocean, dwell in a different world from them, and may have a God, and every thing else, peculiar to themselves : But that the *Americans* came in to being quite another way, and sprung from another man or woman, who came down from heaven in antient times. For though they have some ideas of beings above them, yet they have not so much as a name for God among them. So that they would as readily conclude, from the distance of the *European* and *American* worlds, that they had different superior powers, or gods, as the antient *Grecians* concluded that three gods divided the universe among them ; that heaven and earth had

had one god, viz. *Jupiter*; the sea another god, viz. *Neptune*; and hell, or the world of departed souls, had a third god, viz. *Pluto*.

LOG. This is strange doctrine indeed: Yet since you tell me this is the opinion of the wild creatures in *America*, I am not so well acquainted with them as to contradict it. But why do you cite the several names of the old poetical gods against me, as though the rambling and irrational fancies of the old heathen poets were to be regarded, when we are talking of the powers of reason to find out the one true God?

PITH. I grant, Sir, there were a thousand fables of the poets concerning these heathen gods, which could not be heartily believed, at least by thinking men: But, alas! Sir, it is a very unthinking world in which we dwell: And the priests, and the princes, and the people had really the same gods whom I have named, with many others, and they actually raised temples to them, and worshipped them with sacrifices and divine honours, and they had no other gods but such as these.

LOG. But the philosophers knew there was but one true God.

PITH. Permit me, sir, to say, that few of them knew or owned this: If the *Platonists* had generally this opinion; yet the *Stoics* themselves, as well as meaner sects, talk of more gods than one continually. And please to remember, sir, our present debate is about the bulk of the heathen world, and not about a few philosophers. How can the world find out so easily, that God is but one?

LOG. Well, what think you then of another argument? It is very evident, and reason assures us, that the creator of all things is a being that hath all power, and wisdom, and goodness necessary to create and govern the universe: And if one God has all this perfection of wisdom, and power, and goodness, then another such a being would be utterly needless and useless; for one more, or one hundred more such beings, could have no more wisdom, power, or goodness than one. Now we can never suppose that a God is a useless or a needless being; and therefore there cannot be any more gods than one, because all the rest would be needless beings, and intirely useless; for they would have nothing for them to do, which one could not do.

PITH. I grant this argument is in itself convincing to a good reasoner: yet if these two are the easiest ways you can think of to prove the unity of God, I doubt there are multitudes of creatures in the wild heathen world, that, with their utmost efforts of reason, would never of themselves arise to these sentiments, nor form these arguments: And if both of them were put together, and proposed to heathens, I question whether they would make their way into every understanding among those wild and uncultivated herds of mankind, and convince them all, that there was but one God: Much less can I suppose, they would ever find out these arguments of themselves.

The bulk of the heathen world have generally believed and worshipped many gods, though many of them did confess that one was supreme; and almost every nation hath had its own God: And in direct opposition to Dr. *Clarke's* argument, when they saw such a vast variety of parts in the universe, they commonly appropriated particular parts of the creation to particular gods; supposing them to have only the oversight of the affairs, if I may so speak, of their own province. As gross as this error is, yet it is plain and certain matter of fact, that the heathens in antient times, and in almost all nations, did argue thus, and do to this day.

Besides, since there is such an innumerable and everlasting train of wickedness and distresses, that is, moral and natural evils, among the children of men, the  
heathens

heathens might be ready to suppose, as many amongst them have done, that there was some equally powerful principle of evil, as there is of good; for man sustains as many sorrows, miseries and mischiefs as he enjoys comforts and blessings. And since there are such infinite calamities in the world by storms, earthquakes, famines, plagues, wars, murders, diseases, and the universal dominion and necessity of death, they might be easily confirmed in this false opinion, and refuse the belief of one supreme God.

LOG. Really, PITHANDER, you amaze me; I never met with any man before, who would not allow the unity of God might be found by the reason of men.

PITH. Mistake me not, sir, I do not deny that it may not be found: but I say, it is not very obvious and easy to the rude and uncultivated reason of every heathen: so that I question whether one in ten in the common race of mankind, or one in a hundred in the countries who lie under the prejudices of polytheism, would find it out merely of themselves, without any helps or hints from tradition, or their wiser neighbours, and would firmly believe the truth of it. It is only revelation that has so fully confirmed and preserved or restored this fundamental point of all true religion, and set it in a clear and easy light. Hear, O *Israel*, the Lord our God is one Lord,—and there is no other God but he. *Mark* xii. 29, 32.

But proceed, sir, to the next point, *viz.* the goodness of God, and shew me whether that lies within the compass and reach of reason, so as to be easily proved by an untaught *American*.

LOG. By what you have said, my friend, you think, perhaps, that the goodness of God is an attribute of the divine nature scarce to be found out at all by the poor wild *Indians*: But do not the variety and sufficiency of provisions that God hath made for the food, and life, and pleasure of every creature in the world, plainly shew his universal goodness? Must not every man, who opens his eyes upon the creation, be ready to confess it?

PITH. But a poor *Indian* would be as ready to say, that the vast variety of pains and necessities, of diseases and miseries, and deaths, to which all mankind are made liable in common with the rest of creatures, do incline him to believe, that though God has goodness in him, yet he is not perfectly good; otherwise he would prevent these innumerable evils: And if we christians ourselves, with all the advantages of the bible, find some difficulty in maintaining the perfect goodness of God, when he suffers so much both of sinful and penal evil to enter into this world, and abound, while he could easily have prevented it; I fear the ignorant savage, with all his reasoning powers, would be much more ready to think, that God was not so good a being as he should be; or, as I said before, that there was some almighty evil power, some mischievous God, which opposed him, so that he could not do all the good he would. But pray, sir, go on to the next head, and shew me that the justice of God is an attribute so easy to be found.

LOG. I own, that the wild heathens have argued thus against divine goodness: But his justice, surely, may be found with ease: It is true, in this world all things come so much alike to all men, that God does not make so sensible a distinction between the men of virtue, and the men of vice, as to give ground to a rude heathen to infer his justice: But then reason may teach them, that since God is an all-wise and good being, he will not let good men always be sufferers, nor appoint evil men to be always happy; for this is contrary to the reason and harmony of things. And therefore they may readily infer, that there must be another world,

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or a state after this life, in which God will reward the righteous, and punish the wicked; and this is what I mean by his justice.

PITH. Whatever a deep philosopher might do, or a reasoner in a christian country, I am afraid a poor *Indian* labourer, a digger, a fisher, or a huntsman, would be as ready to infer, that whatsoever mighty being it was that made the world at first, yet he now lets it run at random, and doth not much regard the actions of his creatures, whether good or bad: And perhaps he would be more ready to think, that it was as much or more his own business, and his interest, to make the best that he could of this world, and to free himself from the miseries of it by fraud or force, by right or wrong, rather than to bear the injuries and oppressions, as well as the common calamities of life, with patience, and to expect that some almighty and invisible being should reward him in the next world, if he were never so virtuous, since he sees so very few instances of such a righteous rewarding power, among all the events of this life, or when he rather finds that the wicked oppressors are the most prosperous and happy.

But, to pass over this head also, tell me, sir, how you would prove to a wild *American*, or rather, how a wild *American* would prove to himself, that there is any such thing as another world, or state of retribution after this life? Yet I think it is generally acknowledged, that true religion, in the practice of it in this world, as things stand, seems very much to depend upon this point, and is greatly promoted by it.

LOG. Nay, PITHANDER, if you do not allow this argument for a future state drawn from the wisdom and justice of God, and the want of a just retribution of virtue and vice in the present state, I confess I am at a loss how the poor heathens can prove it: But I must insist upon it, I think this is a good argument.

PITH. And I think it is of weight among persons that are well civilized, and taught to exercise their reason well: But it would be no easy matter for every single savage, both man and woman, to prove that God is just: Nor would the doctrine of future retributions be readily found out among the wretched inhabitants of the eastern or western *Indies*, who are so unpractised in the art of reasoning, if they were left only to their own rude labours of thought. I will not deny but some of the heathens, and even in some of the islands of *America*, have had such a sentiment: but these, perhaps, are but few in number: the bulk of them on the north continent seem to have no such opinion: Nor is it likely their wild reasoning powers should work this way, or should reach so far.

LOG. Indeed, sir, you surprize me again with such talk as this; for, in my opinion, nothing can be more repugnant to the wisdom and justice, as well as the goodness of God, than to suppose that this short life was designed as a state of probation for mankind, in order to their existing hereafter in a state of perpetual happiness or misery, and yet that God doth not let them know there was to be such a state immediately succeeding this life.

PITH. If I were to give a particular answer to this objection, I would say, that however this our short life may be designed by God himself as a state of probation for perpetual happiness or misery in the next, yet perhaps it is not absolutely necessary that God should acquaint his creature, man, with it: For in whatsoever state a creature is placed, it is his duty to exert his utmost power to seek out the knowledge of his maker's will, and to practise it without intermission, so long as his creator pleases to continue him in that state: And then he may, if his maker think proper, be

be removed into some new state of further trial: For if God may confine one man fifty, sixty, or seventy years to a state of probation in this world, why may he not dismiss another out of it at ten, twenty, or thirty years end, and appoint him to fill up the remnant of his probationary state in another world, or in two or three successive worlds, if he please? What is there in the pure nature of things to forbid it? And what can mere reason say to disprove it?

But, on the other hand, if a creature in this world has neglected his duty, and behaved amiss, he may justly expect anger and punishment from his maker, into whatsoever unknown state he shall remove him. Now this is sufficient to vindicate the justice of God, if he had not put it at all into the power of a creature to find out which is his state of probation, or how long it shall last, or how many probationations he shall go through, or when his state of retribution shall begin, or how long that shall endure.

I confess, indeed, that the knowledge and certain expectation of the state of rewards and punishments after this life, is a most desirable thing for mankind, since it has a great and powerful influence on the practice of virtue and religion here; and I allow, that it may be so far found, by a careful and wise exercise of reason, upon the survey of things in this world, that a righteous God will not deal with the good man and the wicked, just in the same manner in all the future states, but will make a sensible difference between vice and virtue: Constant and persevering piety shall be some way or other rewarded at last, and obstinate iniquity and irreligion shall be punished. But all that I maintain at present against you, sir, is this, That the doctrine of future and certain rewards at the end of this life, is not so necessary to be manifested to creatures in this life, as to cast an accusation of injustice against God, if he does not make them sensible of it: nor is it so evident to our mere reasoning powers, nor so easy and so obvious to every man in the world, as you may imagine: You know, sir, the whole sect of the Sadducees denied it: Nor is it so plain, that the wild tribes of the *Negroes*, or the *Iroquois* should readily find it out; For, in fact, many of them are ignorant of it to this day.—Your silence, *LOGISTO*, discovers a generous conviction.

Then let us proceed to some other points in natural religion, and inquire, how easy it would be for the bulk of the heathen world to find them out: Pray tell me, sir, how an *American* might easily convince himself, that God governs the world at all, or takes any notice of it, when he sees things run at random, and a thousand events amongst mankind, so unsuitable to the conduct of a wise governor, so far as our view of things can reach.

*LOG.* Surely an *American* has reason enough to find out and be assured of this, that the almighty being who made all things, must certainly have the knowledge of all the creatures that he has made, and of all their actions: And that he cannot but see the virtues of the righteous with approbation, because they reverence their maker, and practise what is right: And that he beholds the vices of the wicked with disgust and resentment, because they neglect their duty, or disobey the laws of nature which he has written in their hearts: And therefore, though he does not immediately interpose to shew his approbation or resentment by present sensible rewards or punishments, yet he will certainly do it one time or another.

*PITH.* I think, sir, this is little more than a bare repetition of the same thing you urged in other words, and few *American* savages exercise their reason so far. Give me the liberty therefore, sir, to amplify what I have said: When these rude creatures see year after year, and age after age, that there is no such equitable dis-

inction made by providence between the good and the bad, when the wicked flourish in health, in success, and plenty, when the peaceful and sober man falls perhaps under more oppressions and injuries than the men of wrath and violence, and labours under natural wants and diseases in common with other men: When they observe iniquity and oppression fill the seats of power and government among men in this life, and that among christians as well as heathens; and that all die alike, and go down to their graves without any sensible and remarkable distinction in favour of the men of virtue; I tell you, friend, the bulk of the wild *American* world will have much ado to think that a wise God governs the world, or even so much as regards or knows the actions of his creatures. They will be ready to take up with those atheistical sentiments represented in scripture, "How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not. That which befalleth beasts, befalleth also the sons of men, they have all one breath; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; so that a man has no pre-eminence above a beast; all go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again: What profit is it that we should serve God, or pray unto him? We desire not the knowledge of his ways." If it cost *Solomon*, the wisest of men, some labour of thought and inquiry, and cost *David* his father, before him, such a painful inward conflict to solve these difficulties, as appears in *Psal.* lxxiii. and *Eccles.* iii. 16. how much need may we suppose the tribes of the heathen world have of some brighter teacher than their own rude faculties to find out and determine, that this world, and the inhabitants of it, are at all governed by an all wise and almighty being?

LOG. I confess, PITHANDER, some of these are difficulties of which I was not so well apprized before-hand, and I am convinced it is not so easy for a wild heathen to find out some of these necessary truths as I imagined. But however, let us go on. What is the next article of natural religion that you suppose would hardly come within the reach of the reasoning of a wild *American*?

PITH. Why truly, LOGISTO, I think the worship of an invisible God, with prayer, or praise, or thanksgiving, is not so very obvious a duty to those rude and ignorant creatures, nor does it appear to them so necessary as we who dwell in *Europe* are ready to fancy. Pray let us hear then, how their own uninstructed reason would lead them to this general and necessary duty of the worship of the invisible being who made them, or any particular instances of it?

LOG. One would think this a very easy matter for the meanest principle of reason, and the lowest capacity to find out: For if they once come so far as to acknowledge that the world was made by a being of great wisdom and power, surely they may readily infer, that they should admire and reverence this wisdom and power that made them, and all things around them: They may speedily and naturally draw such obvious consequences, that he alone is Lord of all things, that he can supply all their wants, and bestow all blessings upon them, and therefore they ought to pray to him under every distress, and to give thanks when they receive any of the comforts of life from his hands.

PITH. Ah! my friend, this is easily said by a man of your sprightly powers of reasoning, who have been trained up in the knowledge of the best philosophy, and acquainted with religion from your early years: But you know that even in *Greece* and *Rome*, the learned parts of the world, and in the learned ages of it, there were many who professed and learned the *epicurean* doctrine, that the gods did neither make the world, nor concern themselves about it since it was made: That all things were left to nature and chance, and that there was no manner of superior government

government or divine inspection of the affairs of mankind, and therefore they paid no worship, no acknowledgments by prayer or praise.

And as for an ignorant *American*, if he should be brought to believe that an invisible power made this world, yet he is so much addicted to judge of every thing by what strikes his senses, that he will not so easily conceive, that any invisible power governs any of the affairs or events of it, except where he cannot account for some particular strange events or appearances, and then perhaps he will attribute them to invisible and insensible causes. For in the account that hath been given of the *Americans* by travellers, we are told, when they see strange effects produced, and know not the cause, they ascribe it to a being that is somewhat above themselves, that is, some particular being, which has dominion over that event, or in that particular place, but scarce ever rise to the idea of one supreme and universal governor; much less do they proceed so far in religion as to give the one true God the glory and honour due to him on account of their comforts.

But, on the other hand, when their whole business is to provide a little food for themselves, and the skins of beasts for their cloathing, and when they see that it is their own bow and arrows, or their little snares or engines, that furnish them with beasts, or birds, or fishes for their provision; when they find the strongest, and the swiftest, and the most cunning men amongst them catch more game than the rest, secure themselves best from their enemies, and preserve their huts and their poor properties safest from invaders, they naturally attribute their possessions of all the necessaries and conveniences of life to their own strength, or skill, or swiftness; and they do not much think of any superior invisible being, whose providence gives them success: And thus in their rude way of thinking they can seldom find any reason either for prayer or thankfulness: And when they do, it is paid to idols, not to the true God.

Besides, when they observe the natural and constant successions of day and night, of summer and winter, when they see fruits and flowers return in their settled seasons, when they take notice of clouds and sunshine, rain and drought, sudden heat or cold coming at certain or uncertain times, when they find how much the conveniences or inconveniences of life arise from these vicissitudes of things, they ascribe all that is constant and regular to a course of nature; and what is accidental or irregular among these common appearances, they ascribe to mere chance, and look no further. They content themselves to mind their proper businesses of hunting, fowling, and fishing to support their lives, and never think of any providence of an all-wise and almighty being, unless they see some very uncommon and extraordinary event, as hurricanes or earthquakes, some terrible storm, or some spreading desolation, which perhaps they may attribute to some invisible mighty being that is angry with them.

LOG. But surely they must all know that they did not make themselves, and that some almighty being made them, and therefore he alone can preserve them, and to him therefore they should be naturally and easily led to address their acknowledgments and praises.

PITH. When you infer, LOGISTO, that praise and acknowledgments are due to the almighty being that made them, they will hardly allow of your prime proposition, nor do they suppose, that any other being, besides their parents, had a hand in making them: And this cuts off all their devotion to an invisible creator. For though they may perhaps be led to think, that a being of great wisdom and power made this world at first, and formed the first creatures that were in it, if they ever

look so far backward, yet now they imagine he has left the great engine of the world to work of itself : And that seeds produce trees, fruits, and flowers ; that fishes produce fishes ; birds make birds ; lions and sheep produce new lions and sheep ; and men and women breed children. Nor do they imagine there is any need of any superior power to preserve them, since they find their parents who produced them have no other hand in their preservation but by taking care of them when they are children : and when they are grown up, they preserve themselves by providing food and raiment for themselves, and other necessaries.

Nor indeed is it so very easy a matter for an untaught *American*, under his prejudices, rising from the customs and opinions of his ancestors, to find out that any God at all has a present influence on the events of the world, or the affairs of men ; but only, as I hinted before, when they see some uncommon appearance in nature or providence, it awakens them to think of some superior power governing that event : and then perhaps they may ask this fancied power to favour their enterprizes ; but much oftener they endeavour to pacify some God when they suppose he is angry, by some aukward superstitions, or perhaps with murder and human sacrifices.

LOG. Then you will grant, my friend, that there are some seasons wherein they worship God, though it be in a wretched way ?

PITH. Truly, I can hardly grant this, sir ; for it is a plain case, that many of these people pay all the religion they have to some things visible or invisible, which are not God, as the apostle says, 1 *Cor.* x. 20. The gentiles sacrifice to devils, and not to God.

LOG. But the gentiles of whom *Paul* there speaks, did not mean to do honour to mischievous beings, though the apostle is pleased to call all their gods by the name of devils.

PITH. I grant they did not always mean so, though it was so in reality ; for devils were really the gods of this world, that is, the heathen world. But it is plain, that the antient heathens had also their mischievous gods, their *Vejoves*, — whom they sometimes worshipped for fear of their malice, as well as their good-natured gods, and they did service and sacrifice to both of them. And many, if not most, of these savage *American* and *African* nations have a more awful and religious apprehension of some unseen great evil power or powers that bring calamities upon them, than they have of any wise and good being which is the author of their blessings. And they generally pay their devotion and worship to these powerful malicious beings rather than they do to any other God. Self-preservation and fear are more deeply wrought into our nature, at least in the degenerate state, than gratitude and love : And if those poor ignorant creatures had an unequal idea of some good God to what they have of a malicious one, that is, a devil, yet they incline to worship the devil for fear, lest he should hurt them, much more than they are inclined to worship God, and give him thanks and honours for benefits received, or pray to him for what they want : for they generally take it for granted, that the great and good being, if ever they think of such one, will do them good from his own kind and beneficent temper : But the evil being will never do them any good, but will afflict and vex them, and will not suffer them to enjoy good things, unless they bribe and pacify him with worship and sacrifices : But they seem to have no notion of that holy reverence and love which is due to the true God.

Some of these rude nations make images for their Gods ; and the bulk of the people are so stupid as to pay rites of adoration to the very images they have made ; though some of the wiser sort suppose these images to be inhabited by spirits, which can do them good or harm.

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The travels of *Europeans* through the barbarous regions, which are continually published among us, and their narratives of the affairs, sentiments, and customs of the rude and wild nations, give abundant confirmation to what I have said upon this theme, and effectually shew us how unable are mankind, with all their reason, in the stupid, rude and unpolished tribes of *Africa*, or *America*, to find out a religion for themselves, to search out the nature and attributes of the true God, or to determine what honours are due to the almighty power that made and governs all things.

The *jewish* prophet says much the same things concerning the stupor of the heathen idolaters in his age about affairs of religion. Isa. xlv. 15,—20. “He maketh a graven image out of a tree, he falls down and saith to it, deliver me, for thou art my god. None considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge or understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire, and shall I make the residue of it an idol, a god? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, and say, Is there not a lye in my right hand?”

LOG. Though I am not so much moved by what *Isaiab* saith, considered as a *jewish* prophet, yet it must be granted indeed, that the accounts which some of the ancient writers, as well as some modern travellers, give us of barbarous nations, afford us too much ground to suspect, that the reason of man is so darkened and stupified among these wild tribes of the heathen world, that it will go but a little way to search out true religion in the doctrines or the duties of it.

But, it may be, the great God, who knows the weaknesses and the prejudices of all his creatures, will not require much practice of that religion or piety, which are due to God, at the hands of such poor sorry wretches as these are; and if they do but behave tolerably well with regard to the duties they owe to themselves and their fellow-creatures, he may have compassion upon their ignorance, and receive them to his favour.

PITH. I cannot allow this by any means, my friend, that a wise and holy God will provide a heaven and eternal happiness, in his favour and presence, for creatures that never inquire after him, that scarce know any thing at all of him, and never pay him any manner of honour on earth, which is the place of their probation. But however, let us proceed to enquire, How much the native reason of such savages would find out of their own duty to their fellow-creatures.

LOG. Well, here I think I shall prove my point effectually, how much soever I may have failed in the former case of duty to the true God. Will not their own native reason teach them that they must speak truth to one another; that they must be faithful to their promises and contracts; that they must pay what they owe; that they must neither rob, nor plunder, nor steal, nor take away the life nor property of another, who has not first deserved such a punishment by some robbery, or murder, or theft committed against his neighbour? Will not their reason powerfully and evidently shew them, that there is a natural rectitude and fitness in these practices of veracity, honesty, and justice between man and man? That it is a fit, a reasonable, and proper thing that a man should do no injury to those who do not hurt him? That he should be honest in all his dealings, and that he should help his neighbour in distress, and be kind to the miserable, who cannot help themselves?

PITH. I grant, that the reason and conscience that is in man, will generally shew him, that there is a reasonableness and fitness in these practices, which we call virtues, if he will but set himself seriously and honestly to think of them. But yet if one of these *Americans*, or his wife, or children, stand in great need of some of the wild fowl, the venison, the parched corn, or the deer-skin, which are the property of his neighbour,

neighbour, he would be ready to think it, perhaps, a much more fit and reasonable thing that he should steal, or plunder, or even kill his neighbour, to gain these provisions, than that he and his family should be exposed to any hardships for the want of them. The principle of self-love, and of seeking the ease and happiness of ourselves, or those that are dear to us, might dictate to such an unphilosophical tribe, that it is more reasonable and more fit to plunder, and steal, or do any injury to their neighbour, if they could do it with safety to themselves.

LOG. But the reason, even of *Americans*, if it be exercised a little, will further inform them, that without the observance of truth, faithfulness, honesty, justice, and innocence, there can be no safety to man, woman, or child; they cannot preserve their own property, life, or peace; that the strong, the swift, and the cunning, will deprive the rest of all their comforts and possessions; and therefore, in order to secure their own life and property, they must not invade the life or property of another.

And will not their own reason tell them also, that they must be compassionate to the miserable; that they must help their neighbours in distress; that they must be kind and bountiful to those with whom they dwell; or else they can never expect that others should be kind and bountiful to them, should relieve any of their wants, or help them under their greatest distresses? Thus the very law of self-preservation, which is written so strongly in the very nature of men, leads them to practise the duties of justice and goodness towards their neighbours.

PITH. I may venture to grant what you have now said upon this subject: And these are the reasons, and the only reasons, upon which even the barbarous nations generally practise some degrees of justice and goodness towards one another. But is this proper virtue? Has this any merit in the sight of God, or any pretence to his favour? Can this be religion, when men are restrained from doing injury to their neighbours, or excited to do them good merely upon civil principles, without any idea or apprehension of the will of God, who requires it; or when they do it merely for fear, lest they should be exposed to the same injuries among men by way of retaliation, or in hopes to obtain the like good return from them? Can this sort of virtue intitle any man to the love of God, and rewards in a future world, which has no regard to God at all? Will this sort of reasoning conduct men to heaven, if their practices were never so agreeable to these principles?

True virtue and religion arise chiefly from a sense of the reasonableness and fitness of things, and from a desire to obey the will of God. If I would be truly virtuous, I must consider that it is unrighteous and unreasonable to take away my neighbour's life or property, though I myself should never endanger my own property, nor be taken and punished for doing it. And such virtue as is pleasing to God, and can make any pretences to obtain his favour, and a future reward, must arise from a sense of these duties to our fellow-creatures, as being agreeable to the will of that almighty power that made us, and has placed us in such particular relations to other men. And without some notions or principles of this kind, I fear the outward abstinence from falsehood and injury, or the mere practice of external beneficence to a neighbour, will go a very little way to obtain the love of God, and future happiness.

Let it be granted then, that honesty and kindness may be much practised by some heathen nations, on the principle of self-preservation, and perhaps it is conveyed from generation to generation, till it has become as much a custom and habit among them as any of their national civilities, their oddities and fooleries, and then they may go on to practise it in the main, because their fathers did it: Let it be granted  
yet

yet further, that mere natural temper, and the animal constitution of flesh and blood may sometimes incline some particular heathens to practise goodness, compassion, hospitality, forgiveness of injuries, meekness, and peace, even as the constitution and temper of a sheep is meek and unresenting, in comparison of a dog or a lion: This may be called natural virtue, but it is not proper morality nor religion, if the practiser has no regard to the justice and order, the rightness and fitness of things, and the law or will of his maker; which principles, I believe, can very seldom be found in any of the barbarous nations we speak of.

Suppose it be granted again, *LOGISTO*, that some few of these rude tribes of mankind are led, by any principles whatsoever to practise honesty, justice, and goodness, yet permit me to observe, that the very notion and obligation of these social virtues is contradicted and destroyed by the professed principle of multitudes of the heathen world. Though plunder in private persons has been generally counted a crime, yet lying, cheating, and stealing, when it has been practised with great dexterity and cunning, has been allowed and commended by the common voice of a nation. The *Egyptians* were early a civilized nation, yet *Aulus Gellius* tells us, Book XI. chapter 18. that the old *Egyptians* held all thefts to be lawful. And *Diodorus Siculus* mentions a law among them, that the thief must bring what he stole to the priest, who was to divide the booty, *viz.* one quarter to the thief, and three to the owner. Even the *Lacedaemonians*, who dwelt in *Greece*, a polite country, publicly encouraged artful thievery; but your clumsy lurchers, that were caught in the fact, were given up to some punishment: And there are few of the unpolished regions of the world where falsehood, lying, and cheating are not practised, by all that are able to do it, with impunity.

And even robbery and plunder in great bodies and communities of men has been esteemed a virtue rather than a crime. How many kings and people do we read of in antient history, how many captains and large armies, who thought it sufficient reason to invade the properties, and destroy the lives of their neighbours, merely to gain a wider dominion, and to make themselves great and rich by the spoils of those that dwelt around them? Reflect a little, whence did the *Roman* empire rise to its grandeur? Was it not by such public injuries and rapines, robberies, and murders? And who among them questioned the lawfulness of this? Whence sprang the fame of *Cæsar*, and *Alexander*, and other barbarous and brutal creatures, that were called heroes? Was it not from this acknowledged principle, that they might destroy their fellow princes and their armies, if they would not pay tribute to them, or might do any mischief to their neighbours, who had done none to them, if they would not submit to their dominion? What are many of the bloody wars that are carried on among the petty princes of *Africa* and *America*? Are they owing to any better principle than this, that if they have power enough, they may take occasion to make captives and slaves of their fellow nations, if they please, in order to sell them to merchants in a way of trade, or to make breakfasts and dinners of them?

Is this that native reason, *LOGISTO*, which you would teach men to rely upon, without any aids from heaven, for their safe conduct in the paths of virtue, to obtain the favour of God, and eternal felicity? Is this that innate principle, which you would have mankind intirely depend upon, to teach the rules and practices of morality, and justice, and goodness, which is so easily persuaded to let them call vice virtue, and virtue vice? Which suffers whole nations, both kings and people, to be so shamefully led astray into the practice of constant and public villainies, without any remorse or regret? Is this wretched degenerate and perverse power of reasoning fit to be their only guide, while it permits them to work up these public robberies,

robberies, and murders, and spreading desolations into the notions of honour, virtue, and dignity? But I read your generous conviction in your countenance, and am silent.

Let us proceed to the next general head, and pray please to inform us now, whether human reason be sufficient, in a plain and easy manner, to lead the bulk of mankind to find out and discharge their duties toward themselves, in the practice of temperance and sobriety, with a restraint of their appetites and passions within proper bounds.

LOG. Yes, I think that may be done, PITHANDER, in such a manner as this. Appetites and passions may be all reckoned among the powerful natural propensities with which man is endued, in order to preserve his own person and family, to continue his species, to secure himself from evil or injury, and to promote his own ease and happiness. This I might prove by giving instances in a multitude of particulars, if it were needful. It follows then, that the gratification or indulgence of these passions and appetites is restrained within the bounds of reason, when they neither carry us so far as to do any injury to our neighbours, nor abuse any of our own faculties or powers of body or mind, but keep them in their proper exercise.

Thus, for example; a man may be lawfully angry for an injury or affront received from his neighbour, supposing the passion to arise no higher than the demerit of the affront or injury; but if he let it swell and burn to such a degree as to break in upon the peace and property of his neighbour, beyond the reparation of his own damages, and the necessary self-defence against future injuries, he then indulges it to a criminal excess: Or if he suffers the flame to arise so high within him as to decompose his own nature, and to unfit him for his duty toward God, his neighbour, or himself.

In the same manner his natural appetites may be indulged so far as to support his nature, or to maintain his species, or to give himself pleasure or ease, in such a manner as does not make an inroad upon the peace or property of the societies in which he dwells, nor unfit his own flesh or spirit for any of the duties of life. But it is evident, that gluttony and drunkenness abuse a man's own natural powers; adultery invades the property and peace of his neighbour; and fornication has an evident tendency to break the peace and welfare of societies, to introduce children into the world under great and necessary hardships and inconveniencies, who must either die for want of care, or grow up to shame and sorrow, without due and proper provision for their comfort and happiness.

PITH. I acknowledge, sir, your reasoning upon this subject has, for the most part, a great deal of truth and justice in it, except in those instances wherein you seem to allow every private person to judge and determine in his own case, about the degree of injury or affront which he has received, and the degree and manner of retaliation or recompence which he demands; which judgment and determination rather belong to the agreement of a whole society, or the sense of a magistrate, upon whom that power is devolved.

But I would not interrupt the course of our dialogue with too many objections, nor divert the current and tendency of it from its main end and design; and therefore I let this pass for the present. Tell me then, sir, with a sincere heart, Can you imagine that ever a single creature in the wilds of *Africa*, and the *American* forests, could arise to this degree of reason, and to these fine inferences and deductions of the rules of morality, by the dint of his own understanding? The poor wretch that has been trained up from his infancy merely to fish and hunt, to plant a little

*Indian*

*Indian* corn, and to parch it by the fire or the sun, to tie a skin round his body to keep him from the cold, or to dig the trunk of a tree into a hollow canoe for sailing, and who has been employed all his life in some of these low labours and cares; can you ever imagine, that the native reason of such animals as these, can spin out of their own bowels such philosophical discourses, such moral arguments and inferences? And especially, when the design of them is to lay a restraint upon those restless and violent powers of natural appetite and passion? Mistake me not, sir, I do not pronounce it utterly impossible in the nature of things, that reason should exercise itself in this manner; but it appears next to an impossibility, that such sort of moral reasoning should be found in any one hut or wigwam among twenty nations of these *American* savages.

LOC. Surely, my friend, you depreciate human nature to a very great degree, and represent it in such colours, as though the glorious light of reason, which shines in every son and daughter of man, had raised them but little above the beasts of the earth, and the birds of the air.

PITH. If you please, sir, to read the accounts that travellers give us of these rude and unpolished countries, you will find the constant customs and practises of whole nations perfectly agreeable to the colours in which I represent them. History and matter of fact sufficiently declare human nature, in its present state, to be thus far debased and brutified, and that the glorious faculty of reason is so far overwhelmed and benighted by stupid ignorance, that it seeks not after the God who made them, and it is so wretchedly led captive by passion, appetite, and a thousand objects of sense, as scarce ever to exert itself in any inquiries about the themes of self-denial and mortification, much less to find out all these instances of virtue, or duty toward God or themselves.

Besides, sir, please to consider, that passion and appetite are such powerful and ruling springs of judgment, as well as of action, in degenerate mankind, that they disguise and colour the truth as they please, and turn vice into virtue, or evil into good, by the vivacity and force of their representation. The faculty of fancy is almost always engaged on their side, and that helps to throw false colours on things, and leads the untaught and unwary reasoner into a thousand errors. The violence of hope and fear, of desire and aversion, of love and wrath, persuade and almost compel the reason of an *Iroquois*, or a *Negroe*, a *Hottentot*, or a *Laplander*, to determine every thing to be right or wrong according as these passions represent it. And since it is so hard for *European* philosophers, and even for christians, to judge aright by their own reason in particular cases, wherein appetite and passion are concerned, much harder is it, and almost impossible, for these savages of *America* or *Africa*, &c. to frame to themselves a scheme of virtue in these self-denying instances. You, yourself, sir, have granted the truth of what our friend SOPHRONIUS expressed in the end of his discourse, *viz.* that all men every where will frequently find themselves betrayed into sin by the strength of appetites and passions: And how perpetually will these wild creatures be thus exposed to sin against God, when their reason has yielded itself such a captive to sense, as not to inquire and settle the rules of duty?

Let us proceed then, sir, to the last article, which I shall desire you to prove, or rather to shew me, how an untaught heathen shall be convinced that he is a sinner against God; and, when convinced, what he should do to appease God's anger; and if he should repent of sin, how shall he know that God will forgive him upon his repentance, and receive him into his favour?

LOG. First, I cannot think it such a difficulty to convince human creatures, that they have some way or other done what they should not do, or neglected what they ought to do with regard to God, or to their neighbours, or themselves: And thus reason is sufficient for conviction of sin; for it is sufficient to enable them to compare their actions with the rectitude of the nature of God, and with the general rules of their duty which they know, and to observe how much they have wandered from them.

PITH. I grant it no hard matter, sir, when they are once led into an acquaintance with the rectitude of God's nature, and are brought to the knowledge of their own various duties, to make them sensible that they come very short in the performance of them: And I cannot but think, that reason and conscience do sometimes convince *Negroes* and *Hottentots* of some crimes. But reason, as it operates in those wild creatures, shews them so very little of the holy nature of God, of their relations to him, and of their duty toward God or man, as you have found in this dispute, that it plainly follows, that this same reason of theirs will go but a very little way in making them sensible of any failures in their duty. How shall they be convinced they sin against God, in forgetting him from day to day, and from year to year, in neglecting to reverence him for his greatness, to praise him for his goodness, or to pray to him and depend on him for his further blessing, when their whole nation has continued in this constant course of impiety from age to age, without remorse? when none of them have been ever led so far by their own reason, as to know these duties, and bind them upon their own consciences? And suppose they should be made sensible, that they have now and then cheated their neighbours by lying and falshood, that they have plundered or stole their goods from them, or that they have been sometimes shamefully drunk, or guilty of fornication; yet their consciences will bring but a very feeble charge against them for these things as criminal, if they have not been evidently convinced, that truth and justice, chastity and temperance were necessary duties.

And yet further, LOGISTO, be pleased to consider, that if they should be never so much convinced that they have done amiss in drinking to excess, because it injures themselves, or in doing any kind of injury to their neighbour; yet they would not readily conclude, that they did any injury to God hereby; since their reason has not yet led them to the thought, that God is the great inspector and governor of the world, and that he has in any way and manner forbid these sins, or required the contrary duties.

Nor is it any wonder, that a rude *American* should justify himself and his conduct from any dishonours done to God, though he has forgot and neglected him all his life, and has wallowed in lewd and drunken debaucheries, unless he has also been guilty of some most flagrant acts of impiety, injustice, and villainy. Such very flagrant and notorious crimes, perhaps, might recoil upon his conscience, and smite him with conviction. But as for the multitudes of common sins, a wild savage in the *African* or *American* regions would take no notice of them, but think himself and his neighbours good and innocent enough. Nor is this at all strange, since the rude herd of mankind, even amongst christians, are ready to say, when a neighbour dies; "Alas, poor man! he is gone: but surely he is gone to heaven; for though he did not mind much of religion indeed, yet he was an honest creature, he would not wrong a man of a farthing, and he was ever ready to do his neighbour a kindness: It is true, he would drink now and then a little too much, nor was he always so careful to speak truth, and perhaps he would swear when he was

in a passion, but never when he was sober; he was no man's enemy but his own, and did no injury but to himself." Now if this gross ignorance, and senselessness of sin, be found even in the lands of christian knowledge, we may easily suppose the poor savages will hardly think themselves sinners against God at all.

LOG. I own what you say, PITHANDER, has some weight in it: though you must acknowledge too, that there are certainly some secret workings of conscience in all men, which give them some inward notices, when they violate the rule of their duty, especially in grosser instances, and smite them with an inward reproach, though it may not be so frequent, nor in so explicit a manner, as I was ready to imagine, before we had talked over this matter so particularly.

PITH. I have granted it, sir; and it is very likely, at some seasons of grosser transgression, or when their natural spirits are low, they may feel such inward reproaches of conscience more plain and pungent: But having no fixed and settled rules of duty, these little uneasinesses quickly vanish, like a qualm of sickness that passes over the stomach, they forget their own iniquities, and they are prone to fancy, that God forgets them too: And thus they go on again to their old barbarity and injustice, their gluttony and drunkenness. I grant, this conduct is greatly criminal, yet it is the common case, till, by degrees, conscience grows callous and insensible, and they sin without remorse.

LOG. I confess, when we observe so little of the workings of conscience in men, to convince them of sin, in such a knowing and rational land and age as ours, when we observe how much the voice of conscience is neglected, and how easily is it silenced, when we find it grows hard and stupid by degrees, and at last permits men, without any remorse, to commit all villainies, in spite of all the remonstrances of God and man, it is no wonder that conscience has a very feeble influence in such wild and unknowing, and unpolished countries, where irreligion and intemperance are the custom and fashion, from generation to generation.

PITH. Well then, sir, since you allow me this, please to proceed, and inform me, how they shall come to know, if they should be once convinced of sin, that they must repent of it; that is, be sorry for it, and abstain from it?

LOG. This repentance is the most natural and obvious practice that the reason of man can dictate to him, to appease an offended God: It is going as far as he can, to undo what evil he hath done; and therefore the reason of every man would conduct him to penitence under a sense of past sin.

PITH. But we do not find this duty towards God has been so constantly taught, or practised so very much by human reason, even among the philosophers and the inhabitants of *Rome* or *Athens*, as to imagine that the *Indian* savages should prescribe this duty to themselves. Though here and there a wise man might mention repentance as a duty, yet it is evident the polite nations of heathenism were generally for offering sacrifices of one kind or other, to make compensation for their crimes, without much sollicitude or care about repentance as a duty to God, and a watchful care of better obedience. And in those parts of *America* where they made pretences to any sense of religion, it was a frequent thing, as the *Spanish* writers of the country of *Mexico* inform us, to seek out some beautiful girl, and offer her a sacrifice to their offended idols, when they thought their gods were angry with them: penitence and reformation, virtue, and piety of heart and life, are little thought of among wild heathens as the means of obtaining divine pardon, or as necessary for that end.

LOG. I confess, my friend, you put me in mind of many histories which I have read, not only of heathen, but of popish countries, where the doctrine and practice of penances, and sacrifices, and rich offerings to saints and idols, gods and goddesses, are the immediate remedy to which men apply themselves after sin, and which papists and heathens make their ready refuge, after a sense of guilt, rather than to practise the inward and spiritual duties of repentance and mortification, and maintain a future course of watchful holiness.

PITH. Let us drop this point then, sir; and now I entreat you to prove, that if a heathen should truly repent, and be sorry for his sin, even as it is committed against God, and should endeavour to perform his duty better for time to come, will his reason assure him, that God will forgive his sin, receive him to his favour, and make him happy?

LOG. Yes, certainly, PITHANDER, he need not doubt it; for if doing evil be the only foundation of God's displeasure, ceasing to do evil, or returning to do well, must take away that displeasure. God is too good a being, not to approve and forgive such a penitent.

And not only the goodness, but even the wisdom of God would oblige him to forgive those who repent, since the sinner then becomes what God in his wisdom requires him to be: Whereas if God punished him, it could only be with a design to correct him, and make him pious and virtuous for time to come: But when this happy end is attained without punishment, there is then no need of it: And God has no cruelty in his nature, to incline him to punish a creature without necessity.

PITH. To this I answer, That the correction or amendment of the particular offender, is not the only end of punishment, but the vindication of the wisdom and justice of the lawgiver, and his law, which are like to be insulted, and the laws continually broken afresh, if offences were always passed by with impunity, and if the criminal were always pardoned upon repentance. It is necessary for a governor sometimes to teach his subjects what an evil thing it is to transgress his law, by the proper punishment of those who offend. The honour and authority of government must be sometimes supported and vindicated by such severities: And though it may please a sovereign sometimes to pardon an offender out of his great goodness, when he is truly penitent for his crime, yet no degrees of penitence can assure the offender that he shall certainly and intirely be forgiven, or can claim forgiveness at the hands of the sovereign; because repentance makes no recompence at all for the dishonour done to the authority of the law, and of him that made it. His future obedience is all due, if he had never sinned; and therefore it cannot compensate for past neglects and transgressions.

LOG. But when sinful man is truly penitent for his faults, it is the best thing that a creature can do in sinful circumstances, and the best recompence that he can make to an offended God, who is a righteous and merciful governor, and will require no more than the sinner can give.

PITH. But a sinner can "dare pœnas," suffer punishment, to make a sort of compensation, by forfeiting and losing his peace, and thus doing honour to the law in a passive manner, when he would not do it by active obedience: Suppose, sir, if I dare suppose a thing almost impossible, that so worthy a gentleman, and so loyal a subject as LOGISTO, should rebel against his present majesty King GEORGE the second, should murder a fellow-subject, or violate any of the laws of the land by a capital crime, and after he had continued some time in a vicious course, he should  
repent,



repent, and assure his majesty, that for time to come he would be a very faithful subject, has he sufficient ground to claim or to expect a pardon, merely because he is sorry for what he has done, and resolved sincerely to do so no more? King GEORGE is indeed a man of mercy, but would that repentance of yours be any reparation for the injury you have done to the authority of the king, or the welfare of the state? Do you not know, sir, that the government takes no cognizance of such repentances? Even the most sincere penitent cannot claim a right to have his treason pardoned. Government requires that criminals be punished to maintain the authority of the law and the lawgivers: The life of the criminal is forfeited and due to the state: Criminals must be made examples of justice, that the honour of government may be maintained, and that other subjects, who see or hear of this punishment, may be secured in their obedience and duty, by such public examples of punishment and terror.

Now to apply this to the case in hand: The great God sufficiently makes it appear, in the conduct of his providence, and in his government of the world, that he does not punish offending creatures merely to promote their own correction, repentance, and reformation. How many thousands of sinful men are cut off by earthquakes, famine, pestilence, inundations, &c. and sent down to the grave, where there is no reformation or repentance? How many sinners, who have been already truly penitent and reformed, have borne these desolating testimonies of the displeasure of God against sin, and felt a heavy share of these public calamities? Nay, have there not been some of the most virtuous and holy creatures upon earth now and then given up by the providence of God, not only to common calamities, but to peculiar miseries and smarting sorrows, as just tokens of divine resentment for some past sins? And their own consciences have acknowledged the justice of it. God will magnify his law and make it honourable, and will make even penitent sinners know, what an evil and bitter thing it is to offend his majesty, and break his laws.

And as it has pleased the righteous governor of the universe to make even penitent offenders sometimes instances of his just displeasure against sin in this world, that other inhabitants of the earth may see, and fear, and obey, so how do we know, how far the several orders of angels or inhabitants of other worlds, shall be witnesses of the punishment of guilty mortals in the invisible or future state, and be thereby deterred from sin?

The repentance of a criminal is no recompence to God, considered as the universal governor of his intellectual creatures: His supreme authority must be maintained, and his honour be vindicated, through his universal empire: And how can heathens assure themselves, by the mere light of reason, that the wisdom of his government doth not find it necessary to make all the criminals of human race become some way or other examples of his just resentment? It is only divine revelation that informs us with any certainty, that man shall find forgiveness with God, and that pardon shall follow repentance.

LOG. Do you not allow then, my friend, that the light of nature can go so far as to say, it is at least probable, that God will forgive a repenting sinner, though reason may not make it certain?

PITH. I confess some things which SOPHRONIUS delivered, concerning the hope of pardon for repenting sinners, in confirmation of his scheme of natural religion, at the beginning of this conference, have great weight with me. Though I assure repentance cannot claim pardon on the sinner's part at the hand of God, yet

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I know not how strong a claim the wisdom and mercy of God may bring against the full execution of justice in such a case. God may forgive a sinner in part, and release him, in some degree, from the complete demerit and punishment of his sin; though he does not forgive him intirely. The learned *Dr. Clarke*, though he makes but little of original sin, yet in Vol. II. Serm. ix. page 198. he says, "We are the posterity of a sinful parent, and ourselves also are actual sinners; and at best we are but very imperfect and undeserving penitents, and our utmost endeavours of repentance can at most but afford ground of hope for the abatement of punishment, and not any expectation of reward."

But let us suppose and allow, that it is probable God will at last forgive an humble penitent creature that has offended against him in time past, if he earnestly implore divine forgiveness, if he grow up to a settled hatred of his iniquity, and behave himself with all watchfulness in the practice of his duty for time to come, both toward God, toward his neighbour, and himself. I think I must believe, that God loves holiness so well, that he will not for ever punish a creature that repents sincerely, and that he cannot but love a creature which sincerely loves God; and therefore if among sinful rebels he should find any such remarkable penitent, in the savage regions of the earth, I grant he shall not finally and eternally be banished from the presence of his maker, into misery, or at least he may have very encouraging hopes of some favour and acceptance at last, if he can and will exercise his reason so far upon these subjects and inquiries.

LOG. I am glad *SOPHRONIUS* is here in this dispute, and I am well pleased to see *PITHANDER* not only ready to yield to conviction at first, upon the appearance of the light of reason, but to retain it through all our conference.

PITH. But there are still some considerable difficulties remaining, sir, upon this point; there is some darkness hangs about this gleam of light. Suppose a heathen should be brought to believe and hope, that God may forgive his past sins upon sincere repentance, his renewed obedience, and his humble addresses to him for that purpose, yet can his reason teach him, that God will forgive daily and repeated sins, after knowledge and vows of obedience? That he will forgive the same sinner relapsing a hundred times over? That he will forgive his sins, even to the end of his life? Or that he will forgive him intirely and perfectly so as to make him undergo no penalty at all, and pass through no purgatory in the other world, to make some degree of expiation for past offences? This doctrine of a painful purification in another state, was supposed by some of the antient heathens, and is still believed by one party of christians, whereby souls of imperfect virtue do penance for the crimes committed in this life? Can his reason tell him, how long this state of penance and purgation will endure? Can it assure him, that God will take the sinner into his favour, so far as to give him a lasting state of happiness hereafter, who has been such a vile criminal here? And, I was going to say, Can his reason assure him, since his best repentance is so very imperfect, that he shall not be put upon another state of trial in a future world, and that his soul shall not be sent to animate any other body, partly to punish him for his crimes in this, and partly to go through a new probation, with regard to some further state of happiness or misery? And not only one, but all these doubts will grow much stronger, if the repentance itself be doubtful and feeble, or much interrupted by returning sins.

I am sure, *LOGISTO*, you are a gentleman of greater reading than to imagine these are mere fancies of my own: Your acquaintance with the heathen writers informs you of their purgatory: *Plato* expressly declares, that those "who seem to have

have lived a middle sort of life, that is, with some virtues and some vices, go into the lake of *Acheron*, and being cleansed and punished are then dismissed, and receive the recompence of their well-doings." See his *Phædo*. And you know, sir, their doctrine of transmigration of souls, which is said to be derived originally from *Pythagoras* the philosopher, and has spread widely among the nations.

The poets borrowed their representations from the philosophers, though they have dressed them with ornaments peculiar to their own genius. *Virgil* sends *Æneas* into the other world, and there he finds, in or near the *elysian fields*, several souls who were ordained to return to other bodies ;

“ Inclusas animas, superumq; ad lumen ituras,  
And ——— Animæ quibus altera fato  
Corpora debentur———

And the souls even of the best men, before they are admitted to *Elysium*, or the state of the blessed, must go through fire and water, and various pains and purifications.

LOG. I keep a few of the classics here in this summer-house, and some polite writings for my diversion. Here is a good edition of *Virgil*; come, turn to the place, and let us see the lines.

PITH. With all my heart, sir; it is in *Book VI.* toward the end, ver. 755-

“ Quin & supremo cum lumine vita reliquit,  
Non tamen omne malum miseris, nec funditus omnes  
Corporeæ excedunt pestes.——  
Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumq; malorum  
Supplicia expendunt: aliæ panduntur inanes  
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto  
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.  
Quique suos patimur manes. Exinde per amplum  
Mittimur *Elysium*, & pauci læta arva tenemus.”

LOG. I find after their purgatory, *Virgil* allows but a few of them to be happy, so great and universal does he suppose their defilement in this mortal state. But as for the bulk and multitude of these departed souls, pray what becomes of them?

PITH. Surely, sir, you have read the following lines, where he teaches us, that they return to bodies again after a thousand years penance.

“ Donec longa dies perfecto temporis orbe  
Concretam exemit labem, purumque reliquit  
Æthereum sensum, atque aurai simplicis ignem.  
Has omnes, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,  
Lethæum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno:  
Scilicet immemores, supera ut convexa revifant  
Rursus, & incipiant in corpora velle reverti.”

LOG. Since we are got into the company of the muses, *PITHANDER*, let us see what our english *Virgil*, *Mr. Dryden*, says in his translation of this period. I will read them to you.

Not

Not death itself can wholly wash their stains,  
 But long contracted filth, ev'n in the soul remains.  
 The reliques of inveterate vice they wear ;  
 And spots of sin obscene in every face appear.  
 For this are various penances enjoined ;  
 And some are hung to bleach, upon the wind ;  
 Some plung'd in waters, others purg'd in fires,  
 Till all the dregs are drain'd, and all the rust expires :  
 All have their *Manes*, and those *Manes* bear :  
 The few, so cleans'd, to these abodes repair, }  
 And breathe, in ample fields, the soft elysian air. }  
 Then are they happy, when by length of time  
 The scurf is worn away, of each committed crime.  
 No speck is left of their habitual stains ;  
 But the pure æther of the soul remains.  
 But, when a thousand rolling years are past  
 (So long their punishments and penance last ;)  
 Whole-droves of minds are, by the driving god,  
 Compell'd to drink the deep *Lethean* flood :  
 In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares  
 Of their past labours, and their irksome years ;  
 That unrememb'ring of its former pain,  
 The soul may suffer mortal flesh again.

PITH. And it is the doctrine of *Pythagoras*, as represented to us by another of the poets, that human souls return into the bodies of beasts as well as men. *Ovid* informs us so in the XV. book of his "metamorphoses." Have you got it here ?

LOG. Yes, sir, *Ovid* is at hand, and as vain and fabulous a writer as he was in antient times, yet if his soul was transmigrated into any human form in this age, I am persuaded he would be wonderfully pleased to be found in such company as yours, gentlemen, and to hear himself called upon to give his sense of the doctrine of *Pythagoras*, since it puts a sort of philosophical air and dress on his wild stories of the transformation of gods and men.

PITH. See here then, sir, the opinion of that antient philosopher in the language of poesy.

" Morte carent animæ, semperque priore relicta  
 Sede, novis domibus vivunt, habitantque receptæ ;  
 Omnia mutantur : nihil interit : errat & illinc  
 Huc venit ; hinc illuc ; & quoslibet occupat artus  
 Spiritus ; eque feris humana in corpora transit,  
 Inque feras noster."

Which Mr. *Dryden* thus translates ;

Then, death, so call'd, is but old matter dress'd  
 In some new figure, and a vary'd vest :  
 Thus all things are but alter'd, nothing dies :  
 And here, and there, th'unbody'd spirit flies,

By

By time, or force, or sickness dispossest'd,  
 And lodges, where it lights, in man or beast,  
 Or hunts without, till ready limbs it find,  
 And actuates those according to their kind;  
 From tenement to tenement is tofs'd,  
 The soul is still the same, the figure only lost."

And *Lucan* says of the northern countries, lib. I. *Pbarsf.* that they had the opinion of transmigration of souls, and therefore they feared not death.

" — Populi quos despicit arctos  
 Felices errore suo, quos ille timorum  
 Maximus, haud urget leti metus."

And on this account they esteemed it a very cowardly thing in war,

" — Redituræ parcere vitæ,"

that is, to be fond of this life, or solicitous to save it, when it would be so soon restored again.

*Cæsar* tells us this was the doctrine of the *Druids*, our ancestors, in *Britain*. "Disciplina Druidum in Britannia reperta—imprimis hoc volunt persuadere, non interire animas; sed ab aliis post mortem transire ad alios, &c. *Lib. VI. De Bello Gall.*" "The doctrine of the *Druids* was found in *Britain*. This is one of the prime articles of it, that souls do not die; but after the death of the body they pass from one to another." The antient *Brachmans* were known to be professors and teachers of this opinion; and in the country of *Malabar*, in the *East-Indies*, their successors, the *Brahmins*, teach the people the same notion still; and especially, that the souls of men, who have behaved ill in this world, are sent at their death into brute animals, partly to make atonement for sins past, and partly for a new trial.

Now, sir, if those among the antient heathens, in various nations of *Europe* and *Asia*, who professed to be wise above their neighbours, and who endeavoured to use their reason in matters of religion and a future state, were led into such wild errors, and had so little certainty about pardon of sin, and future rewards or punishments, what hope can you have, that untaught reason, in the wilds of *America*, and in *African* deserts, should have better success in their roving and loose inquiries about religious affairs, and the future state of men?

LOG. I know not well what to reply to some of these doubts and queries of yours. Upon the whole, I do not see how the mere reason of man, without any assistance, can get through all these difficulties, so as to assure a sinner of certain restoration to divine favour and the enjoyment of immortal blessedness at death, upon such poor, sorry, and interrupted repentances as will be found among these heathens: And I am now ready to think, that some of my infidel-acquaintance talk with too much assurance and triumph upon these subjects, because they never entered far enough into inquiries about them, to learn the difficulties with which their opinions are surrounded. We are too ready to think the great God a mere weak good-natured thing, such as some magistrates have been in wicked nations, and that he utterly neglects to lay due restraints upon the vices of his subjects, that he disregards the demands of justice, and the rights of government. If I mistake not, your hebrew poet introduces God

himself making this reflexion upon some of the loose and profligate fellows of that age, who were not willing to have vice too severely punished; "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes. *Psal.* l. 21.

PITH. Dear sir, since you have done *David* the honour to cite him in our debates, I beg leave to repeat the awful address he makes to those vicious creatures in the very next words: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Punishment belongs to guilt, and God, the governor of the world, has a right to inflict it if he please. I grant, these persons of whom the psalmist here speaks, were impenitent sinners: But there are many passages in scripture that concur with our natural reason, and inform us, that God may, and sometimes doth, punish in some degree those favourites whom he finally pardons. In *Psal.* xcix. 8. *David* says, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. Nor can all the light of reason assure us, that God will intirely forgive a penitent in this world or in the other, without some punishment.

LOG. I would readily yield, PITHANDER, as far as your argument carries evidence with it. But though we cannot be fully assured, that repenting criminals shall be completely pardoned, yet you have granted, there is very probable ground for a penitent to hope, that God will forgive him at last; and if reason can lead him but to a probability of this final forgiveness, it gives sufficient ground for the practice of repentance and future obedience, though there may be some fore punishments in his way to final happiness.

PITH. Please to consider, dear sir, that though I have allowed that the force of reason, under happy advantages and improvements, and in it's best exercises, may reach thus far, yet when the reason or conscience of a poor untaught *african savage* has been by any providence so far awakened, as to think himself a criminal before God, and has his soul made deeply sensible of sin, I hardly see how he can, upon just and solid grounds, get through all the difficulties which I have mentioned. Will his own rude and uninstructed reason tell him, that God will probably forgive him a hundred times over? That God will call him to no pains and sufferings in a future state, on account of his sins in this life? Or if he endures some pain, can his reason teach him, that God will probably take him afterward into his favour, so far as to give an immortal reward to any of his poor pretences to virtue, which are so often interrupted and defiled by sin? And whatever inferences you and I may be able to make in *Great-Britain*, I doubt the skill of a negro on this theme.

LOG. I am sensible I have been too confident upon these matters; and I begin to think there is some need of a revelation to give men more clear discoveries of true religion, and more evident, substantial, and encouraging hopes of the pardon of sin and eternal happiness.

But however, my friend, you seem at present to have got the better of me, by running over all the particular articles which SOPHRONIUS has mentioned, as belonging to natural religion, and I confess I cannot see how a wild negro, or an *american*, can so well find them out as I imagined; yet I cannot but think still, that human reason must or should have sufficient ability to guide and to conduct mankind to the favour of God, and happiness in a way of religion; and I have something further to offer upon this head: And when I lead the argument, and cast it into another form, we shall try whether your skill can refute it.

PITH. Let

PITH. Let your arguments be proposed, sir, in what new form you please, I think I shall be able to shew you their weakness, or if they are convincing, I desire to be so honest as to yield to their force. But the hours are passed away, sir, with uncommon speed in such an agreeable conversation: The sun hath been set almost this half hour: I think it was full moon yesterday, and we shall have the light of that planet to guide us home in a little time, which is far more than the *american* savages have to guide them to heaven, or the *african* tribe of negroes to relieve their midnight darkness. If you please, LOGISTO, we will agree and meet here to-morrow evening, and carry on the discourse. But let us have SOPHRONIUS's impartial sentiments on our debate thus far, before we break up.

LOG. With all my heart, gentlemen, and I shall be very glad to see you both here to-morrow on so agreeable an occasion: And now I entreat you, SOPHRONIUS, to make use of no compliments, but fulfil the office of an impartial moderator, for which we both chuse you; for our business is the search of truth.

SOPH. Gentlemen, I have been a careful hearer of your free and learned debate, and I cannot but observe with pleasure, that you have avoided all the little paltry methods of cavilling, into which disputants are too often betrayed when they aim at victory more than truth, and when each person is resolved to maintain his own opinion at all adventures. By this happy temper and conduct which has appeared in this conference, I am in no pain about giving you my freest thoughts on the subject, since I am in no danger of displeasing persons of your generous sentiments.

Give me leave then, in the first place, to take notice, that you have confined the greatest part of your discourse to the sufficiency of human reason, in the rude and uncultivated nations of *Africa* and *north America*, to lead them to the favour of God and happiness, by the knowledge and practice of religion: And indeed, I cannot but think you have wisely fixed this scene for your controversy, and limited your discourse to this sort of people, which are some of the most barbarous and brutish on the earth, and where reason has no supposed assistances from revelation.

LOGISTO has taken great pains to prove, that human reason, even in such savage nations as these, is sufficient to guide and conduct them in the way of religion, to the favour of God, and future happiness: or else indeed, the proposition is not universally true, "That the reason of all men is sufficient for this purpose;" and, in my opinion, he has gone a great way toward proving the natural sufficiency of human reason for this purpose, by shewing how rational every article of natural religion appears, and by what natural and just steps of inference, it may be derived from such principles as lie within the reach of mankind, and his reasoning powers.

On the other hand, PITHANDER has shewn us plainly in fact, how unassisted reason is turned aside perpetually from the truth, and that these several nations, in many successive ages, have been born, and lived, and died, by thousands and ten thousands, and have never sought nor found out any tolerable scheme of natural religion, and hardly done any thing toward it; not that he supposes them to be innocent and blameless in these shameful neglects of God, and aversions to true religion; but it is so in fact, from age to age, and there are many evident causes or occasions of it.

Give me leave, LOGISTO, to sum up in one view the various considerations that PITHANDER has intimated in several parts of this debate, why he thinks human reason, in these savages, to be insufficient to lead them to true religion.

1. He considers the early and inveterate prejudices of whole nations against the principles and rules of true religion, the obstinate and deep-rooted prepossessions which they labour under, and the gross and shameful errors which they are led into

from their youngest infancy by all who are about them : And their crime is, that there is scarce a soul of them, that ever bethinks himself so far, as to question the truth of what his parents and neighbours have taught him in his childhood, let it be never so much contrary to reason and virtue.

2. He considers their irreligious customs, and the vicious practices, which run through the whole nation ; which national customs are held so sacred in their esteem, that it is a sufficient proof of truth or duty to them to say, " It is the constant opinion or custom of their country." Every thing that their ancestors have believed or done is reasonable in their account, without any examination.

3. He considers the natural thoughtlessness of these creatures, about any thing that is spiritual and divine, without some hint given them, that should set their reason at work : They eat and drink, and lie down and rise whole years together, and never think of the true God, and the honours due to him if some peculiar providence, occurrence, or conversation doth not turn their thoughts this way.

And to this we might add, their general astonishing stupidity in matters of God and godliness, if ever they hear any discourse of them ; their aversion to the spiritual parts of religion, and utter disregard of every thing that belongs to it.

4. He considers the weakness of their untaught reason, to distinguish truth from error, if ever it were set a working on spiritual things. Reason, as well as our other powers, learns to exercise itself by practice and instruction ; and without instruction it is very rude and giddy, and ever wandering into folly and madness. These rude and barbarous creatures, therefore, must not only be put into a right track of thought at first, but be kept in it too ; or otherwise they presently run into gross mistakes, even in the plainest and commonest principles of religion, such as the existence and unity of God, and the worship that ought to be paid to him, and the common virtues of justice and sobriety. Such poor savages as these, if their faces were once set toward religion and truth, would be readily led away into a variety of errors which stand thick on every side, unless they had some other guide, some better clue and direction than their own reasoning powers.

5. He considers the incessant and everlasting influence of sensible things upon their minds, which continually, though unreasonably, divert them from a right exercise of their reason about matters of religion and virtue. The urgent necessities of nature, the constant return of their appetites, the solicitude and care to supply them, and the frequent rise and efforts of their unruly passions, all join together, not only to hinder the better powers of their nature from engaging closely in the pursuit of religion, but also tend to blind their minds, and lead them astray from the truth. They are criminal, indeed, in indulging these inferior powers to the neglect of their souls, and their best interest ; but still they do universally indulge them.

And I might add, in the last place, he has intimated, that if they feel any efforts of their own reason toward the searching out of the true God and his worship, if they are awakened by the inward dictates or reproofs of conscience now and then, to make some resistance to their brutal customs, and ungodly practices ; yet these inward efforts of conscience and reason are so feeble, that they suffer them to be quickly overpowered and extinguished, by the temptations that stand around them within and without.

PITH. I own my great obligations to you, SOPHRONIUS, for so happy a recollection of my scattered thoughts, and so beautiful a disposition of them, as gives force, perspicuity, and elegance to my argument.

SOPH. Sir,



SOPHRO. Sir, I have done nothing but my duty in summing up the evidence, before I pronounce the sentence. Had there been any thing in LOGISTO's part of the conference which had needed such a rehearsal and new disposition, he might be assured, I should not have failed either in my diligence or readiness to assist or set forth his argument to as good advantage.

But, compliments apart: Thus, gentlemen, having briefly recapitulated the debate between you, all that I shall say, by way of an arbitrator in the present dispute, shall be contained in a few following propositions: Perhaps I shall not be able to place them in so just and regular a form: But I can trust your candour: Conversation does not require such exactness. And I would particularly bespeak LOGISTO's pardon, before I mention the two first of them, because they suppose the truth of christianity, and the bible, which he seems to doubt of at present. But he shall find that I name them only to introduce the rest, and that I shall make no manner of use of these two propositions against his present argument, or in favour of PITHANDER. I proceed therefore,

I. I am persuaded, that God never did or will forgive the sins of any man upon earth, whether *jew*, heathen, or christian, nor receive any of our sinful race into his favour, but upon the account of what *Jesus Christ* his son, the mediator, has done and suffered, for the atonement or expiation of sin, and the recovery of man to the favour of God: So that if heathens are saved, I think it is owing to the merit of *Christ*, and his death. There is salvation in no other, nor is there any other name whereby men may be saved. If any of those who never heard of *Christ* might be saved without the influence of his atonement and mediation, why might not they that have heard of him be saved without it also? Thus there would be no need of him to become a mediator, or to make atonement for the sins of the one or the other; and thus *Christ* would have lived and died to very little purpose.

II. With most sincere esteem and love, and, shall I add, with tender compassion to LOGISTO, I ask leave to declare my belief of the constitution of the gospel, with all the solemn threatenings that are annexed to it, which I would call my second proposition; *viz.* "He that lives where the gospel of *Christ* is published, with it's proper and necessary evidences, and yet refuses all his life-time to believe and receive it, cannot be saved;" but lies under that sentence of condemnation which is frequently denounced in the new testament, "He that believeth not, shall be damned: If ye believe not that I am he, that is, the *Messiah*, ye shall die in your sins." Nor would the blessed God ever denounce such terrible sentences as these, for mere errors of the mind, without any vice of the will. God well knows where he has given sufficient light and evidence; and he also knows, that however an honest and sincere mind may happen to be led astray for a season, yet nothing but criminal negligence, or culpable prejudices, or some sinful aversion to the gospel, can influence men, under such evidences, constantly and finally to reject it: It is plain to me, even from these scriptures, that no man who truly fears and loves God, and seeks to know or to do his will, can or will be guilty of constant and final opposition to the gospel, where it is surrounded with it's proper attestations. And upon this account, dear LOGISTO, I am persuaded, your sincere inquiries to find out the true religion, will issue in a hearty belief and profession of christianity, though your thoughts may be at present fluttering abroad with some uncertainty where to fix.

LOG. I cannot withhold myself, gentlemen, from interrupting our moderator in his discourse, that I may make my acknowledgments for his tender concern about my

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best interests, which he has expressed in so affectionate and respectful a manner. I must confess, I have no obstinate and rooted aversion to the christian religion, if I can find that there is any real need of it, and that it stands upon solid foundations, and if I could answer some few difficulties that belong to the bible. But lest I make too long an interruption of your discourse, I intreat you, SOPHRONIUS, proceed to your third proposition.

SOPHRO. III. Though I suppose no man shall be saved but by virtue of the mediation and death of *Christ*, nor doth the gospel permit me to allow salvation to those who wilfully and finally reject it, under clear light and evidence; yet there is good reason to believe, that there have been many sinners actually saved, who never believed in *Jesus Christ* the son of *Mary*, nor ever heard of his name, nor had any notion of his atoning death and sacrifice. Such were some of the early descendants of *Noah*, who lived long before this name was known in the world, among whom we may reckon *Abimelech* king of the *Philistines*, *Melchisedec* king of *Salem*, *Job* in the land of *Uz*\*, with his four friends, and many others, who feared God, and wrought righteousness: And such were many good men among the *jews*, who might be made partakers of the benefits of the death of *Christ*, and his sacrifice, though they had generally no notion of such a sort of *Messiah*, or saviour, as was to be made a sacrifice for the sins of men: Nor is this at all incredible, since St. *Peter* himself, who had been a disciple of *Christ* so long, did not believe this doctrine even a little before his master's death, when he complimented his master concerning his crucifixion, *Mat.* xvi. 22. and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." See p. 215.

Nor is it unreasonable to have the same charitable thoughts concerning several other persons of the heathen world, during the continuance of the *jewish* church and state, who had either maintained the knowledge of the true God, by tradition from *Noah*, or recovered it by converse with the *jews*, and worshipped him as a God of justice and mercy, with fear and hope: Such was *Cornelius* the centurion, and *Lydia*, and several others, who were called devout persons, and such as feared or worshipped God, in the history of the *Acts*, chap. x. 2, 7. and xvi. 14. and xvii. 4. And it is possible, that since the first age of christianity there may have been some such religious persons, of this same character, who were saved, though they never heard the doctrine of *Jesus Christ*; for if they had so much religion as would have saved them before that time, surely they shall never be excluded from salvation for want of hearing of the doctrine of *Christ*, if they did not lie within the reach of it.

IV. If any persons in the heathen nations are saved without the actual knowledge of *Christ*, or any divine revelation, I think I may venture to say, that they can obtain it no other way but by the knowledge, and sincere belief, and practice of that religion whose articles I enumerated, at your request, in the beginning of your dispute: And I then gave you my reasons, why I think these articles are sufficient, and why

\* Some will object here, did not *Job* believe in *Jesus Christ*, his redeemer, who shall stand at last on the earth; *Job* xix. 24, &c.?

ANSWER. It is granted, that in some bright hours, and particularly in the text cited, he was carried by inspiration above the level of the dispensation under which he lived, so far as plainly to rejoice in this glorious favour of mankind, even the same person who was afterward manifested in the world under the name of *Jesus Christ*: And so might several other pious men under the antient dispensations and perhaps many or most of them might hope for some such favour: but it can scarce be proved, that all of them had an explicit notion of such a glorious *Messiah*, and that they actually trusted in him as a mediator; much less does it appear, that they all trusted in him as an atoning sacrifice, though they might wait and hope for him, as some future deliverer.

why they are necessary: I told you then, why I conceive that a good and gracious God will finally accept of the soul who sincerely believes and practises them; and why I can hardly suppose a holy and righteous God will accept of any thing that comes very much short of these articles.

V. Since all these articles of natural religion, which I before mentioned, arise from the mere consideration of the nature of God, and man in his present state, and the relations in which man stands to God, and to his fellow-creatures, and since they stand so connected together, that they may be, and have been actually drawn out and framed by the exercise of our reasoning powers, by persons who dwell under the light of christianity, then it is not utterly impossible in the nature of things, that the same articles should be drawn out and framed, by the exercise of reason, among those who never enjoyed the preaching of the gospel of *Christ*: though it must be confessed, it is almost infinitely easier for a christian to do it, than for a heathen. Yet still it is possible, in the nature of things, that mere human reason may be so cultivated and improved, without revelation, as to produce such fruits of knowledge as these are. This appears, in some measure, by the fine schemes and thoughts of some of the *greek* and *roman* philosophers, on the themes of rational, mathematical, physical, and moral knowledge, as well as in some parts of religion, and by the great progress a few of them have made in knowledge and truth, on some of the subjects which you have been debating.

I confess indeed, I hardly think those polite writers and philosophers would have gone so far in virtue and religion, if they had borrowed no help from divine tradition, and converse with the *jews*, or their neighbours. But after all, I cannot say that such a scheme of religion as I have here proposed, lies utterly out of the reach of human reason, in the nature of things, since the several steps of it may be all connected by strong inferences.

VI. Though there be several whole nations of the earth sunk into such a brutal stupidity, as the savages in the deserts of *Africa*, and the wilds of *America*, that they know nothing of religion; and though scarce any of the heathen philosophers, much less any whole nations, ever arrived at any clear and explicit knowledge of such a short and plain system of natural religion as I have proposed; yet it does not follow, that human reason is not sufficient to lead them into it. A man who is asleep is a reasonable creature still, and the reason that is in him is sufficient to enable him to discourse and act like a man; but he must be first awakened by some happy accident, and his reason set a working in a proper track. A man that is intoxicated with liquor, and thereby led astray into a thousand fooleries, and is preparing mischief and misery for himself, yet has the principle of reason in him still, and if he does not go on to drink, he may recover the exercise of his rational powers, and thereby find out a way to extricate himself from the dangers which surround him.

Now I look upon the bulk of the heathen world in such kind of circumstances as these. Reason, so far as it relates to God, and religion, and eternal happiness, seems to be asleep in them; some happy hints may possibly awaken it, and set it a moving in a right channel, though without revelation it will be ever ready to wander, and go astray. Reason, in far the greatest part of them, seems to be intoxicated and drawn away into endless fooleries, instead of religion, led astray by wild appetite and passion, perverted by a thousand prejudices, and by the universal customs of the country, and seduced far from all the paths of truth and duty. Now if any occurrence arise which may bring them to a stand, free them from the intoxicating influences of prejudice, custom, passion, &c. it is possible, in the nature of things, that the pow-  
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ers of reason may then trace out such a religion, which, if sincerely practised, may lead them to final happiness.

VII. But since we find by wretched and deplorable experience, that there have been very few among the best of the heathen nations, whose reason being left to itself; without any traditions of divine revelation, have worked well this way, and traced out all the most important and necessary principles of religion; and since also we have seen what shameful ignorance, even of the chief of these principles, is found universally reigning among the ruder and more unpolished nations, so that scarce a man of them knows the true God, or believes or practises the necessary duties towards God, and but very imperfectly toward his neighbour or himself; we may plainly infer, this sufficiency of human reason to guide all men in matters of religion, is but little more than a speculative and abstract idea of sufficiency; it is a sufficiency, at best, that has very little or no influence: It is such a natural capacity, or remote power, or sufficiency, as is scarce likely to become effectual, in practice, in one soul among ten thousand of these rude and brutal creatures which we have been speaking of. And whatsoever speculative, natural, or remote sufficiency in matters of religion and happiness, may be ascribed to human reason among the rude and barbarous nations of the earth; yet it can hardly be called a proximate and practical sufficiency for this purpose: So that there seems to be a plain necessity of some higher means and advantages than they are possessed of, in order to introduce any thing of real religion actually amongst them. This appears evident to me, since I have scarce grounds enough to suppose there is one single person in several of these savage nations, that has arrived at so much religion and holiness, as to be fit, according to the representations of scripture, to enter into the presence of God, and heavenly blessedness, under all the guidance and conduct of their own reason; so ineffectual is it to combat with their natural stupidity, their innumerable prejudices, the incessant influence of their brutal education and customs, and their strong propensities to vice.

LOG. Permit me, gentlemen, after the moderator has spoken, to put in one word, which perhaps has been too much neglected in our present debate, though it has been at first agreed to belong to the question; and that is this: If all mankind used and exercised their reason well, and as they ought to do, I query whether it would not only have a remote, but also a proximate and practical sufficiency, to find out the articles of natural religion, so far as is necessary for future happiness: For it is evident enough, that neither the savage nor the polite nations which we have had occasion to speak of, have used their reason as they might and ought to have done on religious subjects.

SOPHRO. What you propose, sir, I think may be safely granted by PITHANDER, even if he admit my distinction of this remote and proximate sufficiency. But the surrounding darkness and ignorance in which most of these heathens were born, the prejudices and customs of their nations, which they imbibe almost from their birth, their perpetual avocations by present sensible objects, the everlasting urgency of their appetites and passions, their native propensities to vice, and the constant temptations that attend them, are such a powerful hinderance to this right and due exercise of their reason on things moral, divine, and spiritual, and on things future and eternal, that though there be a natural sufficiency in human reason to find out such a religion as might save them, yet it is ten thousand to one, if ever they duly and rightly exercise it. It is highly improbable, that ever their thoughts should be directed into such a track, and guarded and led onward in it so far, till they have found out such articles of faith and practice in religion, as you yourself have granted to be necessary.

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And it is upon this account, LOGISTO, I say, that reason which is remotely sufficient in the nature of things, may be called practically insufficient for the purposes of religion and happiness; since so very few, or none, will actually exercise their reason well; this is the chief thing which I mean by the practical insufficiency of it, that not one in a thousand, or perhaps in many thousands, will so employ their reason as to guide them to religion and happiness under the present circumstances of the heathen world, and especially in the brutal and savage nations.

PITH. Methinks, SOPHRONIUS, I feel myself inclined to accept of your distinction, and to agree to your reasoning on this subject.

LOG. For my part, I thank you heartily, SOPHRONIUS, for your good company, and for your concluding Discourse. I must confess, I cannot see how to get over the difficulties which PITHANDER has before proposed, and which you seem to confirm. Nor do I find any just ground to oppose your distinction of this speculative and practical sufficiency of reason in matters of religion, and your present application of it: For according to the light in which PITHANDER and you have set these affairs, I think I must yield that our experience and observation seem to make it evident, that it is but a poor sufficiency that human reason, in these rude nations, has, to guide them into the knowledge of acceptable religion.

Yet I have still some difficulties upon my mind; for there are several solid arguments drawn from various topics, relating to God and man, to prove that it is necessary God should furnish all mankind with sufficient powers for their own happiness: And these shall be the subject of our discourse to-morrow, when you please to favour me with your company.

PITH. My sincere thanks are due also to SOPHRONIUS, for the office he has sustained, and so happily executed in this our conference.

LOG. Though the moon be risen so high, and the sky so free from clouds, that your walk homewards will be pleasant, yet my servant shall wait on each of you to your dwellings. Here, *Davus*, attend these gentlemen. Good night, dear sirs, and remember the appointed hour to-morrow.

## THE SECOND CONFERENCE.

SOPHRONIUS and PITHANDER being met in LOGISTO's summer-house at the appointed hour, after mutual salutations, the conference began thus:

LOG. Was it not agreed, gentlemen, that I should now produce my other arguments, drawn from various topics, relating to God and man, to shew that reason is, and must be sufficient to guide, conduct, or bring man to happiness in the way of religion?

SOPHRO. I think, sir, you have already gone through but one part of your intended enquiry concerning the sufficiency of reason, and that is, "Whether the light of reason be a sufficient guide to teach all men the necessary doctrines and duties of religion." Then it remains to be disputed, "Whether the powers of reason are able to shew such obligations and motives, and to set them before every person in such a view as shall be sufficient to enforce the practice of the duties required, and thus bring a

man to the favour of God, and happiness?" If I remember aright, sir, you proposed this method of debate yourself at first, and this is what I suppose you mean to include, when you say, "Reason is sufficient, not only to guide, but to conduct and bring men effectually to happiness in a way of religion."

As for those general arguments which you speak of, which may be drawn from the nature of God, and the nature of man, they will better be introduced at last, because they tend to prove both parts of your present question at once, *viz.* that reason is sufficient, both in it's instructions to teach men religion, and in it's motives to bring them to the practice of it; or that it has both light and power enough for this purpose.

LOC. You are in the right, SOPHRONIUS, this was my meaning in the expression I used of conducting men to happiness, and this was the method which I myself proposed last night: But I must confess, I am something discouraged to pursue the second query, by the success PITHANDER has had in the former part of our debate. And yet, methinks, human reason should be sufficient to conduct man safe to the happiness that is suited to his intellectual and immortal nature, and to bring motives sufficient to enforce the practice of necessary duties. I will begin my argument therefore on this subject, and try what can be said.

PITH. I think SOPHRONIUS has set the matter right, and I intreat LOGISTO to proceed to his proof.

LOC. Then I begin thus. When two things are set before us, whereof our reason tells us, with great assurance, that one is vastly more excellent and desirable than the other, reason does what is sufficient to engage us to chuse that which is most excellent. Now to apply this to the business in hand: Reason, working in a heathen, may assure him, that virtue hath much beauty and loveliness in it, because it is acting what is fit and right, and according to the nature of things: But vice is a hateful thing, contrary to what is right and fit: Reason can shew him, that the everlasting favour of such an almighty and all-sufficient being, as God, and the happiness and joys of a future state, which are the rewards of virtue and religion, are vastly preferable to all the delights of sense, which are but short and vanishing, and to all the forbidden indulgences of appetite and passion, which often leave a sting behind them: I think then, that reason does it's office, and performs what is sufficient to incline the man to chuse virtue, the favour of God, and future happiness, above all present and tempting sensualities, and to enforce the practice of religion and goodness. Again;

When two things are set before us, whereof our reason assures us, that one will bring a hundred times more pain and sorrow upon us than the other, reason does what is sufficient to engage us most carefully to avoid that which brings the greatest misery, and to endure the less evil for the sake of avoiding the greater: and therefore when reason, working in a heathen, assures him, that anguish of conscience, and the displeasure and wrath of an almighty God, through all our state of immortality, which will be the consequent of a vicious life, will be inexpressibly harder to bear than a little troublesome self-denial, which he finds in the present life, in the restraints of his passions and appetites, and in the practice of virtue, reason then does what is sufficient to incline the man to avoid vice and to practise virtue; because it teaches him, that it is far better to venture the lesser pains of self-denial here in this life, in order to avoid the more terrible pains and sorrows which the displeasure of God may bring both upon his body here, and his immortal soul hereafter. How can any thing be sufficient, PITHANDER, to bring men to religion and heaven, if such motives as these are not sufficient? And these are the motives that reason finds out and produces.

PITH.

PITH. Though your argument seems to run on, sir, in so smooth a current, and to carry such perspicuity and force with it, yet it is not very difficult to give several solid answers, which will shew it's weakness.

First then, sir, you will please to observe, that your argument supposes these distinct characters of virtue and vice, of lovely and hateful, to be set before heathens, even of the savage kind, in their proper colours, and the immortal rewards and punishments, that attend them, to be found out and ascertained by their reasoning powers. But I intreat the favour of you, sir, to bethink yourself, how very short you came yesterday of your intended proof, that all heathens can find out those truths or duties which belong to religion, or can set forth the distinct characters of virtue and vice, in their lovely or unlovely appearances. Think again, sir, how much you have failed of any plain proof of the doctrine of a future and eternal state knowable by these heathens, how unable the stupid *Americans* are to find out, that God will certainly receive penitent sinners to his favour, at least into such a degree of favour as to free them from all punishment, and to make them happy for ever in another world; nor have you proved that their reason will shew them, that God will make the men of vice for ever miserable. Now if these things are not effectually proved, nor so much as the probability of them made evident and easy to the stupid *Africans*, where are your strong motives to virtue? What is become of your sufficient obligations to practise religion? They vanish and disappear at once: And therefore in the ruder nations of the earth, these motives can have no power to enforce religion or virtue, for they have no existence there in the minds of men, nor are likely to have any existence by the mere workings of their rude reason.

Forgive me, good LOGISTO, if I take the freedom here to suppose, that this argument of yours, for the power of reason to enforce the practice of virtue and religion, was framed in your thoughts, and glowed there with superior fervour and force, while you imagined these distinct characters of moral good and evil, these lovely features and excellencies of virtue, these hateful ideas of vice, and the motives of everlasting rewards and punishments, to be all easily found by the light of reason, in every heathen: but since you are disappointed in the proof of their reason as a sufficient guide or light to teach them their duty, you must accept the disappointment too of your expectations of the sufficient force or power of reason to influence the practice of it.

LOG. I must confess, PITHANDER, I came to this conference yesterday big with expectation of proving reason in all men, even in the rudest heathens, to be a very sufficient guide; and though I do not yet yield up all that point entirely, yet I am constrained to acknowledge your replies have greatly weakened my arguments in that first part of our debate, and thence follows a degree of debility of my arguments in the second. You saw in the beginning of the present discourse, I was something conscious of it.

PITH. I acknowledge, sir, your sincerity and goodness; but please to permit me to proceed in the next place, and shew, that wheresoever unassisted reason has pretended to find out the future and immortal recompences of virtue and vice, it is with so much doubt and uncertainty as renders the force of the motive very feeble.

Reason, in it's best exercises, even in the most polite nations, can hardly arise higher than to give them a grand probability, that there is an immortal or everlasting state of happiness in the other world provided, for the rewards of the brightest virtue on earth. SOPHRONIUS has carefully avoided the making the certain knowledge of it a fundamental article: For since all mankind are sinners, and there is none perfectly

righteous, no not one, how can reason assure them, that such imperfect virtue shall have an immortal reward? Much less could their reason insure such happiness to those who have been great and long sinners, even though they should repent: For can mere reason ever assure the heathens, that they shall exist for ever? Why may not God annihilate such imperfect and sinful creatures as they are, and do it even as a favour granted to the penitent, since for their sins they have deserved to have been made miserable in their natural state of immortality, that is, to have been for ever miserable? And he might still reserve the more profligate and impenitent criminals to some future punishment, to shew the distinction his justice makes between the good and the bad, or rather, between criminals of less and greater guilt: And yet even this punishment, perhaps, so far as reason could certainly teach us, need not be immortal or everlasting.

Such mere doubtful hopes and fears therefore as can be raised by such feeble, probable, and uncertain proofs of everlasting pain or pleasure, are but weak things, *Logisto*, to oppose the strength and violence of vicious appetite, and unruly passion in mankind. Things present and sensible, whether they be pleasing or painful, they are still certain, and therefore they will generally have much more powerful influence than these distant and invisible futurities which are set before men in a doubtful and uncertain light. It is the light of revelation only that ascertains these important points of religion, and discovers an everlasting heaven and a hell, with full evidence and assurance, and this adds a far superior strength to the motives and obligations of religion.

And in the second place, with your permission, *Logisto*, I would proceed farther, and shew, that human reason is very insufficient for these purposes, in comparison of the blessed gospel of *Christ*, for many new and different motives and obligations to virtue and piety are presented in the religion of *Christ*, and the gospel, far beyond what the reason of man, untaught and unassisted by revelation, could ever furnish us with.

It is the holy scripture, it is *Moses* and the prophets, it is *Christ* and his apostles, who set before us the dreadful evil of sin, both in it's nature, as it is contrary to the eternal rectitude and the will of God; and in it's demerit and consequences, as it deserves the indignation of God, and is threatened with death and everlasting punishments in another world. It is the scripture that represents to us the excellency and the necessity of religion and moral goodness, in a much brighter and more easy light than ever all the reasonings of the philosophers have done, and makes the plough-boy and the shepherd to understand and receive more truth and duty in a few lines, and in half an hour, than the philosopher, with all his boasted reason, had been labouring and digging for half his life, and at last had brought it forth into light mingled with darkness and much uncertainty.

It is the scripture that makes the duties of religion practicable, by bringing into a near view all those admirable and lovely examples of virtue and piety practised among men, in the glorious characters of *Moses*, *Joshua*, *Abraham*, and *David*, *Samuel*, *Jeb*, *Daniel*, &c. and above all by *Jesus*, the author of our religion? What strong assurances of the love, compassion, and tenderness of God toward good men in this world, are given us in scripture, as well as the bright discoveries of the glorious world to come: It is the gospel reveals to men the astonishing love of God, in sending his own son down to earth to become a sacrifice, and to make atonement for the sins of rebellious creatures, and the amazing condescension and compassion of *Christ* to undergo such sufferings for our sake. These are illustrious incentives to virtue and goodness, which reason knows nothing of: And time would fail me to talk over half the glorious and divine encouragements that we find in the book of scripture to make us  
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active and constant in the practice of religion, and to incline us to disdain and surmount all the difficulties, and hardships, and terrors which lie in our way to heaven. And what can the poor native untaught reason of an *Indian* furnish him with, to combat all his vicious inclinations, the sinful customs of his country, and the profligate and savage course of life in which he is educated and engaged, that can appear comparable to the divine weapons and armour with which the gospel has furnished us for this sacred warfare? And yet we see all these glorious motives and obligations of christianity do not prove effectual to restrain multitudes of the christian world from vice and irreligion, nor incline them to virtue and holiness, in opposition to the temptations of the flesh and the world: How weak and insufficient then must reason be, poor *african* or *american* reason, to attain such divine effects?

LOG. Then surely, PITHANDER, you will not say any more, that reason does not offer sufficient obligations to virtue, because the bulk of a nation are not reclaimed by it from their vices; for by the same rule, out of your own mouth, I might condemn the gospel of insufficiency too. I might argue concerning the scripture and the religion of *Christ*, that it does not provide sufficient motives to virtue and goodness, because the bulk and multitude, even in christian nations, are not influenced by it, either to learn or to practise their duty, but are carried away perpetually into vicious courses by appetite and passion, by sinful custom and evil companions, and utter forgetfulness of God, and all that is good.

PITH. But you must still allow, sir, that the christian revelation has a vast preference above the mere principle of human reason, in that it's motives are more numerous and more powerful beyond all comparison. And if the motives to religion, which our reasoning powers can propose, may be called sufficient to equal; or rather to exceed, all temptations to vice and impiety, because in the balance of reason they appear more weighty, then the principles and motives of christianity must be more abundantly sufficient, because, with an infinite super-abundance, they outweigh all the temptations of flesh and sin, when put into the same balance of reason.

And, on the other hand, if the motives of the gospel, numerous and powerful as they are, prove ineffectual to many thousands that hear them; surely the motives of mere reason, which are much fewer and feebler, are very insufficient in comparison with those of revelation.

In the third place, let it be observed, that there are large and considerable numbers of mankind, in all ages, who have been effectually influenced by the gospel to renounce every vice, and to practise piety toward God, and virtue toward men, and especially where the christian religion has appeared in it's full liberty and lustre. But any numbers of truly pious and religious men are not to be heard of among the most polite nations of heathenism. How shamefully vicious in practice were many of the philosophers of greatest fame, if the report of *Diogenes Laertius*, and others, may be credited? How very few of them lived according to the light of nature, and the eternal rules of piety and virtue? But what if here and there a good man or two has been found in heathen countries, where knowledge flourished, such as *Italy* or *Greece*, or the lesser *Asia*, in antient times? Perhaps in our age, in *Great-Britain* there are fifty to one, and it may be more than a hundred; and if we should compare the numbers of religious persons in the *british* isles, with those of *Africa* or north *America*, I have some reason to think the proportion would exceed several thousands to one.

LOG. Then, my friend, according to your own argument, if the motives and obligations of christianity are proved to be sufficient to enforce the practice of religion,  
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and to conduct a man to heaven, because they have been found effectual and successful in the hearts of some hundreds or thousands, I think I may make this inference, and you must grant it, that the motives of reason are not utterly insufficient for this purpose, if they have been effectual to bring but here and there one to practise religion, and thereby lead them to the divine favour. And if it be sufficient for a few, why not for all who have the same natural faculties?

PITH. Will you please, sir, to resume your own inference, and apply it thus? Reason has been sufficient in a *Euclid* to trace out a noble scheme of geometrical theorems; in a *Locke* to write an excellent essay on human understanding; and in a *Virgil* to compose an admirable heroic poem; will you infer therefore that reason in all men is sufficient to frame geometrical schemes, write fine essays and heroic poems? Will this conclusion hold, sir? Can all mankind become *Lockes*, and *Euclids*, and *Virgils*? Remember, good sir, we are debating about such a sufficiency as may render all mankind holy and happy. Not that I suppose it is as hard to trace out religion as it is to be a *Locke* or an *Euclid*; but this application of your argument shews how weak the inference is: and though here and there one may happen to do it, it will not follow, that all mankind can do the same.

Besides, sir, this small number, this here-and-there one, that you speak of, who had been led by reason to religion, are found only perhaps in *European* nations, or in western *Asia*, where they have had correspondence with *Jews* or christians, or have received some traditional notices, or hints of divine revelation, without which, I much question, whether there would have been, in fact, one truly religious man in the world: So that it is to the notices and fragments of revelation, conveyed to men from *Noah*, or *Job*, or *Abraham*, or the *Jews*, or from some other inspired person, that I ascribe the real godliness of any person among the gentile nations, rather than to the mere force of human reason in its present degenerate state: For I much question, whether you can inform me of one person, one single person, of true piety and virtue in the wilds of *Africa* or *America*, in all their nations, and in many past ages, unless they have had some assistances from persons of other nations who had acquaintance with revelation.

LOG. What! will not you allow one good man to have been found, for several ages, among all these heathen nations, without revelation? That is hard indeed: Doth not such a degree of uncharitableness border upon cruelty? Can you think the God of mercy is so cruel, as your present sentiments represent him?

PITH. Sir, if it were a proper place here, I could shew you, that this representation of things is very agreeable to the language of God in his sacred writings, and yet he is a God of mercy still. But we shall have occasion to enter into this argument, when you come to talk upon the equity and goodness of God. At present I content myself to say, that since very few in any heathen countries, after the division of the world into *Jews* and gentiles, in the days of *Moses*, have been truly religious persons, in comparison with the multitudes under the light of divine revelation, it is evident, that reason has not this sufficiency to enforce the practice of religion, in any tolerable proportion, to what revelation or scripture has; and therefore, in a comparative sense, it may well be called insufficient, while revelation is justly called sufficient in this sense.

LOG. Well then, sir, you seem to acknowledge a degree of insufficiency in revelation itself, since it is but comparatively sufficient?

PITH. I am not in pain to grant this, sir, that scripture itself, or the gospel of *Christ*, considered merely as a written book, or as a mere system of doctrines, rules,

rules, and motives, doth not pretend to such a complete and powerful sufficiency of itself: That is, though in itself it has a vast superiority to all other rules and motives, yet it pretends not to such an effectual influence over the hearts of men, in opposition to all present temptations, and the powers of flesh and sense, by the mere outward proposal of it's motives without the promised aids of the holy Spirit. It is this heavenly influence that renders even the gospel-motives so efficacious.

It is to the aids of this superior grace of God, concurring with the revelation of the gospel, that the primitive preachers and defenders of christianity direct their disciples in order to obtain victory over their sensual and vicious inclinations. *Rom. viii. 13.* "If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." It is to the operations of the holy Spirit of God, or the agency of God by his Spirit, that they ascribe the mighty change of their natures from vice to virtue, from sin to holiness and purity of heart and life, which is called regeneration, or being born of God. *1 Pet. i. 22.* "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth by the Spirit." *1 John ii. 29.* "Every one that doth righteousness is born of God." And *iii. 9.* "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," that is, freely, and readily, and frequently as before. "It is he that is born of God that overcometh the world in all the allurements of flesh and sense;" *1 John v. 4.* And this, in the language of our saviour, "is being born of the spirit;" *John iii. 5, 6.* If the *Corinthians* were sanctified from their vices of heart and life, it is by the Spirit of our God; *1 Cor. vi. 11.* If the *Thessalonians* are brought to salvation, it is through sanctification of the spirit, as well as belief of the truth; *2 Thess. ii. 13.* Even all the important discoveries of divine motives contained in the gospel, which *St. Paul* calls, "the weapons of his warfare, *2 Cor. x. 4.* and which are mighty to the pulling down of strong-holds of sin in the heart, it is only through God; that is, through the present power of God." And *St. Paul* tells us, in *Rom. viii. 26.* "It is the spirit of God that helpeth our infirmities, and teaches us to pray;" and the aids of this spirit are promised to them who seek it. *Luke xi. 13.* "Your heavenly Father will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him."

LOG. But why this long bead-roll of your scriptures cited to me, who doubt of the truth of them, and cannot yet believe any thing so sacred and divine in them as you imagine?

PITH. I hope, sir, you will permit the first preachers and teachers of our religion to know what their own doctrine is, without determining whether it be divine or not: and I cite them for no other purpose but to shew you, that they themselves acknowledge, that the glorious sufficiency, which even the blessed gospel of *Christ* has to conduct and bring souls to heaven, in a way of religion, does not arise only from the strength that it's motives have, as powerful as they are, to persuade the heart of man to practise true religion, in opposition to all manner of temptations; but it arises also from the promised aids of grace, or supernatural influences of the blessed Spirit, concurring with the moral influence of these motives.

LOG. I see we are now running into enthusiasm apace. I hoped we should have none of this kind of discourse here. Pray tell us, PITHANDER, what does this divine Spirit do to make men religious, more than give them this gospel, or confirm the truth of it, as you suppose, by gifts and wonders?

PITH. If it would not lead us too far from our present subject, perhaps I could set this matter in a very rational light. At present I shall only say, that in some unknown way and manner, it may either give further light to the understanding, or a secret bias and propensity to the will, or, at least, it may set these motives, both of  
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reason and revelation before the soul in a stronger and more persuasive view, and by this means effectually prevail with the man to become thoroughly religious.

LOG. But may not the poor heathens in the dark regions of the earth, who are left to the mere instructions of nature and reason, and have fewer advantages than the christians pretend to; I say, may not these poor wretches be favoured by a merciful God with some such assistances from heaven, to help them in their inquiries after religion and happiness, and to assist them in their endeavours to practise the one, and obtain the other? Will a merciful God bestow such inward assistances on those who have so much outward light, and yet give none at all of it to those who sit in darkness?

PITH. I thank you, LOGISTO, that you feel yourself reduced so far as to make this inquiry; to which I shall offer these two plain replies.

First, I will by no means deny, that ever God favours the heathens with this blessing. And, doubtless, such is the beneficent and compassionate nature of the blessed God, that if he sees the heart of any poor savage breathing toward heaven, and exerting any feeble efforts towards virtue and religion, he is not wanting to encourage it with all proper assistances of light and strength, till the creature refuses to proceed, and turns itself aside from God and his grace. But whatever a merciful God may do out of his abundant compassion, to enlighten and assist such poor perishing creatures, yet these savage nations of whom we have been chiefly speaking, and indeed the greatest part of the heathen world, appear to have had very little of this help, and and they have no reason to expect it, or hope for it, since they do not make religion and virtue the matter of their serious inquiry: they have no solicitude about the true God, or his service, or his favour, nor do they address themselves to God, in order to attain his aid. The *grecian* philosophers boldly despised it, declaring, that "they need not ask the gods for virtue; for this was within their own power, and they could acquire it of themselves." The impious expressions of the *Stoics* on this subject are well known to the learned, that "their wise man was superior to the gods in this, that their gods were wise or good by nature, but man by his own choice."

Besides, those individual persons among the heathens who seek not these aids from heaven, have no promise of encouragement that they shall have these divine favours bestowed upon them\*, and they live indeed like persons abandoned to their own vices; so that one may venture to pronounce partly in the language of scripture, concerning these nations in general, while they are without divine revelation, they are without God, without *Christ*, and without the Spirit too, and without hope in the world.

My second reply is this, that if you allow, LOGISTO, such influences or assistances from heaven to be necessary, or almost necessary, in the present corrupt and wretched state of the heathen world, to guide and conduct them to happiness in a way of religion, why may not you be easily led to believe that God has actually given some divine influences, some special revelations and instructions to some of the ancient inhabitants of this miserable world, to the patriarchs, to the *jewish* prophets, to *Christ*, and his apostles, which have been committed to writing for the instruction of the world, on purpose to make the way to heaven more evident and easy to  
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\* There are general promises indeed in the old testament, that the gospel shall be given to some heathen nations; but there is no particular person, or age, or single family of heathens which can claim these aids of the holy Spirit, while they do not pray for them, nor use the natural advantages and powers which they have already in the sincere pursuit of religion.

wretched mankind, labouring under such thick darkness, such huge prejudices, and such innumerable temptations?

LOG. Why truly, I think I may allow of some divine influences of light from the merciful God, to lead his unhappy and bewildered creatures into the way of religion and happiness, by a discovery of the important truths and duties of religion to them, with as much or more reason than I can allow of divine influences of power upon the hearts of men, to enable them to practise these duties: And, surely, if the influences of power seem in any case necessary, the influences of light or knowledge are much more so: This was a happy thought of yours, PITHANDER, and I give you my thanks for it.

SOPHRO. I think, gentlemen, you yourselves plainly perceive, that this debate between you is brought nearly to an issue. There is no need of my resuming the case, or speaking any thing upon the subject.

LOG. Yes, pray, SOPHRONIUS, let us have your thoughts upon it, and perhaps they may introduce some further conversation, to elucidate this argument yet more perfectly.

SOPHRO. If I must give my sentiment in this matter, about the sufficiency of reason to persuade men to religion, and inforce upon them the practice of virtue, I must determine the point much after the same manner as I concluded the debate of yesterday, about the sufficiency of reason to guide us into the articles of religion; and that shall be done in these few propositions:

I. In natural, corporeal, and necessary agents, that cause or principle can only be properly called sufficient to produce the effect, which doth and will actually and certainly produce it, where all other external things are found which are naturally necessary to this particular effect. So an acorn is said to be sufficient to produce an oak, when it is planted in a proper soil, and has the necessary outward advantages of rain, and sun, &c. So a clock is sufficient to shew the hours of the day, when all the weights, and wheels, and springs of movement, and mechanical parts of that engine are rightly formed and situated, adjusted and put in motion. But in spiritual, and voluntary, and moral agents, a cause or principle may be pronounced sufficient, in the nature of things, to produce the effect, where the effect is not actually produced, supposing that the motives are such as may and ought to influence the will, to produce the effect. Wheresoever the obligations to duty are just and strong, and appear so to the attentive mind, and according to the rules of reason ought to persuade the will to chuse the good, and refuse the evil, there these obligations may be called sufficient naturally to reform the man, though the will may be led astray by a thousand other influences, and may not be once in ten thousand times effectually persuaded to refuse the evil, and to chuse the good.

II. Wheresoever the motives and obligations to religion which arise not only from the fitness of things, but also from the favour or displeasure of God, and from everlasting happiness and misery in a future state, are traced out by reason in the heathen world, though they are not all set in their full light and strength, but arise only to a degree of doubtful probability, yet they may be called, in some sense, naturally sufficient to inforce the practice of religion: and the reason is plain, because even the mere probability of the love or anger of an almighty being, and of an eternal state of misery or happiness, ought to over-balance all our present views of certain pleasure; or certain uneasiness, which belong to this short and perishing life; and so they ought to incline a reasonable man to chuse the hardships of virtue, with the love of

God, and the probable or doubtful hopes of eternal peace, and to refuse the pleasures of vice, with the anger of God, and the probable danger or fear of eternal pain.

III. Though I allow the sufficiency of reason to enforce the practice of virtue and piety in this sense, yet when we consider how very little influence it has ever had, even in polite nations, to reform the world, or to render men truly religious, and no influence at all, so far as we can find, in the darker corners of the earth, those habitations of atheism, idolatry, and cruelty, I think we can account it little more than a mere speculative and notional sufficiency, arising from the nature of things; but since it is confirmed by experience of success in so very few, if any, evident instances, it can scarce be called a practical sufficiency to bring men to heaven in a way of religion, where it acts, or rather sleeps, in such a manner as to let whole nations of miserable mankind run on in the practice of shameful vices, from one generation to another, thoughtless of the true God, virtue, and religion, and careless about his love or his anger in a future state.

Upon the whole, I think, we must conclude, that since human reason, in a remote and speculative sense, may be sufficient to guide and conduct all mankind to religion and future happiness, LOGISTO is so far in the right, and may be allowed to say, reason is sufficient. But since, in a practical or experimental sense, we find reason has scarce any, or rather no sufficiency to attain these ends, PITHANDER may continue to maintain his opinion also, that reason is insufficient: yet it ought to be remembered, that it is in this sense only, and with this limitation.

Whensoever therefore I read any christian writers, who are men of good understanding, and of moderate principles, asserting that human reason, in heathen nations, is not sufficient to guide and conduct men to happiness in a way of religion, I take them to mean, such a practical insufficiency as I have distinguished and described here: And in this sense I would understand the bishop of London in his second pastoral letter, when he declares reason to be insufficient, as well as Dr. Clarke in his discourse of revealed religion: And when I hear of other christian authors, or preachers, maintaining the sufficiency of reason for this purpose, I would suppose, they mean no more than such a natural and remote sufficiency, which will scarce ever become really effectual without revelation, and especially in the rude and barbarous nations of the earth.

Though I must confess, it would better guard their expressions, on both sides, from mistake, since the controversy is on foot, if they pleased to use some such distinction or limitation, when they pronounced either upon the strength or weakness of human reason, and neither called it absolutely sufficient or absolutely insufficient for the purposes of religion and happiness. And I am ready to persuade myself, LOGISTO by this time is almost inclined to believe, that natural reason unassisted in all mankind, is not proximately and practically sufficient, to make them holy and happy here and hereafter.

Thus it happens sometimes, that huge controversies may be allayed and silenced, and contending parties reconciled, by a plain and easy distinction.

“ Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta  
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt.” VIRG.

And if things do really stand in the light in which I have endeavoured to set them, if reason has only such a remote and speculative sufficiency, to guide and conduct sinful mankind to happiness in a way of religion, if there are so very few, if any, who were

were ever guided and conducted by it alone to happiness, then there is a most evident necessity of brighter light, clearer discoveries of duty, stronger motives and assistances, superior to what reason can furnish us with, to make mankind truly wise and blessed: and this light, and these motives and assistances are eminently to be found in the religion of *Christ*.

LOO. How much soever I may be inclined to receive your opinion, SOPHRONIUS, and to abide by your determination in this controversy, yet I cannot think fit to declare myself roundly and positively upon this subject, till I have tried the force of all the arguments which I have in reserve: But perhaps you will think it too much to enter upon any new topics at present.

SOPHRO. Well then, gentlemen, I would propose at present to relieve the fatigue of intense thinking, and close debate: And at the same time, in order to confirm what I have offered about the practical insufficiency of reason in matters of religion, permit me to read two short manuscripts, which I brought hither to entertain you this evening, since I found your debate yesterday ran very much upon the sufficiency of reason, even in the most ignorant nations, to lead them to religion and happiness. The manuscripts are nothing but a short abstract of all the sense of religion that I could find in history among the northern *Americans*, and the southern *Africans*.

The first relates to the rude nations of the north *America*, collected many years ago, for my own use, out of a larger volume, written by father *Hennepin*, a missionary of *Flanders*, who travelled over all that country, and made a considerable stay in some parts of it.

All the notion of a God or religion which they generally have, is this: They see some bodies produce strange effects, which they cannot comprehend, they see some appearances of nature or art which are very unusual, and then they ascribe the causes of these effects or appearances to some being that is above themselves, and call it in their language *Otkon*, or *Manitoo*, or *Asabouta*, which means, a sort of spirit, either good or evil. So when they see a gun make a flash and a noise, and immediately either a wild bull, or two or three wild fowl fall down dead, they cry, it is iron with an *otkon* in it; for they are not able to comprehend the meaning of it. So when they find a great cascade or water-fall, which seems a little frightful, and dangerous to approach, they say, a spirit dwells there. And for such reasons they call all that dwell beyond the great lake, that is, the ocean, spirits; for the *Europeans* perform several things which they understand not. When the author was among the *Iffati*, he began to make him a vocabulary in their language, and when they found he could not understand their words sometimes till he had consulted his vocabulary, they thought his book was a spirit, which told him what they said.

And this seems to be the spring of the notion which they have of their own souls and according to the same way of reasoning, they think that guns, and bows, and arrows, and wild bulls, have souls also. When they die, they have a notion of their spirits going into the country of souls, where they fancy that the souls of every animate and inanimate thing on earth are to be found. They bury their bows, arrows, shoes, pipes, earthen pots, rackets, that is, their broad net-work sandals, made of thongs of leather, &c. that so the souls of their bows and arrows may assist them in hunting the souls of elks and bevers in the country of souls; and that the souls of rackets may be useful to them in travelling over the snow in that country. There are some particular bones of the bulls and bevers which they kill, that are kept choicely by them, and are counted a sort of present mansions for their souls, and they use them well, lest, say they, the soul of the bulls which we have killed, should go and

tell the other bulls, that we have cut them to pieces, and eat them; and then they imagine that the rest of the bulls would never come within their reach, or be caught by them, either in this world or the other.

They think that the souls of the *europeans* go to a different country from that of the *americans*, and some of them are afraid to be baptised, lest we should make them slaves in the country of souls. When one of them asked the author, whether there be good game for hunting in our country of souls, as there is in theirs, he answered, there is no need of it: Immediately they clapped their hands to their mouths, and said, thou art a liar; can any thing live without eating?

Scarce any of these savages have any notion of a God; they do not seem to comprehend a plain argument on that subject. The author had much ado to make them understand what he meant, when he would give them the idea of a God; for they have no word for a God in their language, and yet it is very expressive in other things. He called him therefore, the great master of life, and the great captain of heaven and earth, and when he preached a God to them, they enquired, whether he could fend them some elks and bevers.

It is true, among some of these nations a sudden glimmering of a deity sometimes comes on their minds. Some think the sun to be such a great superior power, but not without much confusion. Some fancy him a spirit that commands the air. And some of the more southern inhabitants of that country, imagine an universal soul belongs to the whole world, just as every particular being has a particular soul.

Father *Marquette*, who is cited by this author, says, every one of the *Illinois* has his peculiar god, whom they call *Manitoo*. It is sometimes a stone, a bird, a serpent, or any thing they dream of; and they think this *Manitoo* will prosper their hunting, their fishing, their wars: They blow the smoke of their tobacco on their *Manitoo*, which they count a salutation of their god. For the most part, says our author, those who own a God, have scarce any sense of religion, and but few of them have any outward gestures to convince men of their esteem for a deity; they have no temple, no priests, no sacrifices, nor scarce any forms of worship, unless it be to evil or malicious spirits, from whom they fear they shall receive some hurt: And to these some of them have made some kind of offerings. They throw in tobacco, or bevers skins to a cascade or fall of water, which is difficult to pass, and cannot easily be avoided, to engage the deity that presides there, in their favour: And if, after the practice of any of their superstitions, they find any degree of success, they are then established in it, though they should mistake ten times for one that hits.

As the generality of these nations have little sense of religion, dreams among them supply all other defects, and serve instead of prophecy, laws, rules of action, and undertakings in war or hunting. If in their dreams they were persuaded to kill a man, they would hardly fail to do it. Parents dreams serve for their own and their childrens actions, and the dreams of the captain for all the people of the village.

Some of them suppose, that *Otkon*, or *Atabouta*, made the world, and one *Messoo*, or *Otkon*, going a hunting with his dogs, were lost in a great lake, which overflowed the whole earth in a little time; but afterwards, this *Otkon* gathered a little earth, by the help of some animals, and repaired the world. Others say, the woman that made the world came down from heaven, and fluttering in the air awhile, but finding no ground, when the earth was thus overflowed, the tortoise offered her back to her, on which she lighted, and by little and little such a quantity of mud and dirt gathered about the tortoise's back, that it increased so as to make *America*.

In



In the southern parts of this vast northern country, the people are something more sensible, and are attentive to the things of their religion. But in the north there is scarce any thing to be met with but an unconceivable blindness, blockish insensibility, and prodigious remoteness from their maker, so that whole ages would scarce be sufficient to reduce them to piety and virtue. These are the sentiments of the traveller.

And they have, saith he, such vices amongst them as are directly contrary to the spirit of christianity. Their cruel and barbarous revenges are practices which they cannot part with. They will wait three or four days behind a tree, to kill a man whom they hate. Gluttony and drunkenness in a high degree prevail amongst them, and mere brutish addictedness to eating and drinking; their intemperance of every kind, their inconstancy to the partners of their bed, immoderate lechery, polygamy, changing and forsaking their wives, are great hinderances to their conversion, because christianity forbids them.

They have such a universal indifference to every thing of religion in which they are instructed, that it is very amazing. They would suffer themselves to be baptized six times a day, for a glass of aqua-vitæ, or a pipe of tobacco. They will sometimes offer infants to the font, but without any motive of religion. They look upon all our mysteries as tales and dreams, as some of them do upon their own accounts of any thing sacred. If you bid them pray, and teach them prayers, they readily comply: Bid them fall on their knees, not smoke, be uncovered, hearken to me, &c. they do all. Say, to-morrow is sunday, or a day of prayer; they say, I am glad of it: Tell them, you must make a vow to the master of life, that you will never be drunk again; they say, I will do it; and are drunk again to-morrow, if they can get brandy. They do every thing with such a careless air, such a negligent thoughtlessness, and universal indifference, that it is to little purpose to have them do any thing. If images or beads are given them, they use them for ornaments. In a word if they hope to get any favour or present for themselves, or their nation, some of them will do any thing in these respects, that you enjoin them.

They never contradict any man's speech or opinion, and think it is civility to leave every man to his own sentiment; therefore they will believe, or pretend to believe, all you say. So that a man must not go to *America* to become a martyr for his faith. They never kill any body for a different opinion: And when they tell you their tales of the woman and the tortoise, they reprove you of incivility, if you contradict them, and say, they believed all you said, and therefore you ought to believe all they say. If any manner of impressions of religion have been made upon themselves or their children, yet when the seasons of hunting come, away they go, with their tribe, for many months together, and lose all that they had learned, and make the labours of a missionary endless and vain.

At last this missionary, the author, laments and declares: That this people are still so savage, that in all the many years labours that I spent among the *Iroquois*, besides my great expedition among several others of the nations, I did very little good besides one or two infants that I baptized. One among the *Iffati*, and for want of accommodation, I did it without any ceremony, taking one christian for the witness of the baptism, only spilling the water on the head of the little savage, saying, "Creature of God, I baptise thee in the name of the Father, Son, and holy Ghost," then I took half my altar-cloth and spread over the body of the infant: A little after it died; and I was glad, says this poor friar, it pleased God to take this little christian out of the world; for it is to be feared, if it had lived, it would have trod in it's father's

ther's stops. I have often attributed my preservation, amidst the greatest dangers, to the care I took for it's baptism. The greatest things, he says, that missionaries can yet do, is to baptize a few infants, and dying adult persons, who desire it. But after all the cares and intire sacrifice of a missionary's life, it would be a happy recompence, if they had the glory to convert one single soul. But they must cry out, it is beyond their force, and only the Spirit of God can do it. Thus far my epitome of the religion of these north-*americans*.

The other manuscript is an abstract of the religious affairs of the several nations of the *bottentots*, at the cape of *Good-Hope*, which I took out of a very entertaining book, written originally in high german, by *Peter Kolben*, translated into english, and published in the year 1731. The author was particularly employed to collect the materials of his history, and had a long residence there, in the dutch settlement, for that purpose, and often made excursions for full information of all their affairs.

The account he gives of their religion is this: They believe a supreme being, the creator of heaven and earth, and of every thing in them. They call him *Gounja-Gounja*, or the God of gods, and say he is a good man; that he does nobody any hurt, and from whom none need be apprehensive of any; and that he dwells far above the moon.

But it does not appear, that they have any institution of worship directly regarding the supreme God. I never saw, or could hear, that any one of them paid any act of devotion immediately to him. I have talked to them roundly on this head, and endeavoured to make them sensible of the folly and absurdity of neglecting his worship, while they worship what they call gods that are inferior and dependent on him: but they will rarely reason upon the matter, or attend to any thing that is said upon it. The most sensible of them, when they are in humour to answer on this head, will tell you the following very remarkable matter: That their first parents so grievously sinned and offended against the supreme God, that he cursed them and all their posterity with hardness of heart; so that they know little of him, and have still less inclination to serve him. The reader, without doubt, will be astonished to hear such a tradition as this at the cape of *Good-Hope*, which seems to relate to the curse of *Adam*, or of *Ham*: I assure him, the *bottentots* have such a tradition.

Forfaking the worship of the true God, though they acknowledge his being, and some of his attributes, the *bottentots* adore the moon as an inferior and visible god. They suppose the moon has the disposal of the weather, and invoke her for such weather as they want. They assemble for the celebration of her worship at the full and new-moon constantly; no inclemency of the weather prevents them. In shouting, screaming, singing, jumping, stamping, dancing, prostration on the ground, clapping of hands, and an unintelligible jargon, lie all their formalities of the worship of the moon; and in such expressions as these, I salute you; you are welcome; grant us fodder for our cattle, and milk in abundance. In rounds of these words and actions they continue the whole night, till pretty far of the next day.

The *bottentots* likewise adore, as a benign deity, a certain insect, peculiar, it is said, to the *bottentot* countries. This animal is of the dimensions of a child's little finger; the back green, the belly specked with white and red. It is provided with two wings, and on it's head two horns.

To this little winged deity, whenever they set sight upon it, they render the highest tokens of veneration. And if it honours, sootho, a village with a visit, the inhabitants assemble about it in transports of devotion, as if the lord of the universe was among them. They sing and dance round it troop after troop, while it stays, in the

• highest

highest ecstasy; throwing to it the powder of an herb they call *Bucbu*, our botanists call it *Spiraa*. They cover, at the same time, the whole area of the village, the tops of the cots, and every thing without doors, with the same powder. They likewise kill two fat sheep as a thank-offering for this high honour. And it is impossible to drive out of a *bottentot's* head, but that the arrival of this insect in a village, brings happiness and prosperity to all the inhabitants. They believe that all their offences, to that moment, are buried in oblivion, and all their iniquities done away.

If this insect happens to light upon a *bottentot*, he is looked upon as a man without guilt, and distinguished and revered as a saint, and the delight of the deity, ever after. His neighbours glory that they have so holy a man among them, and publish the matter far and near. The fattest ox belonging to the village is immediately killed for a thank-offering; and the time is turned into a festivity in honour of the deity and the saint.

This insect I have often seen, and beheld the *bottentots* more than once at these solemnities.

The *bottentots* likewise pay a religious veneration to their saints and men of renown departed: They honour them not with tombs, statues, or inscriptions, but consecrate woods, mountains, fields, and rivers, to their memory. When they pass by these places, they implore the protection of the dead, for them and their cattle, they muffle their heads in their mantles, and sometimes they dance round those places, singing and clapping their hands.

They worship also an evil deity, whom they look upon as the father of mischief, and the source of all their plagues. They call him *Touquoa*; and say, he is a little crabbed inferior captain, whose malice against the *bottentots* will seldom let him rest, and who never did, nor had it in his nature to do any good to any body. They worship him therefore, say they, in order to sweeten him, and avert his malice.

It is this *Touquoa*, say they, who stirs up enemies against them. It is he who frustrates all their good designs. It is he who sends all pain and vexation. It is he who afflicts them and their cattle with diseases, and sets on the wild beasts to devour them. It is he who is the author of all ill luck. And it is he, say they, who teaches the wicked *bottentots* the cursed art of witchcraft; by which, they believe, innumerable mischiefs are done to the persons and cattle of the good. They therefore coax him upon any apprehension of danger or misfortune, with the offering of an ox or a sheep; and, at other times, perform divers ceremonies of worship, to wheedle and keep him quiet.

Father *Tachart* hath delivered their worship of this evil deity very well in the following words: "We honour *Touquoa* at times, say the *bottentots*, by killing a fat ox or a sheep, according to our apprehensions of his designs to plague us. With the fat we anoint our bodies, and with the flesh we regale one another; this being the way to please or reconcile him to us, if we have offended, though we know not how we have offended. He reckons what he pleases an offence, and plagues us when he pleases, and it has been always a custom amongst us thus to appease him."

I have now given, saith my author, the whole system of the *bottentot* religion, every tenet of which, though labouring with the wildest absurdities, they embrace so heartily, and hold so dear, that I look upon it, as a great many others have done, an impossibility to ravish one of them out of a *bottentot's* bosom. Reason against them, and they wrap themselves up in a sullen silence, or run away: And it is very rare that you can get them to hear you upon any religious topic. Never certainly were there, in matters of religion, so obstinate and so infatuated a people. Some *bottentots*,

*tots*, in the hands of *europeans*, have dissembled a profession of christianity, for a while; but have ever renounced it, for their native idolatries, as soon as they could get out of their hands. I never heard of a *bottentot* that died a christian. They seem born with a mortal antipathy to every religion, but their own.

Many a time have I allured them in small companies, with tobacco, wine, brandy, and other things, to places of retirement, in order to eradicate their nonsensical idolatrous whimsies, and instruct them in the pure worship of God. As long as my store lasted, I had their company, who seemed to attend with a design to learn; but they only listened as spongers, in order to be treated with the other bottle, and laugh at me when I was gone. At this bite they are as arch as other people. When my store was spent, they immediately called out for more hire; and without it, would not stay to hear a word more of religion.

How have I laboured to bring them to a sense of their duty to almighty God! How have I plied them upon the absurdity of acknowledging his superiority to all other gods, and yet refusing him any act of worship! And how disappointed were all my endeavours! I was still answered, when I could get an answer, with the tradition of the offence of their first parents, and the blindness and hardness of heart with which they were all cursed for it. From which, when I had taken all the advantages I could to inform and awaken them, and pressed them hard upon the matter, their refuge was in this contradiction, that *Gounja-Gounja*, or the God of gods, was a good man, who neither did, nor had it in his power to do, any one any hurt, though they had told me before how he had cursed their ancestors. When we had got so far, and I had followed my blow upon their absurdities and contradictions, they would often in a rage deny all they had owned, and flying from me, say, they neither believed in God, nor would hear a word about him.

Thus much for their religion towards God: And though they are so incorrigibly stupid in this respect, yet partly their native temper, and partly their common safety and peace oblige them to be more careful in their conduct toward their neighbours. And it must be acknowledged, in the main, they are affectionate and hospitable: The generality of them are a loving honest people, meaning no harm usually to those who do not injure them, unless a stranger be alone amongst them in some part very distant from the *european* settlements: Though it is very seldom they are known to do mischief, except the bands of robbers, who are among them, and who live by plunder. Indeed they make no scruple of lying, and impose upon any of the *europeans* with what falsehoods they please, but it is chiefly where property is not concerned: And though they do not usually practise or encourage theiving, cheating, or plunder, yet there are three impious and cruel customs among them, which contradict the light of nature in a gross manner, and yet they practise them with all freedom.

One is, their abusive and abominable insolence toward their own mothers; for when a young fellow is admitted into the society of men, which is done with great solemnity about eighteen years old, he is discharged from the tuition of his mother, and may insult her, when he will, with impunity. He may cudgel her, if he pleases only for his humour, without any danger of being called to an account for it. And these things I have often known done. Nor are these unnatural extravagancies attended with the least scandal. On the contrary, they are esteemed as tokens of a manly temper and bravery; and the authors of them now and then obtain applause. Immediately after the induction of a young fellow into the society of men, it is an ordinary thing for him to go and abuse his mother, and make a reproachful triumph upon

upon his being discharged from her tuition, in testimony of the sincerity of his intentions to follow the admonitions of the declaimer, at his induction into the society of men.

When the old fellows are admonished, and very often have I admonished them, against this horrid unnatural practice of leading their sons into cruelty and neglect for their mothers, not a word will they hear with patience; nor can any answer be obtained from them, besides the darling one of the *bottentots*, whenever they are heated and confused by any enquiry into their own matters; it is *bottentot* custom, and ever was so: And with this they think you ought to be satisfied.

Another wicked and unnatural practice is, the starving of their parents, when they are able no longer to crawl out of their hutt, nor do any manner of service in it. Then the old man is obliged to make over all that he has to his eldest son, or his nearest male relation; and the heir erects a hutt in some solitary place, at a good distance from their village, and asking consent of the village, which they never refuse, the old man is conveyed to this hutt, and being laid in the middle of it, with a small stock of provision placed within his reach, the company take their leave of the old wretch, and abandon him for ever; and there he is left from that hour, without any one to comfort or assist him, or so much as to look in upon him; but he is exposed to die there, either of age or hunger, or to be devoured by some wild beast. When the women are superannuated, they practise the same in every respect, and leave them to perish.

The third inhuman and national iniquity is, their exposing children, especially girls, or burying them alive, if the parents think they are not able to maintain them: and especially if there happen to be twins, and one of them be a girl, she is certainly condemned, if either the scarcity of the mother's milk, or the poverty of the parents, be alledged against breeding of them both. When they resolve to rid themselves of one, they carry the babe to a considerable distance from the village, and look for a hole in the earth made by a hedge-wolf, tyger, or other wild creature: In such a hole, if they find one, they lay the babe alive; then stopping up the mouth of the hole with earth and stones, forsake it for ever. If they find not such a sepulchre presently, they tie the babe, stretched on its back, to some lower bough of the next tree, and leave it to starve or be devoured by birds or beasts of prey. Sometimes they leave the poor cast-away among bushes.

Though the immortality of their own souls is an article that enters not into the religion of the *bottentots*, and which, for that reason, I mentioned not in my account of their religion, and though they say nothing at any time concerning it in a religious way, and perhaps never think of it with regard to their own souls, yet does it appear very plainly, that they believe the soul outlives the body, and that from the following particulars.

1. They offer prayers and praises to the good *bottentots* departed, and attribute or dedicate to them some hills, or woods, or rivers.

2. They are apprehensive lest the dead should return and molest them. They therefore upon the death of any man, woman, or child of them, remove with their bag and baggage to a new settlement, believing that the dead never haunt any places but those they died in, whether they be good or bad. But to what end they conceive souls to exist out of the body, or whether they trouble their heads about it, I know not. They suppose, according to all the intelligence I could get upon the matter, that the malice of *Touquoa* is confined to this world, and cannot act beyond it. Nor could I ever catch the least hint among them to think, that any of them believe,

that either the good at death go to any certain place of bliss, or the bad to any place of torment. Thus far the author of this narrative.

And thus, gentlemen, I have given you, in short, all the account that I could find of any sense of religion, either in the *bottentot* nations, who possess a large tract of land on the east, south, and west of the cape of *Good-Hope*, and in the several nations of various names, who inhabit a great part of the inland country of north *America*.

The only remark I make here shall be this, *viz.* that though both these travellers spent much time in these countries, and took a great deal of pains with the natives to instruct them in religion, and the knowledge and worship of the true God, yet they could never find one soul among them all, that learned to know and worship the one true God, and to practise sincere and serious religion: So far were their own reasoning powers from a practical sufficiency to guide and conduct them in religious affairs, that their reason would not hearken to instruction, it would neither teach them, nor let them learn the way to heaven.

PITH. You stand intitled, SOPHRONIUS, to our best acknowledgments, for the pains you have taken in entertaining us with these two accounts of *african* and *american* religion. And can you now, dear LOGISTO, deny the justice of the remark that SOPHRONIUS has made? Can you ever suppose, sir, that such sort of people as these have any reasoning powers in them, sufficient to frame and furnish out a religion for themselves, such as is suited to the majesty of God, and to the dignity of human nature, such as can restore sinful mankind to a temper fit for the blessedness of heaven, or such as can recommend guilty and sinful creatures to the favour of a wise, a holy, and a righteous God? I mean, is the reason that is in them sufficient to do it in a practical and experimental sense, according to the distinction with which SOPHRONIUS has endeavoured to reconcile our present controversy?

LOG. I acknowledge we are greatly obliged to SOPHRONIUS for the abstracts he hath given us of the religion of these nations: And it must be granted, that these narratives are more worthy of credit, since the authors from whom he borrowed them were not mere sailors, who touched upon the coast and left it again in a few days, but resided there a considerable time, and spent some years in the countries, as well as conversed with great numbers of the inhabitants. I know not what to answer, PITHANDER, with regard to these particular nations: but surely our learned friend has chosen the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most brutal and obstinate tribes of mankind, to set before us as a proof of the weakness and insufficiency of reason to conduct men to the divine favour and happiness in a way of religion. And by this account of them, they seem to be so far degenerated from the rank of rational beings, and sunk into brutal life, that revelation itself could hardly recover them, if the christian religion were preached amongst them: For SOPHRONIUS has declared, that where some single attempts have been made of this kind, they have been without success.

PITH. Though observation, experience, and matter of fact assure us, that the solid clouds of darkness and irreligion which hang upon heathen nations, have been impenetrable to all the inward light of their own reason for many ages, yet the reformation of some of these nations by the light of the gospel is also supported by matter of fact and experience; for true religion and morality have been actually introduced this way among some of these very stupid people. The savages of north *America*, that lie westward of some of the *british* plantations, and near *New-England*, have several christian congregations; and the *danish* missionaries of *Tranquebar*, in the  
East-

*East-Indies*, have done great things this way, toward the conversion of the heathens: in the *malabaric* nations; though it must be confessed, these east *indians* are not so utterly uncultivated and rude as the *african bontentots*.

But if those rude and uncultivated creatures are first addressed by men who are soft and obliging, and appear to seek only their good, and that by any number of them sent for this purpose; if they are treated in a rational way, and taught to exercise their reason upon the obvious things of the world, and led up to the maker of all things, by the wisdom and power appearing in his works; if these savages are taught to read, and the scripture, which teaches morality and natural religion, as well as revealed, be made familiar to them, if it be frequently preached to them in conversation, as well as in public assemblies, if they have the new testament always at hand, and they are taught how to use and understand it, this will lead their minds into a track of thinking and good reasoning about God and religion, about virtue and vice and the rules of moral life: It will constantly furnish them not only with ideas, but with right ideas of these things, and suggest proper and just thoughts to their minds, vastly beyond what the uncertain reasonings of philosophers would do: and as soon as they begin to be convinced, that this is a revelation from God, by introducing the traditional proofs of miracles and prophecies among them, their belief of it will be abundantly confirmed, and all their lessons before learned will have weight and authority upon their consciences, and will have a much superior influence upon them towards the reforming of their manners, and rectifying their hearts and lives, than if they were left to draw out the notions of God and a future state, and to trace out the rules of morality and religion, merely by themselves; since it is evident, their fathers have never done it in many ages past, nor is it probable the children would ever do it in ages to come.

LOG. Really, sir, according to your own representation of this matter, there must be many scores of teachers employed in this work, and yet the operation would be but slow.

PITH. I grant it, sir, and it might take up many years to reduce such barbarous nations to the virtues of a moral and religious life, by any human methods we could use, even with the gospel of *Christ* in our hands: But yet the work would certainly be done with far greater speed, and much better success, and mankind would be led into a much more just, uniform, and perfect scheme of piety and virtue hereby, than if some philosophers were sent amongst them, just to set their thoughts into a track of reasoning upon these subjects, and leave them to find out the truths and duties of natural religion by their own natural powers, and by long trains of consequences: For I am very prone to think, that so wild a nation, having different capacities, different humours and inclinations, strong prejudices, appetites, and passions, besides all the concurrent avocations of nature, custom, folly, &c. would never be led by their own reasonings into any right notions of true religion and virtue, though their intellectual faculties should be awakened and roused into exercise.

But to facilitate this great and blessed work, some have supposed, that whensoever the appointed time is come, for calling in the remainder of the heathen world to virtue and piety, and the faith of *Christ*, there will be a new and extraordinary effusion of the Spirit of God upon men for that purpose, and that the power of miracles and tongues shall attend the mission of the gospel through the barbarous nations, as in the antient days of pentecost, when the apostles were sent to convert the world: For as you find in the narrative of these rude nations, that when they see any strange effect superior to all their notions of the power of nature, they are very ready to attribute

it to some invisible power, to some unknown spirit; so when miracles shall be wrought amongst them, such as *Christ* and his apostles performed, at the same time that the doctrines of religion, and the rules of virtue are taught them, in a clear and easy manner, they will naturally be disposed to attend and receive these things with a sense of divine authority; and by the concurring influences of the grace of God, there will be a wonderful reformation wrought amongst them.

But I forbid myself to proceed in such a digression as this: All that I insist upon at present is, that some wise and skilful preachers of the gospel, being sent among these savage nations, with the new testament, and the art of reading, will be a thousand times more likely to convert any of the rude and uncultivated tribes of mankind, than their own reasoning could ever be.

LOG. But how hard soever it may be for reason to reform such savage countries as SOPHRONIUS has described in these his narratives, yet the rest of the heathen world are not to be concluded under the same characters of atheism, vice, and brutality, nor are they so hard to be reformed by reason.

PITH. But I intreat you, sir, be pleased to remember, that you at first agreed, and undertook to maintain, that the reason of all mankind, and all nations of the earth, was sufficient for this purpose: And if it were not, then there is a necessity of revelation, at least for those nations where reason is not sufficient. Besides, if the reason of man be only sufficient, in some of the best of the heathen nations, to find out and practise such an acceptable religion, then your proposition concerning the sufficiency of human nature, is not universally true, since there are other nations in whom it is not sufficient.

LOG. I am forced to confess, that the narratives which SOPHRONIUS has given of the state of these wretched countries, goes very far to destroy the good opinion that I had of the universal power of reason, and to incline me to give up the point in dispute very much in your favour. But pray, SOPHRONIUS, tell us a little what you think of the rest of the nations of the world, excepting such savage creatures as those, whose religion, or atheism, you have described, and in whom human nature is sunk into such a degenerate and senseless state?

SOPHRO. Though there are not, perhaps, very many nations of the earth that are so far brutified as these are, whose customs I have been now relating, yet there are several other large countries in *Africa* and *America*, who come not very far behind them in gross ignorance of their creator, in abominable superstitions and idolatries, in barbarity and shameful vices. The little sketches of account which we have of the inhabitants of *Nova Zembla*, in the north of *Asia*, and of *New-Holland*, which lies south of *Java* in the *East-Indies*, give us reason to expect, that we should find them every whit as destitute of the knowledge or practice of religion or virtue, as any of the savages of which I have already spoken, or perhaps more brutish than they.

*Europe*, the best quarter of the world, has some countries shamefully ignorant: The tribes of men in *Lapland*, and even in the northern parts of *Russia* itself, are blind and brutish enough: They have some superstitions among them, but no true religion. I have read in the writings of travellers, and I have been informed, by those who have lived in those countries, that the *russes* are devout idolaters, but immoral men: They are very zealous to have images in their houses, even in their best rooms or parlours, and particularly that of *St. Nicholas*, who, as they suppose, governs the world, and besides him many of them seem to know no other God. They atone for great crimes by making many images of *St. Nicholas*, and dressing them up very fine.

*St. Nicholas*



*Nicholas* always stands in some corner of their rooms, and to him they pay their devotions themselves, and expect their neighbours and visitants should pay it at first when they enter into the room: They profess christianity indeed, but mix it with such heathen superstitions, that it is not like the religion of the new testament. They esteem it a very ungodly thing for any inhabitant to have no image or god in some part of the room, where they receive their friends; and yet they have scarce any notion of the obligations of truth and honesty. They make no scruple to break the most solemn engagements and alliances, when it is for their interest. Falsehood, and deceit, and cheating is almost an universal custom and principle among them, where they can do it safely. And *Scheffer's* history of *Lapland* informs us, that if the tribes of the *laplanders*, who are more uncultivated, are yet more honest, it is because they have no such store-houses and safe custody for their goods or properties; and that if they were false or thievish, there could be no safety or security to any of them in their possessions. It is mere self-preservation, and not a sense of duty, that makes honesty the custom of their country.

But whatsoever degrees of honesty they have, yet as for the religion of the *lapps*, it is half or more than half heathen; for though they have received some notions of the true God, and of *Jesus Christ*, and his apostles, yet they worship their old gods, *Thor* and *Stor-junkar* still: *Thor* is the god of thunder and lightening, who has power over life and death, and mankind, and is their chief deity; and *Stor-junkar* is god of the cattle, fish and birds, and gives them success in hunting and fishing: And these are worshipped under wretched images and rude figures, and anointed with the blood and fat of their sacrifices: their figures are drawn on their magical drums, and *Christ* and his apostles among them; and their superstitions are many, and extremely ridiculous. The custom of their ancestors is their highest, their most sacred and unalterable reason for all their follies, and even for their virtues too.

What shall we say now of these worshippers of *St. Nicholas* and his images, or of *Thor* and *Stor-junkar*, these idolatrous *lapps*, these national cheats of north *Russia*? Can we suppose, that any of these gross idolaters, or these devout and knavish *nicolaites*, who neither pay what is due to the true God or to man on earth, are fit for the presence of God and the blessedness of heaven? Their own reason lets them go on obstinately in these idolatries and knaveries from age to age, and from one end of a nation to the other, without remorse, repentance, or reformation. If their reason be sufficient to guide them, why are there no instances of recovery from these national vices and madnesses? It is true, some of them pretend to pieces and scraps of christianity; but even with these hints of twilight and glimmering assistances from the gospel, what has their reason done to recover them to virtue or real piety?

Let us travel from northern *Europe* to the southern part of *America*. What has this self-sufficient reason done for the natives of *Peru*? And what for the inhabitants of *Mexico*, which, though it lies north of *Peru*, yet is much more to the south than the wild nations I have been before describing? They maintained such horrid customs and practices amongst them, which passed for religion, when the *spaniards* came first to make a prey of them, that must be infinitely offensive to the blessed God, rather than any way capable of obtaining his approbation or favour. It would be endless to repeat their various superstitions. I shall mention only the cruel and bloody rites, which were practised by the *mexicans* in their human sacrifices, as *Antonio de Herrera* gives us an account, in the third volume of his general history of *America*. Many of these wretched victims, which were taken in war, were successively carried up to an elevated place, where the high-priest stood, and were held fast by five men, one

to each arm, one to each leg, and one to hold the head: Then this inhuman sacred butcher, who was trained up to the office, with a broad and sharp flint, instead of a knife, ripped up the breast of a man, tore out the heart reeking with his hands, and shewed it to the sun, offering him the heat and steam of it: Then he turned to the idol or image, which was set near him, and threw the bloody heart in his face: And the bodies of these sacrifices, thus murdered in a long and dismal succession, were tumbled down from that elevated place of slaughter, and were eaten in a festival, by those who had taken them prisoners. Sometimes, says he, these sacrifices, after a victory, have arisen to many thousands in all the country; for this was practised by all the nations near *Mexico*. Why does their self-sufficient reason permit them to practise these mischievous impieties, and call it all religion?

If we survey those countries of *Asia*, where the gospel was never preached, or never received, how little of true religion is found among the people of the continent, or the numerous islands; I mean, religion that can please the true God?

*China* itself is really a polite and ingenious nation, and their natural reason teaches them a thousand fine contrivances and manufactures, which relate to their present life; yet how little has it taught them that relates to the true God, or the life to come? They are so vain and conceited of their wit and ingenuity, that they say, "the *europeans* have one eye, the *chinese* have two, and all the rest of the world are blind." They boast themselves to be the brightest and most rational people under the heavens; yet have they wandered into gross darkness, and wild superstitions, as father *Le Comte* at large informs us. This country is supposed to be peopled very early, by the children or posterity of *Noah*, and they retained the knowledge of the sovereign Lord of heaven, or the supreme Spirit of heaven and earth, and offered sacrifice to him antiently, even seven sorts of animals. Their learned men tell us, that for two thousand years there were no idols nor statues seen among them; and great morality and virtue were practised through the whole nation. But now they generally adore an idol, or fancied god, whom they call *Fo*, as the only god of the world. This was brought from the *Indies*, by computation of times, thirty two years after the death of *Christ*. This poison began at court, and corrupted every town: The nation is now infected with idolatry, and become a monstrous receptacle for all sort of errors.

It is hard to recount what strange fables, superstitions, opinions about the transmigration of souls, idolatry, and downright atheism, divide the inhabitants of the land, and at this present have a strong mastery over them. The ape, the elephant, and the dragon, have been worshipped in several places, under pretence that the god *Fo* had been successively transmigrated into those animals. *China* is now the most superstitious of all nations, with all her boasted superiority of sense and reason: She has lost the true God, and gone on continually to increase the number of her idols, till one may see all sorts of them in their temples.

Yet if they worship an idol a great while, and they do not obtain what they desire, they load him with reproaches, and with stripes, they tie him with cords, pluck him down from his seat, drag him along the streets through mud and dunghills, to punish him. Lately there was one of these idols called to account before a judge, and was punished by perpetual banishment, and had his temple destroyed, as being useless to the kingdom: And the reason of his punishment was, his not saving the life of a person, whose recovery their *bonzes*, or priests, had promised in his name: Yet, instead of coming to more true knowledge of the weakness of their gods, the people grow more blind every day, notwithstanding all their sufficiency of reason

son to lead them into truth, and all the boasted writings of their wise philosopher *Confucius* among them.

These *bonzes* indeed give the people many good instructions in rules of virtue; but they take care to recommend themselves to their liberality: "Entertain and nourish up, say they, the *bonzes*; build them monasteries and temples, that their prayers and voluntary penances may obtain for you exemption from that punishment which your sins have deserved. Burn paper gilt and washed with silver, and habits made of stuff and silk: All these in the other world shall be turned into real gold and silver, and into true and substantial garments, which shall be given to your deceased fathers faithfully, who will make use of them as they have occasion. If you do not regard these commands, you shall, after your death, be cruelly tormented, and exposed to several metempsychoses, or transmigrations; that is to say, you shall be born in the shape of rats, horses, mules, and all other creatures." This last point makes a great impression upon their minds.

I remember, says father *Le Comte*, that being in the province of *Xansi*, I was sent for to christen a sick person: It was an old man of threescore and ten, who lived upon a small pension, which the emperor had given him. When I came into the chamber, "O my good father, says he, how much am I obliged to you, who are going to deliver me from a great deal of torment! Baptism, answered I, does not only deliver from the torment of hell, but intitles us to the enjoyment of a place in paradise: O how happy will it be for you to go to heaven, eternally to live in the presence of God! I do not, said the sick man, understand what you mean, nor, perhaps, have I explained my meaning clearly to you: You know I have lived a long time upon the emperor's bounty: The *bonzes*, who are perfectly well acquainted with all the transactions of the other-world, assure me, that I shall be obliged, after my death, by way of recompence for my pension, to serve him, and that my soul will infallibly go into one of his post-horses, to carry dispatches from court, through all the province. They have therefore been advising me to mind my duty in that new state; not to stumble, nor kick, nor bite, nor hurt any one: Run well, and eat little, and be patient, say they, and you may move the gods to compassion, who often of a good beast make at length a person of quality, or a considerable *mandarin*. I protest, father, the very thoughts of it make me quake: it never comes into my mind but I tremble; yet I dream of it every night, and sometimes, methinks, in my sleep I am already in the harness, ready to run at the first jerk of the postillion. Then I awake in a great sweat, and half mad, scarcely knowing whether I am a man or a horse. But, alas! what will be my sorrow, when this will be no more a dream, but a reality."

"This therefore, father, is the course I took. They tell me, that those of your religion are not subject to those changes; that men are always men, and are in the other world of the same kind as they are here. I beg of you therefore to receive me among you. I know your religion is hard to observe; yet if it had ten times more difficulties, I am ready to embrace it; and whatsoever trouble it put me to, I had rather be a christian than be turned into a beast." The father *Le Comte*, however gave him a little better instruction, and, as he tells us, had the comfort to see him die a good christian. But in the main he assures us, the superstitions of the people are so numberless, that he does not believe any nation under the sun is so full of whimsies as *China*.

And pray, *Loogisto*, how much wiser or happier should we have been in this island of *Great-Britain*, notwithstanding this self-sufficiency of our reason, if christianity had

had never come amongst us? It is true, we have not many memoirs left of the religion of our ancestors in the days of heathenism. *Strabo* tells us, that the *britons* worshipped *Ceres*, and her daughter *Proserpina* above any other gods: The daughter is known to be the queen of hell, and the mother a sort of earthly or infernal goddess. Whether these were originally *british* deities, or whether they were introduced, together with these names of them, by the *romans*, is hard to say. The *Druids* were our ancient priests and philosophers, and, in many things, they were judges also in civil affairs. The doctrine of transmigration of souls, was one of their tenets, and that gave the people courage in war, as *Lucan* tells us; for the "populi quos despicit arctos," as cited yesterday by *PITHANDER*, those northern people, are supposed to be the *britons*. Their religion was much the same with that of the *gauls*; for *Cæsar* tells us, that the doctrine of their *Druids* came from *Britain*; and we are informed, that they offered human sacrifices as well as others, and consulted the bowels of men upon the altar, to learn the fortune of war, and the success of their enterprizes. Had you and I, sir, been sent into the world by providence in that age, would our reason ever have worked it's way through all these loads of superstition? Would our native powers have found out the true God, and his worship, amidst these national follies and crimes, and traced out the way to his favour in a future state? Perhaps I might have been the victim to-day upon some impious and bloody altar, and *PITHANDER*, or even *LOGISTO*, might have been the priestly *Druid* ripping open my breast, and searching out futurities by the beating of my heart, or the colour of my liver.

Or perhaps we might have been now all three worshipping the north *german* and *saxon* idols: *Thor*, the god of thunder, whence our *Thursday* comes, or *Tuisco*, the god of war, who gave *Tuesday* it's name, and been prostrating our bodies in the dust before their images with vain and senseless ceremony. Our great-grandfathers had reasoning powers as well as we, and yet they were blind idolaters: And notwithstanding all our present politeness, and pretensions to reason and refinement, we might have still, in every age, departed further from the true God, as the polite *chinese* have done, and given up our souls, and our lives, and our future hopes, to as many wild and wretched varieties of whimsy and madness. Blessed be the day, when the light of the gospel broke in upon us, when the name of *Christ*, and his religion, was published in our island, and the way of salvation was made known to our fathers!

But let us come to the civilized countries of antient *Rome* and *Greece*, and the lesser *Asia*, where learning had its seat and empire for some ages, where the reason of mankind seems to have exerted itself in it's best effects, and made the most evident discoveries: And what can we suppose concerning the common inhabitants of the towns and villages in *Asia*, *Greece*, and *Italy*, and all their pretences to religion? Has their reason led them in any safe road to heaven? Can you yourself imagine them to be such as paid due honour to God, the true God, the creator and governor of the world, in any tolerable degree? Can you suppose, that their religious notions, their devout practices, their idolatries, ceremonies, and superstitions, are fitted to refine the souls of men, and prepare them for such a heaven, as consists in the contemplation and love of the blessed God, and his eternal worship and service? Were their religious affairs ever conducted and practised in such a manner as to procure the favour of God for sinful creatures, and to bring them into a state of reconciliation and friendship with their maker? Were the devotions, and sacrifices, and ridiculous rites of their national religions, the right way to heavenly blessedness?

Suppose a few philosophers amongst them owned and acknowledged the one true God, yet many even of the reputed masters of wisdom and philosophy desbelieved the being

being of a God, or made him one and the same being or substance with the world, that is, the universe of things. They were engaged in endless quarrels what God was, and whether he was matter or mind. Some of them declared roundly, that they knew him not: And those of them who believed there was one almighty maker of all things, an all-wise, and powerful, and beneficent being, who made and ruled the world, yet kept it too much confined to their schools, and concealed it from the bulk of mankind. They held this first truth in unrighteousness. There are scarce any of all the sects of philosophers, who do not often talk of gods in the plural number: It is plain, that some of them did it because they did not know how many gods there were: And those who believed there was but one true God, yet used the common language of polytheists, because they would not, or they durst not, publish this unity of God amongst the common people. *Socrates* has been said to lose his life for being too free in the defence of it, in opposition to their public polytheism and idolatry, though some say he complied with them too. *Cicero* says, that "it was hard to find out the true God, the parent or creator of the world, and if you should find him, it would be very unlawful to make him known to the common people." His words are these: "Illum quasi parentem hujus universitatis invenire difficile: & cum inveneris, indicare in vulgus nefas. *Lib. de univers.* page 2." and to the same purpose in *Lib. ii. de Natura deorum*. And by the way we may take notice, that the same great and learned writer complains of the weakness of human nature to guide itself without the cultivation of reason by learning and philosophy. *Tusc. Quæst. lib. iii.* And thus he leaves the bulk of world in a state of unguided wandering.

As for these philosophers themselves, as much as some of them knew of the true God, and the way of worshipping him with a pure heart and pure hands, rather than by their national superstitions, yet how honourably do they talk of the mysteries and ceremonies of their gods, and of the piety of those who observed these superstitious rites, and who worshipped the numerous idols of their country? *Marcus Antoninus*, one of the very best of them, who was a philosopher and an emperor, so far prides himself in his respect to his idol-gods, that he thence expected safety to attend him, and success against the rebellion of *Cassius*; We have not been such negligent worshippers of the gods, said he, as to fear that *Cassius* shall get the victory: And indeed he followed the superstitions of *Rome*, and of other countries, with diligence.

There were scarce any of them all but complied with the national worship of many gods, *Mars*, *Bacchus*, *Apollo*, *Neptune*, *Jupiter*, *Juno*, *Minerva*, *Diana*, *Venus*, and the rest of that ridiculous rabble of gods and goddesses. The bulk of the nations worshipped them in their houses, and at their temples, thoughtless of the one true God; for they knew little or nothing of him. *Epietetus* himself, who perhaps paid the greatest regard to virtue among all the philosophers before *Antoninus*, and whose life, in other respects, was more blameless than any of them, and who says some very good things concerning our respect to the gods, chapter xxxviii. yet he advises men to "worship the gods as the country does where they dwell\*." Let the heathens boast then of their *Epietetus* and *Antonine*, the two brightest names among them: Their ignorance of the true God, and their abominable idolatries and superstitions, cast a dismal blemish on their virtues, and almost destroy all their pretences to true piety. Can you ever suppose, sir, that the blessed and holy God, the supreme maker and

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\* Σπίνδειν δὲ ἔστι δίδειν κατὰ τὰ πάτρια ἑκάστου, or ἑκάστου, προσήκει. *Epietetus. cap. xxxvii.* It is proper for us to offer drink-offerings and sacrifices, to the gods whom he had been speaking of, every where according to the custom of the country.

governor of heaven and earth, can accept of such sort of devotions; of drink-offerings and sacrifices, and various rites of ridiculous invention, and such as are paid to false gods, to idols, and not to himself? Are these the people that he will bless with his own favour and love, in a better world, who lavish out their superstitions, according to the wild customs of every country, and adore things that are not God, and never take any care to learn his true nature, or to glorify the one true God amongst men?

The best of them, when they knew the true God, they did not glorify him as God, as *St. Paul* assures us, nor were thankful for the common blessings they received from him; but they turned his glory into shame, and in his room worshipped sometimes birds, beasts, and creeping things, images of wood or stone, or their own fancied heroes, some of whom, according to their own account, were murderers and adulterers, translated into heaven after their death. And no wonder if the lives and the manners of their common worshippers were scandalous and impure, while these were the characters they gave to their gods.

Here and there, indeed, among the philosophers, and especially the *platonists*, or *pythagoreans*, and a *stoic* or two, you find a handsome speech, or perhaps a discourse concerning the nature of God, and the imitation of him in his amiable perfections; but most of them, as I hinted, held this truth, even in their own hearts, in unrighteousness, and very few ever carefully practised in religion, according to their own best sentiments.

Nor had they generally any established notion of a future state of rewards and punishments, according to the behaviour of men in this life. It is granted, that a few of them, particularly *Plato* and his followers, have mentioned such a thing: but *Aristotle* and his disciples declared a future state to be obscure and uncertain, τὸ μίλλω ἀφανές. And several of the philosophers ridiculed not only the doctrine of the poets concerning the *elysian fields* and *Tartarus*, but roundly denied any life after this. Some of them indeed, *viz.* the *epicureans* and the *stoics*, spoke of the change of the same atoms of matter into new forms of men and beasts in following ages: But this was a sorry sort of reviviscence without the same consciousness. Many believed the doctrine of transmigration of souls, as *PITHANDER* has shewn; and others among them could not allow the real punishments of the wicked hereafter, since they imagined, that "God was never angry, nor would do hurt to men." This, *Cicero* tells us was the common opinion of all the philosophers. "Hoc commune est omnium philosophorum nunquam nec irasci Deum nec nocere. *De Officiis Lib. iii. Sect. 27.*" How then can he punish the vilest of sinners?

The *stoics* did not think that the *platonick* argument for future rewards and punishments, drawn from the unequal distributions of good and evil things in this life, was just or strong, because they did not allow riches, health, ease of body, &c. to be real goods; nor pain, sickness, poverty, loss, oppression, &c. to be real evils: And therefore they thought the justice and wisdom of the gods might be sufficiently vindicated in the distributions of providence, without running to the doctrine of a future state, after this life: And on this account *Antoninus* himself, as well as other *stoics*, talks so doubtfully about it, in several places of his writings. "Think of *Socrates*, *Crito*, *Severus*, the *Cæsars*, where are they now all? Any where, or no where? All worldly things are but as the smoke, or indeed mere nothing. *Book X. Sect. 31.*" He has many such sort of speeches. That great philosopher did not know, whether the soul goes from the body by way of extinction, or dispersion of it's parts, or continuation of life in some other state or place, though he pronounces

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it blessed to be always ready for it, without reluctance. *Book XI. Sect. 3.* And indeed, since they made virtue it's own sufficient reward, and made vice it's own sufficient punishment, and called it the slavery of the soul, their philosophy did not so plainly lead them to make any future rewards or punishments necessary.

*Cicero*, who was one of the greatest genius's of antiquity, and did not confine himself to any sect, but took out of all what pleased him best, was so little satisfied with all the proofs of the immortality of the soul and it's future existence, that his vast reading and his own invention could furnish him with, that he frequently professes his uncertainty and doubts about it. When he had reckoned up several opinions, he adds, "Harum sententiarum quæ vera sit, deus aliquis videret. Some god may see which of all these opinions is true." In which short sentence, he shews at once his own doubts both about the future existence of the soul and about the unity of God, or rather supposes more gods than one.

Where now are these agreed principles of natural religion, of the knowledge and worship of the true God, and of certain rewards and punishments in another world, for virtue and vice? Were they taught with constancy and certainty any where but in *Plato's* school, much less in any numbers of schools of the philosophers? How little agreement was there among them about these principles.

If their reason was so far sufficient to find out and practise such a religion as would lead them into the favour of God, and happiness, how came it to pass, that there should be never found any fixed systems amongst them of better rules of piety and religion, than they have generally proposed to the world, and a more rational and uniform account of their principles and practices of what relates to God, and another world?

**LOG.** I do not pretend to have read over all the heathen philosophers; but I have been informed, that there is no precept of true religion or morality which is not to be found in their writings.

**SOPHRO.** I grant many such precepts are to be found; but it will be very hard to find them all there. Give me leave to enquire a few things here:

1. Is it not a precept of morality or true religion, that all our actions should be done to the honour of our maker? Where is this to be found in precept or practice among the heathen philosophers? *Rom. i. 21.* "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

2. Is it not an excellent precept or rule of true religion, that sinners should draw near to God in humble worship, acknowledging their offences, condemning themselves, mourning for their folly, asking pardon of God, and desiring assistance from him against any future temptations, or a deliverance from them? Now is there any of the philosophers among the heathens that has prescribed to us this practice?

3. If with much labour and pains of reading we could find out and collect the several rules of a system of natural religion and virtue, here and there scattered and hinted among all the philosophers, yet what one philosopher has delivered them all? Much less can we suppose the reason of any one single man alone could trace them all out: Nor is there any book left us by all the heathens in the least degree comparable to that of the new testament, even to teach us the truths and duties of natural religion.

4. Among these principles and rules of religion and virtue which lie scattered in the writings of the philosophers, are there not some which are doubted, and some directly opposed by others of these heathen sages? What endless disputes were found in their schools about the chief good itself, and the way to attain it, about God himself,

self, about good and evil, sin and virtue, present and future happiness? Thus the light of reason, in these great masters of it, has left matters of such supreme importance as topics of dispute for their readers, rather than as authentic rules of practice: And of how little use could this be to all the illiterate world? So that mankind is still left at a vast uncertainty, since not one philosopher had any just authority to impose his principles and rules upon the rest of mankind. I add yet

5. That if they had been never so perfect in the discovery of the rules of duty, yet they have never given motives actually and practically sufficient to enforce the practice of them, as PITHANDER has shewn already.

Very poor and feeble must their motives be for the practice of sincere piety and the pure worship of the only true God, when it was opposed, rather than encouraged, by some of the greatest of their wise men, who had any power or influence in the state. That ingenious writer Mr. *Jackson*, in his late answer to christianity as old as the creation, page 14. tells us, that, "All the very best systems of human laws among the gentiles established superstition and idolatry, as may be seen from *Plato's* iv. and viii. book of laws, and also from *Cicero's* ii. book of laws throughout." A foul blemish upon the reason and religion of two of the greatest men of heathenism.

The utmost, therefore, that I can say for them, is this, that the reasoning powers of these polite parts of the heathen world had very little, if any thing more than a sort of speculative or notional sufficiency, for true religion and future happiness; for it's best rules were very imperfect, it's motives very feeble, and scarce ever effectual in fact and practice; and wheresoever they were effectual in here-and-there a particular person or his family, it was rather owing to the traditions they had of some divine revelation, or to an acquaintance with some doctrines of the *jews*, in their various dispersions. And these dispersions of the *jews* did providence ordain for the preservation, or rather for the recovery, of the knowledge of the one God and his worship and religion among the countries of heathenism, who had no remarkable relation made to themselves, or had lost it perhaps for several generations.

LOG. But if I mistake not, sir, some ingenious modern writers have informed us, that human reason has determined, with the greatest ease, what opinions are true and false, in all the main articles and duties of religion: They assure us, that heathen \* deists generally agreed in the belief of one supreme self-existent agent or God, and of his providence in the government of mankind; that they agreed in the unalterable obligations of virtue, and the displeasure of God against all vice and impiety; that there were rewards for good men, and punishments for the wicked in a future state: That God was to be worshipped with a pious heart, and with a conscience free from sin; that justice and goodness were to be practised for their own excellency and delight, as well as in imitation of the blessed God: And they teach us, that all but atheists agreed in these great and necessary points of religion.

SOPHRO. Then I may justly infer, that nine tenths of the heathen world were atheists, with all their boasted sufficiency of reason; for it is pretty evident, that there was not one tenth part of the heathen world, in the days of the *grecian* philosophers, who agreed to hold and profess all these principles, LOGISTO, which you have now reckoned up.

I would yet farther observe, that though any of our ingenious writers should give a loose to their encomiums upon human reason, and tell us how far some of the

\* But how few were these heathen deists, if you except the *platonists*? The rest were generally atheists or polytheists, or doubters about the one true God.



the heathen philosophers were led by it in their discoveries of the true God and his worship, though they should make a sort of saints of them, yet we have no reason to infer, in large and general terms, concerning the heathen nations, this was the scheme of their religion; nor should they tempt us to suppose these were the general sentiments of all the antient gentiles, and that this was the sense of mankind, without a revelation.

How wide this encomium even of the heathen philosophers is from strict truth, we have observed already. And yet if these things concerning the philosophers had been strictly true, we should neither make nor believe any universal and unreasonable inductions from a few single instances of philosophers, in opposition to the common multitude and bulk of mankind, in towns, cities and villages? Let us remember that the common people, even in these polite nations, received their religion rather from their priests, and their rulers than from their philosophers: they much more willingly and readily learned, and more universally practised the impious and ridiculous idolatries and superstitions of their country, than ever they would hearken to the moral or self-denying dictates and abstract reasonings of their philosophers; for princes and priests had much more authority. Now many of these superstitions and doctrines of their gods tended to corrupt their moral principles, and destroy and kill the very seeds of virtue within them. How very few among them had any true notions of piety?

Alas! sir, to make such general conclusions of the goodness of heathen religion, and sufficiency of human reasonings in all mankind to find it out, there ought to be many more instances of the knowledge and belief of the true God, and his spiritual worship, &c. and that among the heathens of *Africa*, and *America*, as well as *Europe*; and among the bulk of the inhabitants of *Greece* and *Asia minor*, as well as the few philosophers: Whereas it is evident, that the gross of the heathen world, even in the cultivated and polite parts of it, were abominably over-run with shameful ignorance, idolatry, and immorality, profaneness and superstition: And in some of the rude and unpolished nations, there is scarce any thing but stupidity and error, darkness and madness, instead of truth, sobriety, and goodness.

While in the learned part of the world the poets and the priests taught these wild superstitions as things sacred and divine, while the rulers commanded the observance of them, and the philosophers themselves complied with them, what can we suppose the people would do but believe in the same deities, worship them with the same ceremonies, and imitate their superiors in their religion, though it were never so ridiculous and immoral? And as for the rude and unlearned nations and tribes of mankind, while their ancestors before them, and their companions all around them, gave themselves up to impious, and immoral, and shameful customs, and they were never taught to think for themselves, or to reason upon the subject, what can be expected, but that they should universally corrupt themselves, and live from age to age without God or goodness? The naratives which *St. Paul* gives us in his epistles of the gentile nations through which he travelled, and the accounts of our later travellers, conspire to assure us of the most wretched and deplorable state of mankind there, in respect of religion and virtue.

This is so copious a theme, *Logisto*, that one might talk upon it whole hours with pertinence and justice, and, one would think, to the conviction of those who are willing to hearken to truth. But I know in whose presence I speak: I am well apprized that the person to whom I address myself needs no more than short hints of these

these matters to refresh his own memory, and give him a compendious view of the things which he himself has been well acquainted with, in his own converse with the antient writers of *Rome* and *Greece*, as well as the accounts which are given us of the more barbarous nations

LOG. I confess, dear sir, I am almost overpowered with conviction by the short account you have given us of these affairs, and the glaring light in which you have set them: But yet still there remain some great difficulties upon my mind, which arise from other arguments which I have heard and read on this subject. Shall I propose them now, my friends? Or shall we appoint to meet again more early next *Wednesday* in the afternoon, and finish our conferences on this subject?

PITH. Indeed, sir, I fear we have too much work upon our hands to be all finished this evening. And since you are so obliging, LOGISTO, to invite us to such a peaceful and pleasant retreat, and since I persuade myself SOPHRONIUS will be so good as to afford us a few hours more of his company, for my part, I know not how I can better employ my time than in endeavouring, in such society, to search after and to communicate truth. It is indeed the appointed business and station of my life to be a teacher to others, yet I take pleasure, gentlemen, to come hither and learn.

SOPHRO. But why will ye not please, my friends, to favour me with a visit, and let your last conference do my parlour the honour of finishing this friendly controversy? I will not pretend to such an elegant and spacious garden as LOGISTO has, nor to so neat and private a retreat for conversation, as this wherein we are now entertained: but you shall be attended with the best accommodations which my dwelling will afford; and if you will give yourselves the trouble to ascend to my study, we shall there be sufficiently retired from all other company.

LOG. I doubt not, SOPHRONIUS, of the sincerity of your request, nor the convenience of your library, for such a friendly conference: but since you have favoured us thus far with your happy assistance in a debate which PITHANDER and myself had appointed here in this garden, I cannot with any satisfaction permit the scene to be altered. Perhaps it may seem a degree of incivility to desire a visit from you so often without a return; yet I promise you, sir, I will write myself down indebted to you for every such favour, and when we begin any new subject of debate, SOPHRONIUS shall appoint the place.

SOPHRO. Then since it is the pleasure of LOGISTO to have it so, without any more ceremony, we will attend him here next *Wednesday*.

PITH. I agree, sir, to your proposal. I can never be in an ill situation at either of your houses, amidst the honour of such company.

LOG. Gentlemen, I own the obligation, and am your very humble servant.

## THE THIRD CONFERENCE.

**I**N the days that passed after the last meeting, LOGISTO had been reviewing several books which have been written in vindication of the sufficiency of human reason to conduct men to happiness in a way of religion; and as he had renewed his own difficulties, so he had furnished his memory with some of their strongest arguments:

guments: but he found none so hard to answer, as that great and important one, which is derived from the wisdom, the equity, and the goodness of God; upon which account he resolved to reserve this to the last.

When his company were come, he led them down to the usual place of learned conversation, and began the conference thus.

LOG. The only thing that remains before us, gentlemen, is, that I should propose some arguments, drawn from the reason of things, and from the nature of God, and man, why it appears necessary that the principle of human reason should be sufficient, in all mankind, to guide and conduct them to the belief and practice of such a religion, wherein they may obtain the favour of God, and happiness in a future state.

PITH. I wait with some impatience, sir, to hear these arguments of yours, which you have so often intimated: And yet it may not be improper, before you produce them, to consider, what is the particular proposition your arguments can possibly prove, or what it is you can expect from them.

Will you please to remember, sir, it has been plainly proved and determined already, and agreed in our past debate, as a certain matter of fact, that there are several large countries of heathenism wherein the inhabitants have not reason sufficient to guide them into true religion, considering their vast prejudices and aversions to God and goodness; much less is it sufficient to enable them to practise it; that is, according to the distinction of our worthy friend SOPHRONIUS, that though there may be in them a remote, natural, and speculative sufficiency for this purpose, yet their reasoning powers are so poor and low, so unpractised, and so much perverted by a thousand errors, evil customs, vicious propensities, and wilful ignorance, that they are not practically and experimentally sufficient for this great design. This hath been abundantly confirmed by the melancholy, and yet entertaining accounts SOPHRONIUS hath given us of *african* and *american* heathens. Now I humbly hope, sir, you will not suppose that any of your arguments can destroy plain matter of fact, nor prove that to be sufficient, which has before been plainly declared and proved, and agreed to be insufficient.

LOG. I must acknowledge, PITHANDER, I know not how to oppose what you say. It seems to be plainly proved, that reason in these savages is not a sufficient guide. All that I can pretend therefore, is, only to shew, that if human reason is not in fact sufficient, even practically sufficient for this purpose; yet, at least, it ought to be practically sufficient; and perhaps my arguments will prove it.

PITH. Pray, sir, be so good as to inform me, what you mean by saying, it ought to be sufficient? Will any of your arguments teach the all-wise God what he ought to have done, and in what other and better condition he ought to have placed mankind, than he has seen fit to place them in? Will your arguments give wisdom to your maker, or instruct him in rules of justice? Or can any of your reasonings inform him, what superior talents, and happier circumstances, he ought to have bestowed upon his creatures? Have you courage enough to reprove or arraign the conduct of the supreme governor of the world towards his *african* or *american* subjects? Is it right, LOGISTO, to talk at this rate? Or is it safe to venture on such an unequal contest? What else can you mean, sir, by affirming, that reason ought to be sufficient, but this, *viz.* that God ought to have given men better faculties, or he ought to have bestowed upon them clearer light, and better helps, or ought to have brought them into the world with greater advantages than his wisdom has thought fit to do? And what is this, but telling the all-wise God, he has acted weakly, or charging the God  
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of justice that he has dealt unjustly, or accusing the father of mercies that he has acted cruelly toward his creatures?

LOG. I confess, good sir, that you confound me a little with these enquiries. I have no such hardness of soul, as to dare to reprove my maker, whom I adore with the most profound veneration; and I do acknowledge, that whatsoever he does, must be right and just. And yet there are arguments which seem to prove, that man, who as you agree, is to be tried and judged in the other world, for his behaviour in this, should, some way or other, have sufficient powers given him to know and fulfil his duty: Otherwise, men would be excusable in their greatest superstitions and immoralities, as being destitute, by the necessity of their circumstances, of a sufficient guide in matters of religion and virtue: And this is the first argument which I desire leave to offer upon this head, as a difficulty which I cannot solve.

PITH. Perhaps, sir, it is an effectual relief to this difficulty, if we suppose mankind to be furnished with such reasoning powers as are, in the nature of things, and in a remote sense, sufficient to guide and conduct men in their religious affairs: For the neglect of using and improving these rational powers, is greatly criminal: And it is this universal neglect of using them well, that renders them practically insufficient. If they employ not their reason in their most important concerns, you will grant it is their own fault; and this renders them condemnable for the neglect or abuse of it, and for the errors and vices proceeding from such an unreasonable conduct of life. This is confessed by the writers of your own side of the question.

Besides, the reasoning faculty, and the remains of conscience, which are found even in the most savage tribes of mankind, may be called practically sufficient, though not to conduct to happiness completely, yet, to have taught them much more of the first principles of virtue and religion, than most of them either know or practise, and thus to have withheld them from their grossest immoralities and superstitions.

Yet further, reason may teach them the duties of an innocent man, but not to recover a sinner to God's favour. The obligations which their reason and conscience might lay on them to practise duty may be clear and strong as far as they go; and yet these may not be sufficient to bring sinners to the favour of God and eternal happiness. Devils are under clear and strong obligation to love God, and to repent, and obey him, through the dictates of a rational nature; but this rational nature is not sufficient to bring them to happiness and the favour of God.

It is granted, the heathens have great hindrances; but great as they are, they are not so unsurmountable, but that most or all of them might have arrived at much superior degrees of knowledge and practice in religion, than what any of them have actually arrived at, if they had not been so shamefully and criminally negligent, so exceeding fond of error and sin, and so lazy in their search after truth and duty. Therefore they are by no means inexcusable, as you express it, in their greatest immoralities.

Give me leave, sir, to represent this matter by a plain similitude. Suppose *Anergus* a slave, to have a remote natural capacity sufficient to trace out all the demonstrations in *Euclid*: Then you consequently must suppose him also to have a proximate and practical sufficiency to trace out some of the first and plainest of them: *Criton*, his master commands him to demonstrate all the propositions there, or to practise all the problems: but he will not so much as set about the first and plainest of them: Is not *Anergus* greatly criminal? If he would have traced out the first, he might perhaps find a growing capacity, and a proximate and practical sufficiency to demonstrate the next, and the next in succession, till he came to the last. Is he not chargeable then with

with the guilt of not demonstrating and practising the whole series, even though he never actually had a practical and proximate sufficiency of reason or ability to grasp the deepest and most complicated theorems, or to perform the hardest problems, because he was lazy and thoughtless, and would not apply himself to the easiest? You know, sir, how to apply this to the case in hand.

LOG. Then you do not assert, that their reason is practically insufficient to have taught them the chief part of their duty, or to have enabled them to perform it, if they had been well inclined to it, and sincerely diligent in their attempts to their utmost?

PITH. No, sir, I assert no such thing: For it is their great and universal sloth and negligence, and disinclination both to learn and perform their duty, that is one of the chief things that renders their reasoning powers thus insufficient in a practical sense: It is owing to their powerful prejudices, their evil moral habits, and their strong aversion to God and virtue, that they do not exercise their reasoning powers to the utmost of their capacity: And it is by this means they continue in darkness, guilt, and death: Whereas if they had a real inclination, and sincere desire, to search out and perform their duty to God and man, if they obeyed every secret dictate of conscience, every hint of truth that arose within them, and used their natural light, both as to belief and practice, to the utmost of their power, God would never be wanting to any of his creatures; I am persuaded, he would have graciously accepted the utmost that their reasoning powers could perform: or, if it were necessary, he would have given such well-disposed persons, greater light, and greater strength, to learn and fulfil the necessary parts of religion; "for to him that hath, shall be given; that is, greater helps shall be given to him that improves what lesser talents God has intrusted him with. But the case of these brutal creatures seems to be represented in the latter end of that text, "*Luke* viii. 18. From him that hath not, shall be taken away that which he hath, or seemeth to have;" that is, those who improve not the feeble light that is given them, even those feeble glimmerings of light shall be taken from them, and by the righteous judgment of God they shall be left in deep and utter darkness: And thus they are greatly culpable, though their reasoning powers are practically insufficient.

LOG. Very well, my friend; I can hear this with more patience, since you impute the crime to men's own abuse of their rational powers, and not to God their creator. I proceed therefore to a second argument, and forgive me if I express it in pretty strong terms: Does not the great and blessed God equally behold all the dwellers on the earth, free from partiality and prejudice? And can he be supposed to make some people his favourites, without any consideration of their merits, and merely because they believe certain propositions, and practise certain duties, which he has revealed, and which are taught and known generally in that country where they happen to be born; while others, and that a far greater number, shall from age to age want this favour of God, because they are destined to be born and live in places where such propositions and duties were never revealed, where they are not known, and are very hard or impossible to be found out, and for that reason they are not likely to believe and practise them? What can more represent God as an arbitrary and partial being, than thus to suppose that he scarce vouchsafes to bring the means of happiness within the reach of so great a part of his creatures, while he has given it so plentifully to others?

PITH. This speech of yours, sir, will require an answer at large; and I am glad you give me occasion to speak my thoughts freely on this subject.

When you use the words partiality and prejudice, you seem to consider God as a governor and a judge, distributing rewards or punishments to his creatures partially, and not exactly according to their former behaviour; and in this respect, I must affirm, God beholds all men equally, and acts without prejudice or partiality in his retribution of the righteous and the wicked: In this sense, God is no respecter of persons; the master and the servant, the prince and the subject, the learned and the ignorant, shall receive a recompence according to their works.

But when we speak of God as an original proprietor and possessor of his own blessings, he may freely distribute his favours in a greater or less degree amongst his creatures, as he pleases, without any charge of prejudice or partiality. And this is sufficiently visible in the whole of his providence, and that among the brutal creation as well as the rational. Are there not many of the birds, and beasts of the earth, and fishes of the sea, that in their several portions of sensitive good or evil, ease or pain, are greatly distinguished from each other, merely by the hand of their creator? Here is one flock of sheep frightened and worried daily, and some of them miserably torn to death, and destroyed, and the rest of them wounded or maimed by a wolf or a bear, while other flocks grow up, perhaps, for several years, enjoying the plentiful pasture that the earth provides for them. Here is one nest of doves plundered by a hawk, and drenched in blood, while twenty of their neighbours breed up their young in all security. Here is a brood of young wild turkeys, hatched in a later or more unkindly season, crippled with the cold, and languishing out their lives under lingering infirmities, while others that were brought into life a month or two sooner, enjoy all the blessings suited to their nature, and continue in this enjoyment, perhaps for several years. What is this difference to be imputed to, but the will of providence?

A thousand such sort of accidents happen not only to birds and beasts, to fishes, and every kind of brute animals, but to men; and that not merely to the individuals of mankind, but sometimes to tribes, and families, and nations. Some are actually born under the power of tyrants, and they commence and finish their lives in tiresome slavery and bondage: Others exult for seventy years, in free, and rich, and plenteous circumstances, while their neighbours are distressed from their infancy with poverty and pain, and drag on life to old age under many calamities. Children of the same parents shall be oftentimes widely distinguished in the blessings or the sorrows of nature, by the mere providence of God, when, perhaps, they are equally virtuous, or, perhaps, equally wicked. Some are suffered to become blind, or to be born cripples in their limbs, and in their understanding too, while others of the same village, or the same house, perhaps, rejoice in the pleasures and the vigorous powers of mind and body. How comes it to pass, sir, that your genius is so bright and sparkling, while your neighbour *Hebetundo*, with all the expences of his education, could never construe an ode in *Horace*, and scarce understands his catechism? Whence is it, that some families are so poor in their intellectuals, and propagate sloth and dulness for half a dozen generations? And yet, perhaps, at last a hero, a philosopher, or a great divine shall arise amongst them, and surprize the world?

Tell me, *LOGISTO*, who makes the difference in all these instances? Will you say, it happens thus according to the course of things, and the succession of natural causes? But pray inform me, who set natural causes at work in this manner, which should produce such very distinguishing circumstances, and that too, perhaps, in persons whose moral character is the same? Or why is their infancy so much distinguished by blessings or sorrows, before their moral character properly commences? Whither shall

shall we run to seek the cause of these varieties, but to the will of the creator and disposer of all things?

Can you give me any account, sir, why the great God should appoint such particular human souls to be united to animal bodies, which are born among the rigours and stupidity of *Lapland*, or in the midst of *Africa* or *America*, where reason is buried under gross and heavy prejudices, and whole nations labour under so many wants and disadvantages, with relation to this world, and the other? How came your soul or mine, to be joined to bodies who drew their first breath in *Great-Britain*, who have ten thousand blessings, in the animal and the rational life, beyond those poor brown or negro savages, that come into the world under brutal parents, who breed them up with cruelty, and sell them for slaves? What is it, dear sir, that makes this distinction between us and them, but the sovereign disposal of God and providence, who, whatsoever reasons he may have in his eternal mind, yet gives no account to us of the reasons of his conduct? Can you, or I, sir, pretend to any claim of merit, that we should be born in such families where we enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education from our infancy, and the knowledge of things human and divine, while the inhabitants of the cottages of the *Peake*, in *Derbyshire*, were never taught to know letters, and are so grossly ignorant of the things of God and men? Who made the difference between us and the miners in *Cornwall*, who spend their days in darkness, and are ever conversant with earth and lead or tin, while we range the sciences with pleasure, and dwell in daylight, and amidst the delights of learning? To whom are our praises due on this account, but to our common maker and Lord?

If we were only to consider ourselves as men left to find out the way to happiness by our own reasoning powers, are not you and I, sir, placed in much superior advantages to the heathens in *Africa*, or even to the poor miners in *Cornwall*? And why may not the same God make as great a difference between his creatures, in bestowing the superior advantages of revelation on some, rather than on others, according to his own good pleasure? You yourself must grant, that God has not favoured all men with the same powers, means, or opportunities to obtain future happiness in the way of natural religion, why may he not then distinguish his favourites in point of revelation?

It is enough for us, *LOGISTO*, if we can but maintain this point, that God does not deal unjustly with any of his creatures: But it is evident, we must allow him to dispense his favours as he pleases; he is not bound to make us all equal in the blessings or the powers of soul or body, with regard to this life, or the life to come, though he has made us all men. And as he has confessedly bestowed on some persons much nobler inward advantages, in the sagacity of their reasoning powers, to find out the way to virtue and happiness, why may he not confer higher outward advantages on some, than he has on others? Why may he not give some of his creatures the light of revelation, to guide them to happiness, while he gives others only the light of reason? May not the great God, the possessor of all things in heaven and earth, do what he pleases with his own benefits? If he has given the blindest and most unhappy nations in the world all that is due to them by nature, in their circumstances, and a natural sufficiency for their happiness, he has done enough to secure his own providence from any just accusations. An *african* has no right to complain, that he was not born a *briton*; nor a porter that he was not born a prince; nor *SOPHRONIUS* and I, that we were not made prophets or apostles. If God has furnished all men with such natural powers, as, being improved in the best manner, would lead them to virtue, religion, and happiness, surely his creatures may give him leave to make so

much distinction between them, as to set some of them in a plainer and easier road to happiness than he has others : And it is shameful ingratitude for us, in christian countries, to complain of our bountiful creator, who has afforded us such peculiar favours, and made our way to heaven plainest of all.

LOG. I observe, PITHANDER, you keep close to this distinction of SOPHRONIUS, and talk of the natural powers of heathens in *Africa*, and their natural sufficiency to obtain happiness ; but I think they ought to have, and therefore I think they have, something more than this natural and remote sufficiency, to find out the way to heaven by their own reason. Is not sense and reason allowed by you all to have a proximate and practical sufficiency to guide men in the affairs of this life ? And surely one would think, reason should be a more sure and infallible guide in matters of religion, than sense is, or can be, in the affairs of this world. This shall stand for my third argument ; and I would enforce it thus : The difference of good and evil, and the natural obligations to virtue and piety, are as manifest to the mind as any of the objects of sense can be, and they have that certainty and demonstration, which the others are not capable of. Surely natural religion has been, and should be always counted as much within the reach of natural reason, as any business that man has to do, since it is the most necessary and most important of all.

PITH. Here, sir, your argument again runs directly counter to matter of fact, which has been examined, proved, and agreed between us. The differences of good and evil, and the obligations to virtue, are not so exceeding obvious to heathens as you imagine ; for though they may be proved by certain demonstrations, yet these demonstrations are, some of them at least, more deep and difficult ; and therefore the rules of virtue and piety are far from being so plain and manifest, as the objects of sense, or the common affairs of this present life : Besides, if they were, surely some of these wild savages, at least, would have actually attained the knowledge of them, since they do actually acquaint themselves with objects of sense sufficiently for their own poor and sorry manner of life here on earth ; but in the affairs of religion, and a life to come, they are all error and darkness. All their reasoning powers leave them utterly ignorant of true religion, be it never so necessary and important. And such ignorance reigned very much in polite nations too, except among a few philosophers, or men of a studious and thoughtful frame of mind, who could argue upon moral and intellectual subjects, and trace out a few demonstrations and certainties about them, which lie out of the road of *americans*, and almost out of the reach of these unthinking creatures.

LOG. But surely, without being philosophers, every one by employing his natural power of thinking, or his innate reason, in the best manner he was able, might and could not but see the reasonableness and obligation of piety and moral duties, *viz.* that he ought to worship his creator, to acknowledge and depend on him, and pray to him for a supply of his wants ; that he ought to submit to his providence, and be thankful for the benefits of it ; that he ought also to be obedient to governors for the good of society ; to be righteous, just, and charitable to man his fellow-creature, be willing to do him all the good he could, and abstain from all injury and violence ; that also he ought to use temperately the pleasures and enjoyments of life. There never needed any subtle reasoning to prove these plain duties which nature taught and commanded ; and the transgression of any of which is as repugnant to the plain evidence and dictates of natural reason, as it is to the revealed will of God.

PITH. It has been already granted, that if every one employed his natural reason in the best manner that he was able, there is a natural sufficiency in his reasoning powers



powers to find out these things, or at least the chief of them: But the insufficiency lies very much in this, that their prejudices and aversions, &c. are so great and numerous, that not one in ten thousand will employ his natural reason in the best manner, and this SOPHRONIUS calls a practical insufficiency. If it were so easy a matter to do it as you represent, how came so many millions of people to be ignorant of these things: or to receive notions about them so grossly and shamefully contrary to truth? How came whole nations, without one exception, to be so blind and stupid, so impious and immoral, and to continue so from age to age.

LOG. But here starts up a fourth difficulty, and it lies entirely upon you christians to solve it. Remember, my friend, whatsoever argument can be brought from the actual immorality, irreligion, and superstition of men, in any heathen state, to prove the insufficiency of reason in matters of religion, will conclude, with equal strength against the sufficiency of the scriptures, because men are as vicious, as irreligious, and as superstitious under the light and profession of christianity, as the worst of heathens.

Gross and abominable as the heathen superstitions were, yet they have been equalled and even exceeded by popish idolatry, which has prevailed for many hundred years over the christian world: As great lewdness has been committed among papists, as ever were known among the heathens, and that with impunity, and esteemed so venial as to be bought off with money. The bloody persecutions and massacres executed by the papists are far more cruel and inhuman, than the human sacrifices which the heathens offered to their gods: So that any crimes of the heathens against the light of reason, will not prove the insufficiency of reason to be their guide, unless you allow the same or greater crimes committed by christians will prove, that the gospel is insufficient.

PITH. This objection has been already answered: But to speak yet plainer on this head; it is granted, sir, that the vices of professing christians, the venial lewdness of papists, their idolatries, their bloody murders and massacres, are as bad or worse than the crimes of heathens, because they sin against much brighter light, and far greater advantages: But the greatness of the vices of popish or protestant christians cannot infer, that christianity is insufficient to guide, to reform, or save mankind; for it is not the greatness of the crimes, but the intire number or universality of the criminals, that represents reason to be so practically insufficient to save or reform the heathen world.

Now you must grant me, that men are not so utterly and universally irreligious, vile and vicious in christian countries, even in popish nations, where the gospel is so corrupted, and much less in protestant lands, where religion is learned and practised with freedom, as they are in the regions of heathenism. There are multitudes of knowing, and virtuous, and pious persons in christendom, and particularly in the *british* isles, which shews the practical sufficiency of the gospel to reform mankind; whereas in the more learned and more polite heathen countries, there have been exceeding few truly religious, and in the rude and barbarous regions, which have been the chief scene of our dispute, it will be hard to find one single virtuous and pious man or woman; and therefore, I say, that in a practical sense, reason may rather be called insufficient, though revelation cannot be called so.

LOG. Let us proceed then to a fifth argument why reason, methinks, should be practically sufficient to direct all mankind to those duties which God requires of them, and to conduct them to happiness; and that is, because happiness, that is, spiritual moral happiness, is the end for which man was made, and therefore it is certainly to be obtained by those rational moral powers, which are the very principles God gave  
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man for his guide and conduct to this happiness. Otherwise man was made for an end, to the obtaining of which, the means are insufficient.

PITH. I answer this two ways. First, it may be said in a sense, that God made mankind in general, in his first formation of them, for happiness; but he made them to obtain this happiness in a way of free choice, by the diligent use of their rational faculties in the best manner: Now if far the greatest part of the heathen world will wretchedly and wilfully abuse these faculties, if they will thoughtlessly and rashly chuse the evil, and rush into it, if they will neglect to seek, or to inquire, or to learn what is good, as well as to practise it, then though these faculties may be said to be naturally and remotely sufficient for religion and happiness, yet they are never likely to become effectual for these purposes to one in a thousand. When there is a long established habit and universal custom of neglecting or abusing their faculties spread through whole nations from age to age, these faculties may be called practically insufficient, without any charge upon the creator of man, or his original constitution of things.

I answer in the second place, that God did not create all mankind for happiness, in such a sense, as to design they should be actually happy. This is sufficiently evident by the event; for the greatest part of mankind are, and will be, sinful and miserable: Our daily experience and observation concur with our reason, to manifest this to us; and our saviour says, that few find the way to life.

Now may not the great and blessed God, the supreme Lord of all, and governor of the universe, have some very wise and unsearchable ends in not securing certain happiness to all his rational creation; that is, in leaving some of them wilfully to neglect their own happiness, and to chuse their own misery? May he not, consistently with his own perfections, suffer them, by their own folly and negligence, by their guilt and madness, to forfeit the light and strength of those faculties which were at first practically sufficient to guide and conduct them to happiness? Or to render them dark and feeble by an utter disuse, or an actual abuse, of them?

It is granted, that man in his original state had a proximate and practical sufficiency to obtain happiness by virtue and religion; yet since he is grown, some way or other, a very corrupt and degenerate creature, his reasoning powers are now hardly to be called a sufficient guide, or rule, or law, for his conduct to the original happiness for which he was made.

LOG. But what is there wanting to make a rule or law sufficient to the end of it's being a rule or law, but that it be plain, and clear, and easy to be understood, and enforced with sufficient sanction of rewards and punishments? Now reason always was and is such a law to mankind, even since any supposed degeneracy, as well as before.

PITH. Dear sir, have you already forgot the two accounts which SOPHRONIUS has given us of *african* and *american* savages, and their reasoning powers? Have you forgot the whole subject of our first day's conference? Can you bring these things back to your thoughts, and yet imagine, that these rules of religion and virtue, these sacred laws and sanctions, which you speak of, are plain, and clear, and easy to be found out and understood by such stupid and perverse animals, with all their wretched reasonings? Have they, within their view, any such ideas of these eternal obligations to duty, either to God or man, or of these awful sanctions of future punishments and rewards? Can these holy rules and sanctions be called plain, and clear, and easy to such creatures, among whom we can hardly suppose there is one in a whole nation, or a whole age, nay scarce one in many nations and many ages, who ever found

found out, or knew, or believed these rules and these sanctions? I beg you, sir, not to constrain me to repeat these things so often, by urging over again, what has been abundantly answered, even to your own conviction.

SOPHRO. Pray, PITHANDER, let me intreat you to guard your temper a little. Perhaps LOGISTO has read over these arguments in some modern pamphlets, since your first day's conference, and they being fresh in his thoughts, may have renewed his difficulties, and he is willing to have every obstacle entirely removed that lies in the way of his complete conviction of the truth, and his establishment in it.

LOG. SOPHRONIUS is much in the right. He has spoken the matter of fact, and the very sense of my heart. I proceed therefore to propose another difficulty, and I hope, PITHANDER, you will not call this a repetition of what has been answered before, since I borrow it from your own favourite writer *St. Paul*, whom I have never yet cited against you. Do you remember what he writes in the first chapter of his letter to the *romans*, that "the eternal power and godhead are known by the visible things of creation;" though he adds indeed, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but that they held the truth in unrighteousness;" that is, they did not hearken to the truths which their reason taught them, but unrighteously imprisoned or stifled those truths, and therefore they were without excuse: And did you never consider, what he says in his second chapter of that letter, verses 14, 15. "The gentiles who have not the law," that is, any written law, "do by nature the things contained in the law; these are a law to themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts excusing or accusing them?" What can be more evident and express than that this writer believes and declares, that the rules of duty which the gentiles owed to God and man, were implanted in their minds, and that when they transgressed either of them, they sinned against their knowledge, their own consciences accused them, and they were inexcusable? And yet that sometimes they obeyed some of these rules, and then their consciences excused them, or approved their actions.

PITH. If such a writer as *St. Paul* had told me, that human reason, in all the heathen world, was practically sufficient to guide them into true religion and happiness, and there were no facts to contradict it, I pay such a veneration to his writings, that I would readily drop the dispute, and give up the cause intirely: But I do not find *St. Paul* says any such thing, either here or any where else, nor can his words be construed to amount to such a proposition. And to make this plain, sir, be pleased to observe these three things:

First, that the persons he speaks of, in the first chapter, are chiefly the learned heathens, or at least the inhabitants of the countries where learning flourished, such as *Egypt, Greece, Asia, Rome, &c.* such as had found out and known the being and chief attributes of God by his works; such as knew the true God, and professed themselves to be wise; see verses 19, 20, 21, 22. But the apostle does not say, that their knowledge reached so far as to lead them to salvation, though by not worshipping and honouring God, so far as they knew him, they rendered themselves inexcusable. "Verses 20, 21. They did not glorify him as God when they knew him; they were not thankful for his mercies; they became idolaters, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into the image of corruptible man, and into birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and worshipped the creature more than the creator. Verses 23, 25. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and therefore they are without excuse. Verses 20, 21, 28. Their foolish heart was darkened;

kened, and they were justly abandoned of God, and given up to all manner of iniquity." They wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore God, in his righteous judgment, sealed up their eyes, and gave them up to a mind void of discernment, as many of our critics render the word *ἀδύκνιστος*, and thus their own reason, by their abuse of it, was rendered more insufficient than it was before; their minds had gained a strong bias toward error, as a natural consequence of their sin and folly, and then, as a righteous judgment from heaven, they were abandoned to follow those errors without any restraints of providence or grace.

In the second place let it be considered, that when the apostle says, *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* that the "work of the law is written in their hearts," he can never mean, that the knowledge of the laws of God and their duty practically sufficient for their future happiness, is actually found in the hearts of all the heathen world: For this is so contrary to plain fact in the barbarous nations, that the apostle could never intend to assert it. All that he can be supposed to mean therefore is this, that there is a natural and remote sufficiency in their hearts, or their reasoning powers, to find out their duty, which I have already granted; and that there are several of the more obvious and common instances wherein their consciences do actually know their duty, and excuse them when they practise it, or accuse them when they neglect it.

And this, in some measure, is true concerning the rudest and most ignorant nations of the earth, that there are particular instances of duty, and some particular rules of honesty, justice, and compassion, which their consciences sometimes may actually represent to them; and according to their compliance or non-compliance may approve or condemn them. But this is far from asserting, that every man and woman in the heathen world has the whole law of God actually written in their hearts, or an actual knowledge of all the truths and duties necessary to religion and happiness. The most rude and barbarous creatures in *America*, may sometimes be awakened by nature and conscience to do a few of the social duties of life, which are contained in the law, without supposing them to have found out all the necessities of true religion: And they may also resist the dictates of their reason and conscience, so far as to condemn them justly, without the least probability of one in a thousand following the leadings of reason and conscience, in the inquiry and practice of the true religion, so far as to save them.

And therefore it may be observed, that the apostle does not say, that any shall be saved without the written law; but that those who have sinned without it, shall perish without it: And though in some particular instances their consciences may excuse them as well as accuse them in others, yet in the whole of their practice he does not affirm their consciences will actually excuse any of them.

In the last place, I desire it to be considered, that the apostle could never suppose the brutish and barbarous part of the heathen world to have any proximate or practical sufficiency for religion and salvation, or such capacities and advantages as were ever likely to attain that end, when the characters which he gives, even of the more polite nations through which he travelled, are so exceeding dismal and desperate, so widely distant from the knowledge, fear, and love of the true God, and so universally abandoned to gross errors, idolatry, and shameful vices, that "they were without God, or atheists, and without hope in the world; *Eph. ii. 12.*" In the first chapter to the *romans*, which has been already cited, the wise men amongst them, "who knew God, did not like to retain God in their knowledge, their foolish heart was darkened, they were given over to a reprobate mind, they were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, &c. Backbiters, haters of God, inventors

inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful ;” 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. “ Their minds are blinded by the god of this world,” that is, the devil and his angels, whom many of them worshipped as their gods. And in *Eph.* iv. 18. “ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart ;” with many other expressions to the same purpose in his epistles.

Let it be observed here, that the people where this apostle preached, and to whom his letters are written, lie in *Greece*, or round about it, and were within the verge of that learning and politeness which from *Greece* diffused itself round the neighbour nations and countries. Now if these things are spoken concerning the more knowing nations, what most dismal characters of deeper darkness, despair and death would the apostle have given to the stupid *laplanders*, to the brutal creatures of *New-Holland*, in human shape, to the savages of the wild regions of *Africa* and *America*, had the course of his travels led him through their countries? Surely you can never suppose, that he would have pronounced their reason, under these ten-fold clouds of stupidity, prejudice, and error, ever likely to break through these obstacles, and to lead one in a thousand of them into the ways of truth, holiness, and eternal life? And this is what we call a practical insufficiency.

LOG. Really, sir, I think you have made it out beyond my expectations, that your good friend *Paul*, your apostle and oracle, was much of your opinion in this matter. I shall not cite him again in haste for a witness on my side. But I will ask leave to cite a great writer, whom you may call my oracle, if you please, so far as I pay deference to the authority of any man; and that is *Cicero*, whom I take to be a man of honour and virtue, and as bright a genius at least as *St. Paul* was, and much more improved in the learning of the philosophers; I cannot but fancy him to be one of the greatest men of all antiquity. For this reason I have two very good editions of his works by me, one of which I always keep in this summer-house, and another in my library. Let us therefore turn to some places of his writings, to which a late author has directed me, and see what he says of the universal power and sufficiency of reason to lead all mankind to their duty, to preserve them from sin, and to be, as it were, a divine law within them. See his third book *De Republica*, and that noble fragment there preserved by *Lactantius*. “ Est quidem vera lex recta naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo; vetando, a fraude deterreat. Nec vero aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus: Neque est quærendus explanator aut interpret ejus alius: Nec erit alia lex *Romæ*, alia *Athenis*, alia nunc, alia posthac: Sed & omnes gentes, & omni tempore una lex & sempiterna & immortalis continebit: Unusque erit communis quasi magister & imperator omnium Deus ille legis hujus inventor, lator, &c.” In his second book *De Legibus*, he says, “ Legem neque hominum ingeniis excogitatam, neque scitum aliquod esse populorum, sed æternum quiddam quod univèrsum mundum regat.” You see what a high esteem he has every where for this law of nature, written in the hearts of all men: He repeats it often; you find it again *Lib. iii. De Officiis* “ Ipsa naturæ ratio, quæ est lex divina & humana, cui parere qui velit nunquam committet ut alienum appetat, & id quod alteri detraxerit sibi assumat.” And in the third book of his *Tusculan questions*, he says, “ —Qui vero probari possit ut sibi mederi animus non possit? &c. qui se sanari voluerint, præceptisque sapientum paruerint, sine ulla dubitatione sanentur, &c.”

The sense of all these expressions may be summed up in this manner: "Right reason which is conformable to nature, is, that true law which is diffused or spread abroad among all men; it is constant, it is everlasting, it calls us to our duty by it's commands, it forbids us to practise iniquity, and deters us from it. Nor can we be freed from our obligations to this law by senate or people. Nor need we seek any other explainer or interpreter of it, it is so clear in itself. It is not one law at *Athens* and another at *Rome*, one now and another hereafter; but it is the same immortal and everlasting law that obliges all nations, and at all times. And there is one as it were the common master and ruler of all men, even that God who is the inventor and the maker of this law, &c. This natural reason is both a human and a divine law, which is not invented by the wit or fancy of men, is not the statute and decree of any particular nations; but something eternal, that does or should govern the whole world. He that obeys it will never be guilty of coveting his neighbour's goods, nor of assuming to himself that which he takes away from another, whether it be in point of honour, of property, or estate. And if the mind of man has at any time failed in it's duty, and suffered itself to be corrupted with vice, there is no doubt but it is able to heal and reform itself, since it is the mind that has found out the very medicines for healing the body: and those souls who are willing to be healed and reformed, and will obey the precepts of the wise men and philosophers, shall without doubt be reformed and healed; for philosophy, that is, the doctrine of reason, is the medicine of the mind." And no doubt this was the sense of most of the great men amongst the antients, as well as of *Cicero*, as would evidently appear, if we had time to search out and make citations from their writings.

PIET. Give me leave, sir, to make these two answers to what you have drawn from this great man of antiquity.

First, all that he says on the sufficiency of reason, will reach no farther than the concessions which have been already made, *viz.* That the power of reason in every man hath a natural and remote sufficiency to lead them to the most general notions and practices of duty both to God and man: "There are indeed," saith he, "in our minds some seeds of virtue, which, if we would let them grow up, would lead us by nature to blessedness. *Tusculan* questions book iii." And it is granted also, that this power has been drawn out into a more regular exercise by some happy geniusses in some nations than it has in others: Where persons of a thoughtful and philosophic spirit have risen up in the heathen world, they have employed their own reason to much better purposes than the rest of mankind; they have drawn out several of the laws of nature into view; they have communicated these to their countrymen; and the manners of the nation have been hereby more polished, and several more virtues practised.

Yet let it be observed, that *Cicero* in some parts of his writings, particularly in these *Tusculan* questions, book iii. does not make the light of nature practically self-sufficient for the bulk of mankind, even in learned nations. He grants indeed, that "If nature had so framed us that we could behold herself, and take a complete view of her, and that we were able to form our lives by her guidance, there would be no need of our learning philosophy: But now she has given us only very little sparks which we soon extinguish by our evil customs and depraved opinions, that the true light of nature does no where appear." And again—"As soon as we see the light we are immediately in the midst of all perverse sentiments and wickedness; so that we seem to have sucked in error almost with the milk of our nurse." This he says even of the *romans*. But as for the barbarous and unthinking herds of mankind in  
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other countries, alas! how little do some of them actually know even of this universal and eternal law? They do not awaken their thoughts at all, to inquire and search it out: It lies culpably and everlastingly dormant in the seeds of it in their hearts, and produces neither knowledge, virtue, nor piety. There is need of some better interpreter or explainer of this eternal law in these brutal and stupid creatures, than the mere working of their own reason; and there is need of some further powerful hints to be given their reason, in order to awaken and excite them to take any cognizance of it for the purposes of true virtue or religion.

And even these very polite nations of *Rome*, and *Athens*, and the schools of the philosophers themselves, have been greatly assisted from some traditions of divine revelation, and, perhaps, had their first and their best hints of religion derived to them from thence. Some of them have confessed, they wanted such help. Some have acknowledged, they borrowed it from those who lived nearer to the gods: And others stole their notions without confessing it. This has been traced out with great learning by some writers, such as *Stillingfleet*, *Gale*, *Edwards*, &c. And after all, the rules of religion and virtue, which were drawn up by these philosophers, have been very imperfect and defective in many instances, as *SOPHRONIUS* has shewn before: And at *Athens* and *Rome* they had very different opinions about the most important subjects of God, virtue, the chief good, &c. and they have had grievous quarrels and contests about many parts of their moral philosophy. Nor hath *Cicero*, nor *LOGISTO* yet proved, that the gross and ignorant nations, the barbarous and savage people of *Africa* and *America*, have any proximate and practical sufficiency to guide themselves into virtue, religion, and happiness, or that ever they would or could arrive at it, if left intirely to themselves.

Let it be observed here, that several of these nations have not so much as a priest, and there is scarce any such thing as a philosopher amongst them, or any one who pretends to teach either virtue or religion in the extent of a thousand miles: Whereas your own *Cicero* himself acknowledges, "that it is by hearkening to the precepts of philosophers, that the bulk of mankind must be reformed and healed." For he was not so weak and inaccurate in his observation of men, nor so complaisant to his whole species, as to imagine, that every low genius of human nature, and all the meaner ranks of mankind, who are ever busily engaged among the necessities, the labours, or the amusements of this life, should frame a scheme of religion and virtue for themselves, and spin out of their own reasoning powers a whole system of rules for their own conduct toward God and man, in things that relate to this life, and another. Now by *Cicero's* own account of matters, what shall those nations do to heal or reform themselves, who have not one of those wise men or philosophers among them?

Secondly, consider what sort of man *Cicero* himself was, and whether you can think him, with all his boasted reason, fitted and prepared for the favour of God in a heavenly state. I will allow him to have as much virtue as most of the philosophers, but he was guilty of one huge and glaring vice, and that is, a most exorbitant ambition, and excess of pride, which is hateful to man, provoking to God, and the very image of the devil: And yet this he indulged in a most shameless manner: His writings and his behaviour are full of self, and discover one of the proudest and vainest mortals that ever trod upon the earth. At present I will point to no other proof of it than his own letter to *Lucceius*, who was about to write the history of his own time: There you see him sacrificing even truth and honesty to the grand idol of his pride. "I beg you, says he to *Lucceius*, and I urge you over and over again, that you would

lay out your wit to dress up the year of my consulship; lavish out your ornaments upon it: Neglect the laws of history; do not consider so much to say what truth requires, as what will render that period and scene of my life shining and glorious. Is this your virtuous man, LOGISTO? Is this the man of honour, that would persuade his friend to convey falsehood and lyes down to posterity, merely to flatter his own ambition, and to procure him fame in following ages?

LOG. Indeed, PITHANDER, this is such a scandalous and shameless manner of exposing his own vanity, and building his honour on the ruins of truth, that I could scarce imagine that great and wise man would have suffered such a letter to go out from his hand. I fear, my friend, you have cited this in gross merely by your memory, and exaggerated some expressions to disgrace his character, and blaze abroad his frailty.

PITH. I own, sir, it is many years since I read this epistle, and I have cited only the general sense of it, according to the impression it made on my mind when I read it: But since you have his works here, let us turn to this famous letter. I think it is in his fifth book, among his letters to *Metellus* and others. See how he begins: "When I have been in your company, *Luceius*, I have felt a sort of rustic bashfulness to say those things which in your absence I will now declare with freedom; for a letter never blushes. I burn with an incredible desire of having my name adorned and celebrated by your writings:—Think whether it be not better to divide the history of the civil conspiracy, "that is, the conspiracy of *Catiline*, which was suppressed in *Cicero's* consulship," and relate it apart from the foreign wars: For when your whole soul is engaged in one argument, and fixed on one person, I plainly see how much more copious and ornamental all your writing will be. I am not ignorant what an impudent thing I am doing, when I urge you to adorn my actions: But he that hath once passed the limits of modesty, must become thoroughly and completely impudent." Then a little after follow the words I chiefly refer to, which are these: "Itaque te plane etiam atque etiam rogo, ut & ornes ea vehementius etiam quam fortasse sentis, & in eo leges historię negligas,—amorque nostro plusculum etiam quam concedit veritas largiare. I ask you plainly again and again, that you would beautify this transaction of mine with more ornament than, perhaps, you think it deserves, and therein neglect the laws of history, and bestow a little more of this your favour on me than truth will allow." You see, gentlemen, *Cicero's* own pen makes him as vain and shameless as my representation of him: And he spends above a page in folio on the same subject, and frequently urges his friend to write this immediately; "Ut & cæteri viventibus nobis ex libris tuis nos cognoscant, & nosmetipsi vivi gloriola nostra perfruamur: That the world may know me by your writings, and I may enjoy in my life-time the glory that belongs to me." What glaring pride and impudent falsehood sully the character of this heathen saint of yours, LOGISTO?

Again; let us see what his religion and piety were: He cannot find whether there was one God, or many: He talks often of the gods in the language of the *stoics*: as for the true parent or maker of the universe, as *SOPHRONIUS* has cited him, *Cicero* acknowledges, "it was hard to search him out, and when you have found him, he forbids you to teach the knowledge of him to the bulk of mankind." Is this the man that deserves the favour of the true God, who hardly knew him himself, and was resolved to conceal him from the world?

As for his own religion, he complied intirely with the polytheism and idolatry of the nation, and worshipped the multitude of their gods, that is, the stars, the devils, the departed heroes, or the chimera's which the city of *Rome* had adopted into the  
number



number of their deities. In many parts of his writings he vindicates the national ceremonies and idolatrous rites of worship, superstition, and auguration, as necessary to be observed; and I think it is in his second book of laws that he presses upon his countrymen a strict observance of all the religious rites established by authority, and declares all those worthy of the last punishment, who should attempt to disturb them, as some of the vindicators of human reason frankly allow concerning him. Pray, sir, what great influence had reason upon the heart and practice of such a man as this, who, when he could not believe the *roman* idols to be the true God who made or governs the world, yet uses his utmost influence to make the world worship them, that is, to make mankind idolaters, to set up rivals to the true God, and procure divine honours for them, without any public acknowledgment paid to the true God himself, the creator and Lord of the universe, and with an express prohibition of making him known?

LOG. If I would shew myself a fair disputant, and a searcher after truth, I know not well what defence to make for my darling author *Cicero*, unless you will permit me to say, that neither he, nor the rest of the antient sages, could imagine there was so much hurt in practising the religion of their native country, and in worshipping the gods of it, as the bible has taught both *jews* and christians to conceive: And that this vice of pride and ambition, of which PITHANDER brings such a heavy charge against *Cicero*, was so universal amongst all great men, that they counted it a piece of virtue and glory, rather than a crime.

PITH. But does not human reason, even your darling reason, teach you the same that the bible teaches the *jews* and christians? Is not polytheism and idolatry contrary to the nature of things, and to all the principles and rules of reason? Is not pride and self-sufficiency, and such an ambitious desire of fame, at the expence of honesty and truth, a very criminal thing in itself, and a high offence both against God and man? Was *Cicero's* own reason practically sufficient to be his guide in matters of religion and virtue, if it indulged him in such corrupt and abominable practices as these? Or if it did make any feeble remonstrances against them, his practice still shews how weak, and vain, and insignificant these remonstrances were; and this proves to us, on the other hand, the practical insufficiency of his reason to resist criminal inclinations, and enable him to oppose the idolatrous customs of his country. Thus it appears, that either his reason was insufficient to guide him right, or if it did whisper truth and duty to him, it was with so low a voice, as was very insufficient to make him obey.

LOG. Pray, SOPHRONIUS, let us have your sentiment upon this subject; for I am at a loss to find a solid reply, and I must be silent, unless I would run into cavilling?

SOPHRO. Dear sir, pardon me if I say, that I am as unable to refute PITHANDER's manner of arguing as you are; and I rejoice to see you so steady a friend to truth, as to yield to an argument. But I will take occasion, gentlemen, if you favour me with your permission, to make one remark upon this debate of yours, concerning *Cicero's* opinion and practice with regard to every man's compliance with the religion of his country. Several of the great men of antiquity, of whom *Cicero* was one, having lost the divine revelations of *Noah*, their ancestor, thought it necessary to introduce some doctrines and duties of pretended revelation, and particular ceremonies of worship, among their countrymen, in order to oblige the consciences and practices of men to virtue, and to restrain them from vice, by some guidance and authority superior to each man's own reason; because they were generally convinced, that reason,

son, as it is at present in the bulk of mankind, is very insufficient to be their guide to virtue, religion and happiness.

Give me leave upon this occasion to read to you a page out of an ingenious writer of the present age, wherein he cites your own favourite author *Cicero* more than once. It is in the 49 page of his book\*, where he is arguing against the same ill treatise which doctor *Waterland* opposes, written by some supposed infidel, and intitled "christianity as old as the creation." "The testimony of all ages, says he, teaches us, that reason, whatever force and strength it might have in particular men, yet never had credit or authority enough in the world to be received as a public and authentic rule, either of religious or civil life: This is allowed by all the great reasoners of the heathen world: And the experience of its insufficiency as a guide of life, is given by many of them as the very cause of the invention and establishment of religion," that is, "of some pretended revelation from heaven, and ceremonies of worship," that the authority of religion, as *Tully* takes notice, might restrain those whom reason had been found too weak to keep in order. The life of man, as *Plutarch* tells us from *Euripides*, was once like that of beasts, governed by force and violence; laws were then contrived to repel injustice; but when these proved still insufficient, religion was at last invented: By whose mysteries, as *Tully* observes, men from a savage life became formed and cultivated, as it were, to humanity.

"Such an universal consent must needs be owing to an universal conviction and experience of the insufficiency of reason, and seems to be the voice of nature disclaiming it as a guide in the case of religion: And thus our author's scheme, by the confession of all antiquity, and even by his own, must appear foolish and irrational, in attempting to set up that for a perfect rule of life, which from the nature of things never was or could be received as such in any age or country whatsoever.

"Should he then gain his end, and actually demolish christianity, what would be the consequence, what the fruit of his labours, but confusion and disorder; till some other traditional religion could be settled in its place; till we had agreed to recal either the gods of the old world, *Jupiter*, *Minerva*, *Venus*, &c. or with the idolaters of the new, to worship sun, moon, and stars, or instead of *Jesus* take *Mahomet* or *Confucius* for the author of our faith? And hence may be demonstrated, the immorality also of his scheme, even upon his own principles.

Now though I cannot think this writer has argued so effectually against doctor *Waterland*, in his remarks upon him, as to leave no just room for a defence of the scripture history of the fall and circumcision, &c. yet his sketch or plan of an answer to the author of "christianity as old as the creation," has some valuable thoughts in it, and worthy of the reader's best notice.

Log. Well, gentlemen, I will pursue this manner of debate no longer: I see my cause cannot be supported by it. I will immediately therefore betake myself to my last and strongest argument, to prove, that the natural and rational powers of man must have a greater sufficiency than this which you allow, to lead all mankind to religion and happiness; for I think the contrary doctrine bears very hard upon the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of the great and blessed God. I am at a loss to find how it is consistent with his justice and his benevolence to his creatures, to leave such millions of mankind, from age to age, under so poor a capacity to find out or to practise the way of pleasing their maker in this world, and yet to judge and condemn them in the other world for displeasing him.

PITH.

\* Remarks on doctor *Waterland*, &c.

PITH. I grant, LOGISTO, this is a point of argument which has great difficulties attending it, and therefore I propose that we adjourn the debate for one half hour, and if you please to give us your company, and lead us through the several walks and divisions of your beautiful garden we will there relax our thoughts for a season, and I hope we shall each of us resume the debate again with fresh spirits, and to our mutual satisfaction.

LOC. With all my heart, gentlemen, I attend you with the greatest readiness and delight.

## The FOURTH CONFERENCE.

**W**HILE LOGISTO was attending his two friends through the pleasures of his garden, he conveyed them to a very agreeable piece of elevated ground, whence they could survey the neighbouring fields and meadows covered with cattle of divers kinds. Some were grazing upon the natural bounties of providence; some rested at their ease; and others were sporting variously, with life and vigour, and joy, in the provisions that were made for the happiness suited to their natures. The birds sung their cheerful airs upon the bushes, being replenished with their proper food, or they exulted upon the wing with wanton pleasure, transporting themselves from bough to bough; and their little souls took in all the satisfaction of their natures, and their harmless life. Even the very creeping insects, as well as those that were made for flight, appeared joyful in their narrow dimensions: The worm, the emmet and the butterfly were pleased with their atoms or inches of being, and in their low rank of existence seemed to bear their witness to the beneficent hand that gave them every thing necessary to their support and delight. LOGISTO took notice of it, while they were taking their rounds, and at their return to the summer-house, he thus renewed the conference.

LOC. And can you think, PITHANDER, that every worthless creature in the universe, not only the beasts and the birds, but even the butterflies and the worms, have powers given them by their wise and bountiful creator sufficient for their happiness, during their little extent of existence; and shall not man, the lord of the lower world, man, the favourite of his maker, shall not man have sufficient powers conferred upon him, to lead and conduct him to his final happiness? Is it not inconsistent with the justice and equity of a God, and much more inconsistent with the goodness of so magnificent and so bountiful a being, to make creatures of an immortal duration, capable of intense happiness, and intense misery, through all that immortal existence, and not provide them with sufficient capacities in themselves to make that long state of existence happy? And yet what multitudes of them, according to your account, are brought into being, almost under a necessity of being miserable? Did these intellectual and wretched creatures ever once desire to exist? Was not their existence the mere effect of their maker's sovereign pleasure? And would the sovereign pleasure of a wise, a righteous, and merciful God, ever bring creatures into such an immortal existence, without sufficient powers to guide and conduct them to that felicity which is suited to their natures?

Nor

Nor is the mere remote, natural, and speculative sufficiency, which SOPHRONIUS has taught you, any sufficient answer to this difficulty. Could so wise, so righteous, and merciful a God bring millions of creatures into being with such a poor provision for their happiness, as not one in ten thousand should be likely to obtain it? This is so near a-kin to an absolute insufficiency, that this doctrine of yours seems to bear too hard upon the perfections of God. What! has the blessed God dealt harder with his creature man than with any of the meaner works of his hands?

PITH. No, sir, by no means: And if you could have known man in his original state of powers and blessings, furnished with a clear and sagacious mind, with reason bright and strong, and superior to all his lower appetites and passions, you would, doubtless, have acknowledged the transcendent advantages for elevated happiness, and the ~~rich~~ sufficiencies given to the creature man. You would have confessed, they were such as became a magnificent, a wise, and a bountiful creator to bestow upon his noblest piece of workmanship on this earthly globe. God hath not dealt worse with his creature man than with the rest; but man has dealt worse with his maker than any of them. He has not followed the laws of his nature, but broke his allegiance to his God, by chusing evil instead of good: He has ruined his original happy state; and, according to the constitution of things, his whole nature and race is tainted, so that he is become viler than the brutes that perish: He has forfeited his native blessings, and he, with his race, are become rebels, and obnoxious to their maker's displeasure.

This, as SOPHRONIUS hinted in the first of our conferences, has been the sense of the more thinking heathens, as well as *jews* and christians; and without an eye to some such sort of original degeneracy, it is hard, if not impossible, to give a satisfactory account for the poor, dark, stupid, and wretched circumstances in which so great a part of mankind, are brought into this world, wherein they live and grow up, age after age, in gross ignorance and vice, thoughtless of their duty to the God that created them, or their true happiness in the enjoyment of his favour.

LOG. But since I am not yet so far convinced, nor so complaisant as to confess this original degeneracy, and since it would lead us, perhaps, too far from our present point of debate, pray, my friend, try if you cannot say something else to clear the justice and the goodness of God from the imputation of dealing so hardly with his creature man.

PITH. I cannot waive this matter of some original degeneracy; for I think it is so necessary to the solution of the difficulties which attend this point, that it is not to be done without it: Yet it is not the only answer to them neither; I will see what may be said from other topics also; but I cannot promise you to avoid this.

LOG. Well then, let us suppose mankind to come into the world in any circumstances of degeneracy, yet still it is agreed, that each of them has an immortal soul, each of them is accountable to God for his own actions, each of them is rewardable for his services to God, and punishable for his neglects of duty, and for the indulgences of vice; therefore, surely, all mankind hath a right, by the common laws of equity, to be furnished with the knowledge of those things for which they are accountable, the difference of vice and virtue, and the duties they owe to God and to man: They have a right to be endued with a sufficient power to find out, and to practise them: And if this sufficiency of light and power be not planted in the reason and nature of men, they have a right to have it by divine revelation: Otherwise they would be excusable in their foulest vices, in their neglect of duties, and their  
practice

practice of all ungodliness, because they seem to be left under almost an unavoidable necessity of neglecting their duty, and of sinning against their maker.

PITH. In such a degenerate and sinful world of creatures as we are, who have so shamefully rebelled against him that made us, perhaps it is sufficient to vindicate the equity of God, if he has left in mankind such a natural and remote power or sufficiency to find out and practise their duty as SOPHRONIUS has allowed in his distinction; as for the ruder and wilder nations, this is certainly and evidently the case: By their brutal thoughtlessness, their obstinate prejudices from age to age, their vicious propensities, and their long contracted habits of wilful ignorance and impiety, these natural powers of reason are so disused and unpractised in matters of piety and virtue, that they will scarce ever be rightly exercised, or lead them into the path of religion and happiness. They have forfeited the proximate and practical sufficiency of their reason, and without the superior light of revelation, they can hardly be ever supposed to recover it.

LOC. Dear sir, I intreat you to consider, that however the great and righteous God might punish the first man by such a forfeiture, however such mere reliques of a natural and remote sufficiency be all that was afforded to the supposed first parent of our race himself, who sinned against God, yet can his children and posterity, for a hundred generations, be involved in this forfeiture? Though the equity of God may justify itself in confining *Adam* himself to such a limited and contracted capacity of attaining happiness after his sin, yet can the equity or goodness of God be justified in leaving his offspring in such hopeless and calamitous circumstances, with such a narrow pittance of reason and powers to find out their duty, to secure their own welfare, and obtain the felicity of their beings? What was the crime of these poor ignorant wretched infants, that could forfeit any part of the powers due to their natures? What have these millions of *african* and *american* souls done, that they should be born under so dark and dismal a climate, in the midst of such impious customs, such universal oblivion or neglect of God, such insuperable prejudices, and with such strong vicious propensities, that it is ten thousand to one, as you confess, if ever any of them come to the knowledge and favour of God, to the practice of true religion, and to the enjoyment of future felicity? Has the equity, or wisdom, or will of God acted fairly with all these miserable millions? Has divine and infinite goodness ever expressed itself toward them as becomes a creator, a father of his creatures, and a God of unbounded love? Or can his justice ever pronounce a sentence of condemnation, as a judge upon them, for sinning against such laws as they never knew, nor had a practical and proximate capacity to find out?

PITH. Pray, good LOGISTO, calm your spirit, and rebate your fire: Be not so vehement and pathetic in your oratory for the sinful race of sinful man: Take heed that while you act the zealous advocate for rebel creatures, you do not repeat the crime, and the danger of which I took the freedom to warn you before: Have a care of running furiously upon an accusation of the all-wise and righteous creator. If you give me leave, sir, I will endeavour to soften and relieve the terror of this objection, by laying before you several weighty considerations.

But before I begin them, I must remind you, that while you argue from the justice and goodness of God, that there ought to be such a proximate and practical sufficiency in all mankind, to obtain the favour of God in a way of religion, you argue against plain matter of fact again, and which you yourself have allowed; and that more than once, in this afternoon's conference.

Forgive me therefore, dear sir, if I am constrained to repeat again to you, that plain fact is an unchangeable and obstinate thing, and will not bend to any of our arguments, though derived from the divinest topic. All our notions of the immense goodness and eternal equity and justice of God, and our strongest inferences from them, can never prove any thing contrary to plain fact, nor demonstrate that not to be the case, which really and actually is the case. And I am sure the argument is much stronger and more convincing when turned into this form, *viz.* This is the sad case of the *african* and *american* savages, and yet God is just and good; therefore it is certainly consistent with divine equity and goodness: This argument, I say, is much stronger than for you to tell me, it is not agreeable to your notions of divine equity and goodness, that this should be their case, and therefore, in opposition to plain fact, you infer, this is not their case.

Are you so sure that your scanty notions and your fallible reasonings on the equity and goodness of a God are exactly true, as you are sure that these savage nations are unfit for heaven, and are far from any probable way of attaining it? Are those sublime and incomprehensible perfections of the deity, so easy to be judged of in their natures? And are you so certain of the inferences you draw from them, that these inferences of your's must regulate the divine conduct? Are all these things so plainly evident to you, and all within your compass, and grasp, and determination, as much as this plain matter of fact, that these *african* and *american* herds of mankind with all their reasoning powers, are not practically sufficient to guide themselves to future happiness? Can you be so certain that God's justice and goodness must oblige him to give all men on earth such rational powers as shall be practically sufficient for their guidance, and conduct in religion, as you are certain that there are on earth thousands and ten thousands of human creatures, who to all appearance, are never likely to know, and worship, and love their maker, and be fitted for his enjoyment by the mere powers of their own wild and untaught reason?

Be content therefore, good LOGISTO, not to argue any longer even from these divine topics against certain matter of fact, nor assume so much to your reason, as to teach God what he ought to have done: But I intreat you, sir, to turn your argument into a juster channel. Let these your ideas of divine justice and goodness, and the conduct of God, which you think must result from them, be only proposed as difficulties on this subject which want an answer, and which to you appear knotty questions: But let what is matter of fact rest and abide so, for no reasonings can alter it; and let the blessed God be allowed to be just and good still.

LOG. I confess, PITHANDER, this is a more modest way of talking, and becomes such poor and narrow understandings as our's are, when we dispute about the perfections of the great and blessed God, and his government and conduct toward his creatures: I consent therefore, and would now only propose all that I have before pronounced, perhaps with too bold an air, merely as difficulties and darkneses in divine conduct, which want some further light and skill to solve them.

PITH. Well, sir, since you are brought thus far to acknowledge, that God is just and good, and yet that multitudes of human race have not a practical sufficiency to lead them to happiness, be pleased to consider now, who are the persons upon whom it lies to solve these difficulties, to reconcile these two jarring propositions, and to shed light upon these darkneses of providence. Does it lie upon christians only, and the believers of the gospel? Doth it not fall upon the deists also? Is it not as much your business therefore, as it is mine, to relieve these hardships? Do you not believe as well as we, that God is wise, and good and righteous? And are you not convinced, that

that whole nations live under such unhappy circumstances, that their own reason is not practically sufficient to guide and conduct them into true religion and happiness? Do you not own, as well as I, that this is the present constitution of things? And doth not your accusation of this conduct of providence fall as heavy upon the God of the deists, as upon the God of the christians?

Pray, bethink yourself a little, sir, why must christianity have the blame of all these hardships thrown upon it, as though it was that which brought so many stumbling-blocks and darkneses into the scheme of God's government? Are not you, who believe and reverence, and adore the wisdom, and justice, and goodness of God, as much bound to vindicate these perfections of the divine nature from any appearing difficulties and accusations of the conduct of providence, as we are, since you are convinced, that these difficulties are found in providence? Pray, sir, deal fairly with christianity, and let it not always bear such unjust criminations and reproaches. Let the religion of the deists try to solve and clear up all these difficulties, which now appear to lie upon their scheme as well as our's.

LOG. You surprize me, PITHANDER, with this short turn upon me. I had not the least suspicion that you would lay the labouring oar upon me, to shove away the burthen that I always thought belonged only to your scheme, and pressed so hard upon it. But what shall I say to this? let me think a little. A philosopher urged to vindicate the conduct of the divine being toward the *americans* and *bottentots!* Surely the conduct of God should be vindicated by all those who acknowledge his being, so far as they are able to do it. The case appears plain, and upon consideration, I own what you say seems just and right: The difficulty lies upon us infidels, as much as it doth upon you believers: And I confess I cannot remove nor relieve it: If you can do it therefore, you will give me a further turn of thought in favour of the christian scheme.

PITH. I will not pretend, sir, to give a full solution of all the dark appearances and difficulties which attend the providence of God, in many parts of his conduct, relating to this world or another. But I will endeavour to set before you several considerations or suppositions, which will go a great way, at least, toward relieving the hardships which attend this part of God's conduct toward the heathens, in that so great a number of them are born, and grow up, and live and die under such unhappy circumstances, as that their reasoning powers are not in a practical sense sufficient to guide and carry them to religion and happiness.

Now, sir, if I can but propose an hypothesis or a rational and probable scheme of suppositions, drawn chiefly from the christian doctrine and the bible, whereby these difficulties and hardships may be softened and relieved, I think you ought to esteem it a sufficient answer to the objection, as you are a philosopher: But as I profess myself a christian, so I profess to believe most of these suppositions to be real truths, and therefore I call them a scheme of actual considerations, which relieve this difficulty, and not merely an hypothesis.

LOG. I long to hear these suppositions or considerations, call them what you please, set forth at large, and in their full strength and weight; for I must acknowledge, since these our conferences, I find myself something disposed to hearken to them.

PITH. First then, let it be supposed, and I persuade myself you will readily assent to it, that when God made mankind at first, he gave them the knowledge of himself and of his will, so far as concerned their duty to him and to their fellow-creatures: he furnished them with such principles and powers of reasoning and free choice, as were abundantly sufficient for them to find out and practise what he required of them, in

order to their continuance in his favour : And it is probable also, that he gave them encouragement to expect the rewards of piety and virtue, in some future and happier state.

But let it be supposed also, that he put them upon a state of trial by their own free choice, that they might inquire out and practise all their particular and daily duties, that they might chuse what was good, and refuse what was evil : whence it comes to pass, that though they were created in a state of innocence and virtue, and had powers, given them richly sufficient to maintain it, yet they were capable of abusing these powers, of neglecting their duty, and of sinning against their maker.

Secondly, it is but reasonable also to suppose, that he gave them sufficient notice, or taught their reason to inform them, that if they rebelled against him, by neglecting their duty, or practising what was sinful, they should be exposed to his severe displeasure, that they should be liable to what pains and sorrows the wisdom and justice of their maker and governor thought proper to inflict, as well as incur a forfeiture of such blessings and privileges, both corporal and intellectual, as he had bountifully bestowed upon them.

And among these pains and penal sorrows, it is not at all improbable to suppose, that their kind and beneficent maker let them know, that if they indulged their appetites and passions in sensuality and vice, in excess and intemperance, if they were carried away by the temptations of flesh or sense, to eat of such meats as they knew to be hurtful in their nature, or forbidden by their maker, this would introduce diseases and pains into their animal nature, and expose their bodies to sickness and death, as well as their minds to the anguish of conscience, and the bitter reflexions that would arise from their own abused powers and blessings.

Thirdly, it may also be very reasonably supposed, that God let his first human creatures know, either in some express manner, or by the sagacious dictates of their own reason, that they were to propagate their kind in their own likeness : And that if they continued in a holy and a happy state, their offspring should also be propagated holy and happy. But, on the other hand, if they abused their natural powers, if they lost the favour of their maker by sinning against him, and incurred his displeasure, if they forfeited the sensual and intellectual blessings they enjoyed, if they impaired their animal or their rational powers by a criminal abuse of them, and brought folly and misery, sickness and pain, diseases and death, into their natures ; it is probable, I say, that God gave them some evident intimations, that they should bring forth their offspring under these degenerate, enfeebled, and unhappy circumstances, according to the law and constitution of their natures.

And we may well suppose, that such a constitution of things, and such notice of it given to the first parents of mankind, would be a much more effectual motive to them to continue in the practice of religion and virtue, and a more powerful guard against their indulgence of sin, than if merely their own single happiness or misery were to have been the consequence or effects of it.

Fourthly, let us further suppose, what is sufficiently evident to our daily observation and experience, that all mankind are now a degenerate, feeble, and unhappy race of beings, that we are become sinners in the sight of God, and exposed to his anger : It is manifest enough, that this whole world is a fallen, sinful, and rebellious province of God's dominion, and under the actual displeasure of it's righteous creator and governor. The overspreading deluge of folly and error, iniquity and misery, that covers the face of the earth, gives abundant ground for such a supposition. The experience of every man on earth affords a strong and melancholy proof, that our reasoning powers are easily led away into mistake and falsehood, wretchedly bribed and biased by prejudices, and daily over-powered by some corrupt appetites



or passions, and our wills led astray to chuse evil instead of good. The best of us sometimes break the laws of our maker, by contradicting the rules of piety and virtue which our own reason and consciences suggest to us. There is none righteous perfectly; no, not one. Nor is there one person upon earth free from troubles and difficulties, and pains and sorrows, such as testify some resentments of our maker.

Even from our infancy, our diseases, pains, and sorrows begin, and it is very remarkably evident in some families, that these pains and diseases, the gout, the foul disease, frenzy, &c. are propagated to the offspring, as they were sometimes contracted by the vices of the parents; and particular vicious inclinations, as well as particular distempers, are conveyed from parents to children sometimes through several generations. The best of us are not free from irregular propensities and passions even in the younger parts of life, and as our years advance, our sins break out, and continue more or less through all our lives. Our whole race then are plainly degenerate, sinful, and guilty before God, and under some tokens of his anger.

Though I own that I borrow this set of thoughts from the bible, as well as from reason and observation, yet I would say as little as possible to awaken your opposition; and therefore I say not now, whether God made one pair of human creatures, or more; I do not here determine, whether mankind sinned at once and fell from God, and their duty, and their happiness, in one single family, or in one generation; or whether it came by a more slow and gradual degeneracy, by increasing habits of vice, by the evil influence of vicious examples, or by a complicated consent of multitudes, rebelling against their maker. In my present discourse, as far as possible, I would avoid every thing that might give you any uneasiness; and therefore I confine myself here to suppose only those things which may be very probably supposed by the exercise of our reasoning powers, upon the past and present condition of mankind throughout the world.

You know, LOGISTO, that I take it for granted, according to our scripture, that God made but one pair of first parents, *Adam* and *Eve*, and that they having broken the law of their God, have exposed themselves and their posterity to such a forfeiture of their privileges, to such a disorder in their rational and animal powers, to disease and sorrow, misery, and death. But I propose to you nothing else at present but an hypothesis.

Fifthly, suppose that our good and gracious God, in compassion to this sinful and miserable race of creatures, has continued to them many of the forfeited comforts of this life, has maintained their animal nature in some degrees of ease, and health, and vigour, and given them sun and rain, and food and gladness, that they might trace out the goodness of their maker: Suppose he has also preserved their reasoning powers in such a measure of strength, as that they have a natural ability to search out the knowledge of their maker, and the most important rules of their duty to him, and to their fellow-creatures, though with much more pains and difficulty, and uncertainty, than in their primitive state. Suppose also, that they are not only able to find out the main original points of religion and virtue, which God requires of an innocent creature, by the due exercise of their reason, but that their reasoning powers are also naturally sufficient to inform them what an offending creature must do, in order to obtain any hopes of pardon and acceptance with an offended God, that is, that they must practise hearty repentance for past sins, prayer for divine forgiveness, and watchful endeavours to fulfil all duty, and avoid every sin for time to come.

I suppose therefore, that though mankind, according to the constitution and law of the propagation of their natures, is brought into the world under unhappy circumstances,

cumstances, with prejudices against truth and goodness, and propensities to evil, yet there is in the nature of man still, such a principle of reason and conscience remaining, as now and then gives him secret hints and intimations of the differences of good and evil, and the different consequences of them: And that if all these hints were duly attended to, and rightly pursued, they would lead him to true repentance, and give him encouraging hopes of acceptance in the sight of God. And this rational principle, I have granted, is found in some considerable degrees among the more learned and polite nations; nor are the most rude and unpolished tribes of mankind utterly destitute of it: And perhaps this is full as much as can be any way claimed, by a degenerate and sinful race of creatures at the hands of an offended creator and righteous governor. But I proceed,

Sixthly, let us suppose farther, in order to vindicate the justice and goodness of God in his conduct toward mankind, that he has made some particular and express revelation and discovery of his own laws, and his intended grace and mercy towards man, in his degenerate state; and that this discovery of duty and grace has been made to all mankind, that is, to all who are the parents and progenitors of the present race of mortals; and that it was committed to them for the use of themselves and their offspring. Suppose that God had, in some express manner, taught them what they should do, as men, to please him, and as sinners, to remove his anger, and to become afresh interested in his love, and to obtain happiness in a way of religion. And suppose after this, that mankind, or at least the greatest part of them, should have neglected to practise these rules of religion, or at least the greatest part of them, should have neglected to practise these rules of religion, or to transmit them to their offspring, is the wisdom and goodness of God bound to be perpetually renewing his discoveries of grace and mercy to every age? Is it not sufficiently manifest, in the nature of things, that parents should provide for their children's safety? Has not God wrought it in some measure, into the very constitution of men, that they should take care of the welfare and happiness of their offspring? What is that natural and almost universal tenderness that is found in parents towards their children? Is it not a dictate of the God of nature to them, that they might take care of the true happiness of those whom they bring into the world, and that in their relations to God, as well as their relations to this world?

And has not the great and blessed God done all that justice or equity could require for such a sinful and rebellious race of creatures, if he has taught one generation the way to recover his favour and happiness, and has wrought this principle not only into the powers of their reason, but even into their animal natures, that parents should take care of the welfare of their offspring, and should teach them the rules of duty and felicity?

Seventhly, suppose again, that notwithstanding all this care and goodness of the blessed God in revealing his laws, and his grace, that mankind by degrees have corrupted themselves again, and run into such an universal practice of impiety and vice, that God has manifested his indignation against their sins, and their neglect of religion, by an universal destruction of their whole race, excepting a few families.

Suppose he has taught religion afresh to these few families who were saved from the universal punishment and desolation, and impressed a deep sense of his justice, and of the evil of sin, upon their minds, by this spreading ruin of their fellow-creatures: Suppose he has given further assurances of his grace and goodness, that if they repent, and do his will, and trust in his mercy, according to the methods he prescribed, they should be saved: yet after all, in some successive generations, the greatest part of them corrupt themselves again, and grow rebels against their maker: What shall be said in a way of vindication or apology for such a race of criminals, who

who are neither to be kept in their duty by examples of vengeance, or discoveries of grace? What is there can reasonably be alleged by way of accusation against the justice and goodness of the great God, if he leave them to perish in their wilful ignorance and rebellion?

While I have been representing this matter, LOGISTO, while I have been shewing the repeated discoveries of grace and duty made to all mankind, I know you are so well acquainted with the bible, that your thoughts must needs run upon the grace manifested to *Adam* and *Eve* after their first sin, when God taught them sacrifices, and, without doubt, promised them pardon and peace, and gave intimations of a favour and salvation, in much plainer language, and greater variety, than the short history of *Moses* can be supposed to contain in a page or two in the book of *Genesis*: And I doubt not but when I speak of some universal vengeance destroying sinful man, and of a second revelation of grace made to all mankind, who were saved out of the general destruction of the world, you readily apprehend the four couple of persons saved out of the general deluge in the ark, that is, *Noah*, with his three sons, and all their wives: And yet, even after all these instances of vengeance and grace, mankind grew most abominably ignorant, corrupt, and profligate, vicious, and profane, in most of the families of the world.

Now is the blessed God bound in every age of mankind to renew the discoveries of his mercy and their duty, of the true religion, and the way of salvation, and that to every family when it is evident that he had twice made such discoveries to all mankind in the family of *Adam*, and in that of *Noah*, who were the two progenitors of all human nature, in different ages? And especially, since we believe, God had both inclined and commanded the heads of these families, *Adam* and *Noah*, to instruct their children in these most important concerns, and since he had so wrought into the constitution of every parent a natural tender concern for the welfare of all their offspring, to influence them to communicate these instructions. Has not God, the wise and the merciful, done all that justice can require, toward the propagation of the superadded light of grace through all the world, besides the common light of reason which is continued to them, and which in itself is naturally and remotely sufficient to lead them to religion and happiness?

Give me leave, sir, to state this case in two similitudes, and see whether the equity and goodness of God, the creator and governor of the world, may not be thereby sufficiently vindicated in his conduct towards mankind.

The first similitude is this: Suppose a sovereign prince has found the inhabitants of some city of his dominion breaking the general laws of his kingdom, and rebelling against him, and on that account, they are banished from that city, and from the king's presence, into a distant province, where they continue in their rebellion: their posterity are born under this banishment, and yet still rebel, and break the laws of their prince, and by degree forget these laws, and lose the knowledge of their duty.

Suppose at any time the king publishes an act of grace, wherein he reveals their general duty to them afresh, and further declares to them, that whosoever of this race of rebels will repent of their crimes, will ask forgiveness upon their knees, will renew their oath of allegiance, obey his will, and trust in his mercy, shall be restored to their city, and to the king's presence and favour.

The king having appointed this method of grace, and published it to all the rebels, he justly expects, that that generation and their posterity should carefully transmit the knowledge of their duty to their offspring, and that all should conform themselves both to his general laws, and to the appointed methods in this act of grace, till he himself shall alter it: And whatsoever new or further methods this absolute sovereign shall

shall appoint to them hereafter, for the obtaining his favour, all that hear of it, both they and their children, are bound to comply with it, if ever they would find favour at court.

The king doth not think himself obliged every year, nor every age to give the rising generation a new and immediate promulgation of his general laws, nor of this act of grace, nor to repeat to them over again the testimony and proofs of it's royalty and authority. Yet the children being rebels still, may be still justly continued in their banishment, for their own and their parents rebellion, if they do not comply with the appointed method in the act of grace which was published in their great grandfather's days.

Is it not a common case among mankind, that when any king makes a law with a penalty, and publishes it once through his whole nation, he doth not think himself bound to publish this anew, as often as new subjects are born in his dominions? And yet not only all the present subjects, but their posterity also, who break this law, are, in the common sense of mankind, liable to the penalty, because it is supposed, that nature obliges men to communicate such necessary knowledge to their own offspring. Much less would any king who freely published an act of grace to rebels, think himself obliged in justice to repeat the publication of this act to every new generation of rebels who should arise, and continue in the known and wilful rebellion of their fathers; for since he was not obliged to make any such act of grace at first, he can never be obliged to repeat the proclamation of it.

But let it be supposed yet further, that the king of the country should hear of the continued rebellion of those subjects, and that they had persisted in the violation of his laws, and despised and rejected, forgotten and lost the proclamations of his grace; and suppose he should send his army to destroy all that race of rebels, except a few families, in order to manifest his just indignation against their crimes, and thereby awaken those that were left, to a more awful sense of the majesty and justice of their king, and of their own duties to him: Yet further, we will suppose he should send another proclamation of mercy to these few families that he had spared out of the general slaughter, with some plainer discoveries of his royal goodness in it, and repeat afresh to them what duties they should perform, in order to partake of this mercy: Now if after all this discovery both of his justice and his grace, this race of rebels in two or three generations, should so abandon themselves to all manner of disobedience, should despise this new proclamation of mercy, and giving themselves up to riot and folly, should lose the knowledge of the laws, and grace of their sovereign; what possible apology could be made for this wretched race of rebels, why they should not be continued in their banishment, and under the displeasure of their king?

The rebellious children of these rebel subjects may complain indeed, that they were never told, nor did they know the general laws of the kingdom, nor were they acquainted with the particular acts of grace, and these special appointed methods of obtaining pardon and favour.

But if the general laws of the kingdom were so far agreeable to the laws of reason and nature, that if they would but seriously consider with themselves, and set their reason at work in good earnest, they might find out not only these general laws, but so much also of the particular methods of grace, as to get some hope of pardon and acceptance, if they sincerely practised them; then, I say, these children are highly criminal for not applying their rational powers to the work, and for not seeking out and practising all that was within the verge and compass of their natural powers, in  
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in order to be restored to the favour of the king. And such criminal creatures justly continue under the displeasure of their sovereign.

It is granted indeed, that the parents who rebelled against the king, and brought up their offspring to rebellion and misery, who run counter to that compassion which nature gave them for their offspring, and by continuing in their rebellion lost the knowledge of the laws, and the grace of their king themselves, and never taught them to their children, are much more culpable than the children, who never actually knew them: Yet the children are far from being innocent, since their natural powers, if they awakened them to a right and careful exercise, might lead them to so much knowledge of the laws, and methods of grace of their sovereign, as, if sincerely practised, they might hope to find mercy with him. The king may be wise, and just, and gracious still, and yet the race of rebels may be in such circumstances, that not one in a thousand are ever likely to be restored to his favour.

Take the thing in a little different view, under another similitude: Suppose any particular family upon earth had some painful and mortal disease hereditary to the house, derived from the vices of their parents, and more rooted in their constitution by their own personal vices; and suppose the blessed God had communicated a divine receipt or medicine to their whole family, which would relieve and heal every one that made use of it; is God obliged, by a miracle, or by inspiration, to restore the precious secret to this family, when they have lost it by their own guilty negligence? When the parents took no care to preserve the remedy, nor the children ever inquired for a cure? Or when they wandered after the most vain and most irrational pretences, and the most ridiculous experiments to heal themselves? Is it unjust for God to let them die under their disease? Do they not deserve to perish under their own distemper and folly?

Suppose yet further, that the wise and righteous God should, in the course of his providence, suffer this disease to spread itself, and rage with mortal fury in some single generation, so as to destroy the whole race, except seven or eight persons. Now by such a dreadful spectacle of death and desolation, these persons must have a very terrible sense of this mortal distemper impressed upon their minds: And suppose God should again discover to this surviving family the noble medicine whereby they might be healed of this distemper: Suppose this family should publish the terrors of the late universal destruction, together with the precious remedy, to the following generations, as *Noah* published the history of the flood, and the laws and grace of God; yet if all this be despised and neglected by their posterity, and the late desolation, as well as the new notice of the medicine, be banished from all their thoughts, and forgotten in a few ages, what can be said in excuse for them, or what accusation can be brought against the wisdom, justice, or goodness of God, if they are suffered to go on and die.

The crime is yet more inexcusable, and the justice and goodness of God yet more defensible, if we suppose some chief ingredients of this sovereign medicine, which make a great part of the composition, to be in some sense within the natural reach of their own faculties to find out, and within the native power of their hands to acquire and compose; so far at least as would greatly relieve the distemper, and give them comfortable hopes of healing, if they searched it out, and used it. But if these wretched creatures under a mortal disease will never exercise their thoughts about a cure, will never employ their reason carefully and diligently to search and find out the proper ingredients, nor use their hands to attempt the composition, but will trifle away all their time in riot and sensuality, in dancing and singing, regardless of their own lives,

what reasonable charge or censure can be brought against the great governor of the world, for permitting them to go on to death in their own madness?

This is the case of mankind among the savage nations of the earth, who were all derived from *Adam* and *Noah*, their fathers, to whom the laws of God, and the methods of grace and salvation were communicated by God himself, and who took care to inform their immediate posterity, what the world suffered by disobedience to God, at the fall and the flood, and took care also to teach them those truths and duties by the belief and practice of which they might be saved. It is probable, that some of these families did retain true religion for several ages: But in a few ages, others despised and lost the truths and duties of true religion: every generation grew worse than their fathers; and now whole nations, without one exception, are led away by prejudices and sensuality into endless follies, errors, and impieties, without any care or effort of mind to recover the knowledge of the laws of their maker, or the methods of his grace.

A due survey of this last consideration will most effectually refute that wild and unreasonable charge against our doctrine, "as if the great God left all the world, except the *jews*, for four thousand years together, destitute of sufficient means to do their duty, and to obtain his favour;" which is as false as I believe the book of *Genesis* is true, and has not so much as a colour of argument to support it.

But before I leave this head of the shameful degeneracy, and gross apostasy of the heathen world, I cannot but take notice of one very remarkable aggravation of the crime both of parents and children, and that is, that though several of these nations in a few ages lost and abandoned the worship of the true God, the knowledge of his laws, and the discoveries of his grace, though the parents took no care to communicate them to their children, nor the children to retain any notices of them; yet these very nations are most obstinately tenacious of the idolatry and impious ceremonies, the savage and the vicious customs and practices of their ancestors; and their parents are as careful to teach them, and to breed them up in these iniquities and errors. If you ask the wild *americans*, the *laplanders*, the *bottentots*, the reason of their ridiculous opinions and practices, their universal answer is, that "it is the custom of their nation, and their fathers and their grandfathers, for many ages, have believed and done so before them." This, in their esteem, is a sacred and sufficient reason for their immovable perseverance in their own nonsense and madness: So impiously fond have they been of the tradition of their ancestors, in their profane and vicious customs, while they so soon and so easily parted with the rules of virtue and religion, and the promises and hopes of grace and salvation, which their ancestors taught them. And thus the very same humour and practice which has had so strong and fatal an influence to maintain and propagate superstition, impiety, and vice among them, is a heinous aggravation of their crime in losing the rules of virtue, religion, and happiness, since the same reverence for their early ancestors, the same temper and practice would have preserved the truths, duties, and rules of virtue and religion.

It is time now to proceed to the next consideration, in order to vindicate the justice and goodness of God in the present constitution of things.

In the eighth place therefore, suppose that none of the race of mankind, whatsoever advantages or disadvantages they lie under, shall ever be condemned in the other world for the neglect of any duties, but what their own reason was in a practical and proximate sense sufficient to find out: Now there are a sufficient number of these neglects to bring condemnation upon every part of the heathen world, whether learned

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or barbarous. Suppose that no creature shall be punished hereafter for any sin but what was some way or other committed against his own light or conscience, or for a plain wilful neglect of seeking further knowledge of truth and duty, by such means as were plainly and practically within their reach: Suppose that the great judge at last shall pass a sentence of death upon no soul but who shall be made to recollect his own guilty conduct, either by opposing the dictates of his conscience, by stifling convictions of sin or duty, by suppressing some inward principles or tendencies towards truth or virtue, or at least by a wilful neglect to pursue such hints of knowledge as have been given him in the course of providence, or by the good Spirit of God: Will not this thought fairly relieve the objection, and vindicate the honour of the divine perfections?

It is the character of the heathens, *Rom. i. 18, 23, 28.* "That they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, that they held the truth in unrighteousness; they stilled the dictates of their own minds; and when they knew God, they would not glorify him as God." Even the wise men of the nations, who were acquainted with the true God, wilfully complied with national idolatries, to the scandal of their own reason, and the great provocation of their maker, so that he gave them up to judicial blindness, for their own vile abuse of the light of their reason and consciences. Is not the great governor of the universe to be justified in this conduct?

The design of the day of judgment is to justify or condemn men according to their works, and to make the equity of the great God, as governor of the world, appear in that sentence of justification or condemnation: and therefore I am inclined to believe, that no person in that day, shall fall under the condemning sentence of the judge, but who shall also be judged and condemned by his own awakened conscience, for those very things upon which his condemnation proceeds from the lips of the judge. Every mouth will be stopped by such a procedure as this, and all the heathen world who shall be condemned in that day, shall be made to recollect their own resistance of conscience, and their wilful neglects, and by the light of their own reason shall confess the justice of the sentence, and the equity of him that condemns.

Though it has been sufficiently proved, that the barbarous and savage nations of the earth have not a proximate and practical sufficiency in their reasoning powers to find out the necessary truths and duties of religion, in order to obtain happiness, yet perhaps every single creature amongst them had a practical and proximate sufficiency to find out and know more of God and their duty, and to practise more rules of virtue than they ever actually found or practised.

And let it be added also, that if there were any soul amongst them that had followed the leadings of his own reason and conscience, together with every beam of light, or hint of knowledge that occurred in the course of life, the blessed God would have manifested his goodness in giving that soul some further hints of the necessary truths and duties of religion. It is an universal law of heaven, "To him that hath, that is, improveth what he hath, more shall be given:" And I am persuaded, God would never withhold his hand from communicating further hints of knowledge, till he sees the creature wilfully stop short of what he might attain, and neglect or suppress some intimations of truth or duty, which one way or other were suggested to him. It is rebelling against some degree of light that provoketh God to withhold grace from man, and would vindicate divine justice in it's severest sentence. But in the

Ninth place, as there is infinite variety of degrees of guilt in particular persons, and their conduct in this world, there shall be the same variety of the degrees of punishment

nishment in the world to come. Every man shall be judged according to the advantages he enjoyed. More is required from those whose advantages were greater, and their guilt is more heinous in abusing or neglecting them. God the all-knowing and the righteous will weigh every circumstance, both of his favours and our use or abuse of them, in the nicest balance, and his sentence shall bear an exact proportion to the demerits of every sinner. "He that knew not his master's will, shall be beaten but with few stripes," in comparison with those criminals who knew it and fought against it. Suppose therefore that the punishment of these rudest and most stupid nations of the earth, in the future world, shall be exceeding small, in proportion to the very small degrees of light and knowledge which they have enjoyed, or which have lain fairly and practically within their reach; will not this greatly relieve the difficulty?

And if even these lightest punishments which shall be assigned to the most ignorant part of the heathen world, should be thought something severe, yet none can be thought utterly unjust, if, as was before mentioned, none are punished, but for acting in some measure against the light of their own minds.

Now, sir, if we could put all these nine suppositions together, and place them in such a happy situation, as that they might, with their full force, project all their light upon this single spot of darkness in divine providence, about the state and circumstances of the heathen world, I persuade myself, they would illustrate this gloomy scene, they would clear up the difficulties, and relieve the charges which are cast upon the conduct of divine justice and goodness in this affair.

Let us suppose, that mankind at first were placed in happy circumstances, with a rich sufficiency of natural powers, to prolong and continue their own happiness through all their immortality, by knowing and doing their master's will: Suppose they had some proper notice given them, that if they sinned against God, they should not only expose themselves, but their offspring also, to a forfeiture of the blessings they enjoyed, and should introduce pains, and weaknesses, and death into their natures: Suppose it also evident, from observation and experience, from the weaknesses both of flesh and spirit, from the pains and miseries of human nature, as well as from the universal corruption of morals in the world, that mankind has sinned against God, and is become a fallen and degenerate race of beings, under actual tokens of his displeasure; yet that they are not so utterly divested of their original powers and blessings, but that they have many of the comforts of this life left them to trace out the goodness of their maker, and also a natural capacity to find out their duty, if they exerted this capacity to the utmost: Suppose yet further, that God has made several new discoveries both of his nature, his laws, and his grace, as well as of the severity of his punishing justice, to those families of mankind whence all the rest have been derived; but by degrees their criminal negligence, their irreligion, and their sensual vices have prevailed so far, as in some nations to blot out the remembrance of the true God, his laws, and his grace from amongst them; May not the goodness and justice of God be sufficiently vindicated, if these criminal nations are abandoned by heaven, and fall under divine punishment for these abominable offences? And especially if the justice of God proceed no further against them than to condemn and punish them for those offences only, which have been committed against some evident inward or outward manifestation of their duty, and the actual light of their own consciences; which offences being comparatively but few in number, call for a much lighter punishment than those sinners whose consciences have had higher degrees of light communicated to them in *jewish* or christian nations?

SOPHRO.



SOPHRO. I thank you heartily, PITHANDER, for the large repetition you have given us of your last Sunday's morning-sermon, for I was then at church, and heard it with great satisfaction.

PITH. I acknowledge, sir, I espied you there, and was almost ashamed to think how much I had borrowed from your discourse, in some of these conferences, toward the composition of that sermon: but gratitude and justice demand my hearty thanks to SOPHRONIUS; for I am constrained to confess, that I was not so well skilled in this controversy when I entered the list with LOGISTO: And I am resolved, sir, for your sake, henceforth to entertain a better opinion of those who are not intirely with me in all the rites, laws, and powers of an established church. Thus I have learned at once from your agreeable conversation both wisdom and charity.

SOPHRO. You overwhelm me, sir, with honours and civilities. I hope this conference hath not passed without my own considerable improvement, and am glad to find growing charity among all that profess the christian name, which I shall always endeavour to promote and cultivate; for without it I can never approve myself a disciple of the blessed *Jesus*.

LOG. Gentlemen, your mutual compliments return so thick on each other, that I have scarce room to put in my thanks to both of you, for the information I have received from both, I was wondering indeed, how PITHANDER came to deliver so long a discourse, in so regular a method and connexion on the sudden in free conversation: But SOPHRONIUS hath explained it to me, when he saith, it is the repetition of his sermon last Sunday.

I acknowledge you goodness, PITHANDER, that you have given me the pleasure of hearing this excellent discourse, though I was not so good as to be at church: I must confess, sir, these suppositions or considerations of yours are not at all improbable, and carry a good force of argument with them. You give me a little better opinion of the bible than I had before, since it teaches you to unfold such a difficulty, and to shew us that God may be wise and good, notwithstanding the present wretched condition of the heathens, who overspread so great a part of this earth where we dwell.

But then there is another difficulty ariseth here, and it is the very last I shall mention. "Has God, who is so wise and good a being, left the greatest part of his creation to become finally miserable?" Is this consistent with the designs of a being who possesses infinite goodness and equal wisdom?

PITH. Truly, sir, the scripture seems to inform us, that there are but few which shall be saved: "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and they are but few who find it; whereas the way to destruction is broad, and crouded with multitudes:" *Matth. vii. 13. 14.* And the apostle *John* tells us, that though "we who believe in *Christ*, are of God, yet the whole world lieth in wickedness:" *1 John v. 19.* And if at last it should prove, that there are far greater numbers condemned to bear the anger of their maker, than those who enjoy his love, they have nothing justly to complain of but their own ill conduct, since they shall be all condemned, even by their own consciences. God is just, even though all his creatures should make themselves miserable.

SOPHRO. Will you give me leave, PITHANDER, to try whether upon some principles of philosophy and the rules of government, together with some charitable turns of thought, I may not be able to give satisfactory answers to the present inquiry and objection of LOGISTO?

SOPHRO.

PITH. With all my heart, sir, and I shall be happy to learn from you any further methods of relieving the difficulties that are supposed to attend the conduct of providence in its transactions with the race of men.

SOPHRO. In the first place then, what if I should venture to tell you of another supposition that has been raised from some charitable turns of thought concerning those rude and barbarous nations, those guilty and unhappy creatures who lived and died in ignorance and vice, whose parents had lost the knowledge of God and their duty before they were born, and who never came within the reach of the gospel in any of the dispensations of it, either by *Noah* or *Abraham*, *Moses* or *Christ*? What if we should suppose these wretches, by the overflowing mercy of God, should be favoured with some other state of trial or probation, before the final sentence of the last day condemns them to perpetual misery? You know some persons have supposed, that in the invisible regions where sinful spirits are kept, the souls of the rebels who were disobedient in the days of *Noah*, and were drowned in the flood, enjoyed the preaching of the gospel by *Jesus Christ* himself, and that after they had lain in prison and punishment some thousands of years *Christ* went into hell for that purpose, *1 Pet. iii. 19.* "and preached to the spirits in prison, who were once disobedient." Now what if these guilty and unhappy creatures, who never had any opportunity to acquaint themselves with the true God and his worship, and with any dispensation of his mercy, shall be raised again in the second resurrection, after the millennium, or the happy state of the church, is expired? And after they have sustained punishment for their former madness and folly from the time of their death till that day, what if they should be put upon another trial under the dispensation of christianity, that so none of all the race of *Adam* may be finally condemned without having the actual knowledge of the gospel, at least in some or other of the antient or later dispensations of it? This would not afford the least glimpse of hope to those sinners who have finally rejected the divine revelations which have been made to them under any of the dispensations of the gospel, and especially under the light of christianity: Yet this would solve every difficulty, and remove every pretence against the justice of God, in his present conduct towards heathens. It is true, I cannot say that I can find this in my bible: but a very learned and ingenious divine of the church of *England*, who wrote about thirty years ago, thinks he hath found it there, and that is *Mr. Staynoe*, in his first volume of the salvation of man by *Jesus Christ*, to which essay on this subject I refer you: but I venture no further into these depths and unsearchables of the divine counsel.

Yet it must be confessed, that if there should be any other state of trial appointed for those unhappy creatures, whom God is said to wink at in the days of their ignorance, *Acts xvii. 30.* and, perhaps, for this reason he is said to wink at them, because he intended another state of probation for them; I say, if there should be such a state, it is not improbable, that vast multitudes of them might repent and believe, and be saved.

PITH. This is a very strange supposition indeed; and I think there might be considerable objections raised against it from several places of scripture.

SOPHRO. I only mentioned it, sir, as a supposition that is not impossible; for I cannot say that I come heartily into it, and therefore I will not undertake to be an advocate for it. Permit me then to make yet another supposition, in which many of our divines seem to have been encouraged by scripture; and that is, that before the final shutting up of the theatre of this world, there may probably be a long space of time,

time, at least a thousand years, wherein virtue, religion, piety, and happiness shall be spread over the world as universally as vice and misery are now. Suppose also in this millennium there be a more regular and numerous propagation of mankind, when at the same time there shall be no wars, no public calamities and spreading depopulations of the world; would not this blessed scene of things go a great way to provide and prepare such multitudes of inhabitants for the heavenly regions as might nearly equal the numbers of sinners in the six thousand years past?

But suppose after all, it shall be found in the great day of decision, that far the greatest part of the inhabitants of this our world have been wilful criminals against the laws of their maker, and fall under a sentence of condemnation and punishment; and suppose that, upon the whole, it must be acknowledged, that there are some degrees of severity exercised by the Lord and governor of the universe against the inhabitants of this little globe of earth; why may he not chuse to make the final impenitents of this our sinful world a monument of his punishing justice, his hatred of sin, and his vindication of his own injured honour? Why may he not set them up as an awful warning to millions of inhabitants of upper and larger worlds of his dominion, in comparison whereof, perhaps, this earth is no bigger than the prison of *Newgate*, when compared with the large and spacious cities of *London* and *Westminster*?

Is it esteemed any unreasonable severity in the government of *Great Britain*, if twenty or thirty prisoners in *Newgate* are capitally punished every year, in order to deter the millions of inhabitants of these two great cities from the like crimes? Does not every governor find it proper and necessary that there should be some examples made of executing and sustaining the penalties of the law, when villains, by their own crimes, have incurred these penalties? Does not prudence itself sometimes see it needful by such executions to vindicate the wisdom and justice of the government, to maintain the authority of the laws, and to secure the rest of the subjects in their constant obedience? And may not a sovereign prince chuse which criminals he pleases to pardon in a rebellious province, and which of them he will make a monument of terror to preserve the honour of his government, and due obedience to his laws? And if by this means he secures millions of his subjects in their allegiance to himself, and in the enjoyment of a thousand happy privileges, which he has bestowed upon them; who can say, that this sovereign has acted any thing unbecoming a wife or a gracious ruler?

Alas! Sir, we have too ambitious and over-weening a conceit of ourselves, when we imagine, that we, who dwell on this little spot of ground, are the whole of the intellectual creation of God; or even that we make any great or considerable part of it. Perhaps the world of those spirits which we call angels, may be as large and numerous as our's: There are many ranks and degrees of them, thrones and principalities, dominions and powers. The multitudes of their armies are ten thousand times ten thousand: And there may be some reason to think, that even all these ranks of intelligent creatures are but an inconsiderably small portion of the intellectual works of God. Perhaps most, if not all these orders of angels might be formed with a regard to this earth only, to be divine agents and messengers to manage the affairs of this terrestrial province of God's dominion. It is possible, that all the intellectual creatures of which God has given us an account, from the beginning of *Genesis* to the end of the *Revelation*, have some special relation to this little world of our's. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. And the fallen angels in the grand scheme of God's universal government, perhaps, have all their posts assigned to them, by divine order, or by divine permission, to trans-

fact

fact no other affairs but what relate to mankind. It is possible, that all we call angles and devils are only God's invisible ministers of this his kingdom of visible creatures called men, both in their bodied and unbodied state. Why may not his other visible dominions among the stars, which I shall point out presently, have also their proper ranks of invisible ministers, by which his providence and government may be carried on among them?

Let us consider yet further, what innumerable ranks of beings may be found in the vast universe which God has made, superior both to men and angels, in a gradation almost infinite. Let us think of the astonishing varieties and gradations of beings belonging to this our globe, in air, on earth, or in the sea, which lie in the descending scale of creatures betwixt the nature of man, and the nature of an oyster, or if there be any animal of lower life: And why may there not be another variety and gradation of beings as vast and astonishing in the ascending scale of existences, all superior to us, and yet the highest of them infinitely beneath God, it's maker? surely the wisdom of God hath an inexhaustible sufficiency of invention to contrive, and his power to produce such gradations, and such varieties. How audacious a thing is it then, for such little creeping animals, who dwell on this clod of clay, to fancy ourselves so large a part of the workmanship of God, or so considerable a portion of his extensive dominions? And since we are a sinful race of creatures, who have fallen from our original state of holiness and felicity, why may not the blessed God think fit to make the greatest part of our rebellious world a monument of his just resentment against sin, while other numerous ranks of being abide firm in their duty and in their happiness, and perhaps, are confirmed in their allegiance and felicity, partly by the warning they receive from the revolt and punishment of the inhabitants of this earthly globe.

It is generally now agreed by philosophers, that the planetary worlds, such as *Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn*, are replenished with inhabitants, as well as this earth, which is a planetary body like themselves. They are placed in such a situation to the sun, which is a central fire, and are carried round it in certain periods of time, so as to receive light and heat from it in proportion to their distances and their revolutions, just as our earth does: and they seem to be as proper habitations for a variety of unknown creatures, as the globe on which we tread. Can we suppose, that the air, the earth, and the water all round this our world should be thus replenished every where as it is, with multitudes of inhabitants, and all, in some measure, under the dominion of mankind, whose race is propagated and spread all around it, and is there not as much reason to conceive, that these vast bulky bodies, the planets, which are so well fitted for the residence of animal and intellectual creatures, should be mere waste wildernesses, huge solitudes of lifeless matter, without any vital beings to replenish, possess, and adorn them? Without any intellectual tenants there, who may give God the glory of his works? This seems not only contrary to the dictates of reason, and to the appearances of nature round about us, but to the words of scripture itself; for the prophet *Isaiab* tells us, chapter xlv. verse 18. "That the God who created the heavens, and formed the earth, and made it, he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited:" Whence the inference is very natural and obvious, that had he not formed it to be the habitation of some creatures, it had been made in vain.

And may we not make the same inference concerning those huge planetary globes of *Saturn* and *Jupiter*, which, perhaps, are two hundred times as big as this earth? They, surely, are made to be inhabited, and designed for some better and nobler purpose,

purpose, than merely to give us mortals a little glimmering light in the absence of the moon, to direct a wandering ship at midnight, and to entertain the curiosity of an astronomer and his spying-glass. These seem to be purposes too low and mean, too little and inconsiderable for the prodigious vastness of those heavenly bodies, and the regularity of their situations and motions round the sun. The wisdom of a God does not aim at such poor and unworthy designs, by such stupendous fabrics as these rolling worlds. *Caucasus*, or *Teneriff*, or a taller mountain, if it were made only for the birth or residence of a mouse, would be a more proportionate contrivance, and, perhaps, a wiser design.

And what if we make yet another excursion beyond the circle wherein *Saturn* rolls, which is the most distant of our planetary globes? What if we suppose, with some modern virtuoso's, that every fixed star is a sun, or central fire, to enlighten and warm a whole set of planetary worlds, which may roll round it? And what if all these worlds are furnished with intellectual inhabitants? What a stupendous idea shall we have of the magnificence of the works of God, and the extent of his innumerable dominions? Where is the hurt or danger of it, if we should yield to these reasonings, and to the philosophy of the age, so far as to imagine these innumerable worlds to be the appointed residences of conscious beings? Let us suppose them all inhabited by animal and intellectual creatures of God, and, perhaps, better peopled than this our earth is, especially if sin and death have not entered amongst them.

Now though we are not favoured with the knowledge of the state, or laws, or circumstances of the inhabitants of those worlds, because we are a rebellious and criminal province of God's dominion, and deserve to dwell in ignorance and darkness; yet those upper regions and worlds may be favoured with a large and particular account of the state and circumstances of this earth, and of the conduct of God towards the rebel inhabitants of it: And this notice of the degeneracy and rebellion of mankind, together with the severity of God, our common governor, against a great part of men, may have a happy influence to secure their obedience, and to preserve the inhabitants of those worlds in an everlasting state of duty and happiness.

As it has pleased God, in his wisdom and goodness, to reveal to us the heavy and endless punishment he has inflicted on the evil angels for their first rebellion and disobedience, and has told us, "That he spared not the angels who sinned; but cast them down to hell, and has reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," and some greater punishment to ensue, in order to warn us of the dangerous crimes of pride and rebellion, *2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6. 1 Tim. iii. 6.* So it is very probable, that the same divine wisdom and goodness has made our crimes and punishments on this globe of earth a monument of his just severity, to give warning to some vast and unknown regions of upper worlds, lest they also should sin against their maker, after our example, and fall under his dreadful displeasure, as mankind has done.

Though it should appear at the great day of judgment, that the largest part of the inhabitants of this our earth are condemned to greater or less degrees of unhappiness, yet, as I before hinted, perhaps all this earth, with all the number of its inhabitants put together, are not so much in comparison of the holy and happy worlds of intellectual beings which God has created, as *Newgate* is in comparison of the populous cities of *Westminster* and *London*: And if by the punishment of a few criminals there are millions preserved in duty and happiness, then the great and blessed God will have a spacious and most illustrious display of his goodness above and beyond the exercise of his more awful perfections of justice or vengeance: And even

the exercise of these awful perfections upon a few of the subjects of his dominions, will become as it were a means in the hand of his goodness, to make millions of them for ever blessed.

Thus though the largest part of mankind may be sinful and unhappy, yet I am persuaded, that the far largest part of God's whole intelligent creation are holy and happy beings; and if there are some thousands of miserable immortal souls on this little globe; yet there may be, perhaps, above a thousand whole worlds of conscious beings, who are happy in the favour of the God who made them, who love and serve him, and rejoice in his love through all the ages of their immortality. How unreasonable is it then for us to pass a judgment either on the conduct of God, or on the state of his intellectual creation, by such a narrow and limited survey of his wisdom, justice, and goodness, as this our little planetary globe of earth can afford us?

LOG. Well, SOPHRONIUS, I am wonderfully pleased with this last speech of your's. This seems effectually to secure the honour of the divine perfections against all charges, if you could shew us the inhabitants of these castles in the air, these ætherial worlds. But are not all these mere suppositions of wild fancy, and imaginary scenes? What certainty have you of such unknown creatures and unknown dominions of God the creator?

SOPHRO. It is granted, LOGISTO, that these are suppositions, but they are such suppositions as I have shewn you are plainly built upon principles of reason: the force of argument that maintains them is so strong, that, in my opinion, it rises to a very high degree of probability, and therefore they are not to be called imaginary scenes or the airy castles of wild fancy. If these reasonings are good and solid, then it will follow, that these unknown worlds are so far from being mere fancies, that they are the solid and real structures of God himself.

Besides, sir, as I remember, it was mentioned by PITHANDER, that if we can but find out any such hypotheses or suppositions which may solve real difficulties in the conduct of God and providence, this will effectually prove, that these difficulties are not insolvable: and much more effectual are they to remove these difficulties, when the reason of things so far conspires with these suppositions, as goes very near to prove them great realities.

PITH. I am much inclined to come into these sentiments of SOPHRONIUS, since they carry such an appearance of reason and truth in them, and since they have so happy an effect as to represent far the greatest part of the intellectual works of God holy and happy, and hereby do so much honour to the equity and goodness of the great creator.

LOG. I cannot but approve such a scheme as this, which bestows virtue and happiness upon almost all the intelligent creatures of God; for I can hardly conceive, that ever a being of such boundless wisdom, power, and goodness, should produce so many millions of creatures capable of pleasure and pain, felicity and misery, without designing and securing felicity to far the greatest part of them, as far as is consistent with the freedom of their will.

SOPHRO. So far as things appear to me, LOGISTO, I cannot but agree with you in this sentiment; and by such considerations and reasonings as these, I think we have removed the grand difficulty that lay upon your mind with the greatest weight, *viz.* How it should come to pass, that so many thousand inhabitants of the heathen world, who are originally fallen from God, should go on from age to age in the neglect of God and virtue, still running on in the paths of misery, and be so far abandoned by their

their creator, as not to have a practical and proximate sufficiency in their own reasoning powers to guide and conduct them to religion and happiness.

But after all, sir, give me leave to say, that the nature of the great and blessed God is infinitely superior to all our powers and conceptions, his thoughts are so far above our thoughts, and his ways so far above our ways, that if there should remain such difficulties in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures, that we could not fairly account for by our reason, and by all our suppositions, yet we are still bound to believe matter of fact, when our reason, experience, and observation assure us of the truth of it. We cannot but believe, that the heathen world actually lies in a dark and deplorable state; and yet, on the other hand, we are bound to believe, that the great God is perfectly wise, and righteous, and good. The ways and works of God may be unknown and unsearchable, but they can never be unjust. There may be infinite schemes within his comprehensive view, whereby his wisdom can reconcile those things which we know not how to reconcile. Those different propositions in the science of theology, as well as in mathematical learning, stand within his view in a most perfect and amiable consistency, which to our narrow thoughts appear so dissimilar, and almost inconsistent. If there are such sort of seeming inconsistencies in some parts of geometry, when we run into the doctrines of infinites and incommensurables, which yet all stand right in the eye of God, much more may we suppose, that in the works of the great God, and his divine schemes and transactions, there may be many things which seem to us all difficulty and darkness, and yet before him they stand in the fairest and most easy light.

When St. Paul had considered the long darkness that lay upon the gentile world for many ages, the peculiar privilege of the *jews*, to be made, during those ages, the favourites of God; when he considered again, these very favourites, almost the whole nation of them, so far left as to abuse the Son of God himself, to run into infidelity, and thereby to be abandoned of God, their benefactor and their king; when again, in prophetic vision, after this once favourite people had continued long under unbelief, guilt, and misery, he saw that they should be recovered, and restored to the true religion, and the favour of God, in his xi. chapter to the *Romans*; with what ecstasy of devout surprize and adoration does he conclude his discourse! "God hath shut up both the gentiles and the *jews*, by turns, under unbelief, that he might have mercy upon both, in his own season: God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen,

Log. I know not how to make a sufficient acknowledgment to you, gentlemen, for the favour you have done me, and the light you have given me in these conferences. I am fully satisfied, that the bulk of the heathen world is in a very dark and deplorable state, and amongst those who have lost all traditional knowledge of divine revelation, their own reason is far from being sufficient in any practical sense, as you have explained it, to lead them to virtue, religion and happiness. Upon a just review, I am convinced, that had I been so unhappy as to be born amongst them, my reasoning powers would have been exercised to no better purpose than their's are: For why should I be so vain as to imagine myself the wisest man among so many thousands of the present age, and the millions of former generations? I begin to see there

is a necessity of some better advantages, in order to reform mankind, and to render them wise, and pious, and happy: Nor do I know how this can be attained, but by some favourable discoveries sent from heaven: And as for all other religions, that in our age pretend to divinity and revelation, it is evident in itself, that none of them can compare with the doctrines of the new testament, either for it's own internal excellency, or the outward proofs that it came from God. I must confess therefore, I think I am come as far as king *Agrippa*, when he heard *Paul's* apology for himself; for you have almost persuaded me to become a christian.

PITH. Permit me, sir, in the language of *St. Paul*, to make my reply: Would to God that not you only, but all the young gentlemen of our age, who have been tempted to abandon the religion of their fathers, and to forsake the gospel, and the faith in which they were educated, would bethink themselves ere it be too late, and become not only almost, but altogether as firm believers in *Christ* as I profess myself to be.

SOPHRO. And as you have done me the honour, gentlemen, to put me into the place of the learned, and made me your moderator during this conference, I ask leave now to resign this honour and office: and since PITHANDER has formed such a benevolent and pious wish, I take pleasure to occupy the place of the unlearned, and confirm it with a most sincere and devout, *Amen.*

H U-



# H U M I L I T Y

Represented in the

CHARACTER of St. *PAUL*,

The chief SPRINGS of it opened,

And it's various ADVANTAGES displayed;

Together with some occasional Views of the contrary Vice:

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

I Hope there will be something found in these papers, which is suited to rectify the vicious disorders of the mind, to subdue the foolish vanity of human nature, and promote a meek and humble spirit: But I am sure, they can have no such influence, while they continue to sleep in a desk where they have lain many years already. If the divine grace shall so far attend the publication of them now, as to make them attain these happy ends, my duty will be thankfulness and praise.

While I have endeavoured to trace out the pride of the heart in the various and general appearances of it both in higher and lower life, I have carefully avoided the particular description of any person living. By this means my representation of true humility in the moral and religious springs and advantages of it, together with some views of the opposite vice, may have a more kindly and powerful effect upon every reader. Conviction and reproof are much better received when such hints only are given, as may lead conscience in secret to search out the criminals, and may teach them to set their own folly and guilt and danger before themselves. We all like to do this work best in retirement and silence. And I hope my readers will be so kind and so just both to themselves and to me, as to be more diligent in the discovery and cure of any weakness of their own, than in pointing out censure for their neighbours; though it must be confessed there is sufficient matter for it in every corner of the world.

Surely if we could but look down upon mankind with an all-surveying eye as the great God doth, we should see a dreadful and universal spread of this vice of pride over all the race of man, and an infinite number of mischiefs derived from it, and diffused through kingdoms and churches, through all human societies and personal affairs. Had we such a view as this, one would think every son and daughter of *Adam* should labour night and day to root out this cursed and poisonous plant, till not a branch or fibre of it remained to infect the earth. Pride was the ruin of angels: Pride was the fall of man: "Ye shall be as Gods" was the great temptation, and the event is we are become like devils: Nor doth the array of flesh and blood which we wear, cover our shame or excuse our iniquity.

God has sent his Son *Jesus* into the world in the likeness of man, and in all the forms of humiliation, that he might teach us by his word and his example to be meek and lowly, and shew us how to regain the divine favour and image, by laying the foundation of his gospel and of our recovery in humility of soul: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven," *Matt. v. 3.* And next to his own Son  
God

## The P R E F A C E.

God has set his servant *Paul* for our pattern, who calls himself, "less than the least of all the saints," and persuades us "to be followers of him as he is of *Christ*."

I have not drawn out at large here the particular rules and directions for acquiring these lovely virtues of christian humility and meekness, having written so many chapters of advice how to subdue pride and wrath and other vices in my little treatise of the passions, and to these I refer my readers under the divine blessing.

Newington, *March*  
25, 1737.

H U M I-

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# H U M I L I T Y

Represented in the

## Character of St. *Paul*, &c.

EPHES. iii. 8.

*Less than the least of all saints.*

### I N T R O D U C T I O N.

**H**OW meanly does this great and holy man, this chiefest of the apostles speak of himself? To how low a degree does he sink himself and his exalted virtues? To how narrow a compass does he reduce all his own natural talents, his acquired excellencies and even his divine qualifications? Less than the least, *ἐλαχίστοτος*: It is a greek word made on purpose to signify the exceeding diminutive idea he had of himself, and it is very happily rendered by our *english* translators.

How different is our common behaviour from that of holy *Paul*? When we think of self we are ready to raise our thoughts beyond all measure and aggrandize our ideas to a vast and shameful degree, as though we stood as fair and as large and as high in the eyes of our fellow-worms as we do in our own eyes. Vain imagination! Wretched self-flattery and foolish pride! We take the least of words, the least of syllables, the least of letters, I, and swell and amplify it, if I may so speak, to fill a page, or to spread over a whole leaf, and we scarce leave a scanty margin for all other names to stand in: Nothing less than a volume will contain or display our characters and our due praises. We set so many flourishes round our own names and fill our own eyes with them, that we can see nothing else. All other names lie concealed and disappear, while our own ingrosses our sight and admiration. We make every thing else look so little, as though it were fit only to lie neglected and forgotten, while self, or I, should be alone beheld and alone regarded. But the great apostle who had more excellencies and real honours than a thousand of us put together, gives his thought, a different turn; what am I? says he, a little mean worthless thing, to be intrusted

with this glorious gospel, and to have such divine favours conferred on me? "I am nothing that is grand and exalted, but the least of all the saints, and less than the least of them." When, O my soul, when wilt thou learn to copy after so illustrious an example, so divine a pattern of humility?

But not to paraphrase any longer on this matter here at large let us enter into particulars.

Perhaps some persons may expect that I should spend time here to distinguish and determine exactly what sort of opinion and esteem we ought to have of ourselves. Surely a man of letters and education is not bound to think himself as illiterate as a peasant, nor a youth of ingenuity to fancy himself a fool: A person of figure and quality must not suppose himself in all respects upon a level with the lower ranks of mankind, nor can it be but that a man of sense and virtue, of religion and goodness must know himself to be of superior worth and merit to the rude and the wicked multitude. Do not nature and reason direct us to judge of persons as well as things according to truth? Nor does the best of religions forbid us to pass a true and right judgment concerning our selves or concerning our fellow-creatures.

Besides, it is proper and necessary that a man should have in some measure a just idea of himself, that he may every where in his conduct and behaviour maintain his own character, and answer the demands of his own station with justice and honour both in the world and in the church. What is it then we are to understand by this diminishing idea of self, which was so honourable in the great apostle, and which is so worthy of our imitation.

To this inquiry I shall give but a short answer, for I allow all that is here proposed by way of query or objection to be just and true. I grant it is our duty to know ourselves for many valuable purposes both in life and religion, and to form a just sentiment, as near as we can, of our own qualifications, and our place and rank amongst our fellow-creatures. But as the honourable example of *St. Paul* directs us, so the design of my present advice lies here, *viz.* that in passing a judgment concerning our selves, we should always set a strong guard on the side of self-love and flattery: We should watch against the pride of our hearts, which is every moment ready to overrate all appearances of what is valuable in us, and forgets to bring our defects into the balance of the account; pride spies out those excellencies in us which none else can see, while it conceals and lessens our evil qualities so as to reduce them almost to nothing. By this means the judgment that we form concerning our selves, is for the most part mistaken and criminal: We hearken to the prejudices of our self-love; we view our virtues through a magnifying glass in the sunshine, and cast our vices into shade and concealment. We carry always about us these false representations of our selves, this vain picture which is so very unlike the original: We speak, and act, and live, according to this bright and great and mistaken idea of self, and thereby we plunge ourselves into many errors, iniquities and mischiefs.

And especially when we happen to compare our selves with others, our envy arises to assist the work, and offers it's wretched and dangerous aid to help on the comparison. We soon spy out all their blemishes and imperfections, and lessen their character in order to exalt our own. Thus while pride on the one side brightens and aggrandizes our own image, and on the other side envy detracts from the image of our neighbour, sullies his virtues and darkens his honours, we act our relative parts in the world in a very irregular manner, under the influence of these erroneous sentiments and ideas.

The mean opinion of self therefore, that by the pattern of the apostle, I would recommend to my own heart and to all my friends, is this, that in taking a just estimate

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of every thing that relates to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures, we should keep a strict watch against the dangers of these selfish passions and prejudices; and we should always make large allowances for those false and glaring colours, wherewith our vanity paints and adorns our own image, and for those deceitful weights which pride is ever flinging into our own scale, to make our virtues appear solid and weighty; and we should make the same allowances for those dark and disgraceful shades of vice and folly which envy spreads over our neighbours character, and for those reproaches wherewith she loads the opposite scale while we are weighing the virtues of our neighbours, in order to make them seem lighter.

The bulk of mankind are so generally given to err on this hand, that is, to over-value themselves and depreciate their neighbours; and the number of those who make a mistake on the other side is so exceeding small, that in proposing general directions for our conduct there is scarce any need of a caution or guard against the humble and self-denying kinds of mistake. Then is our opinion concerning ourselves and our neighbours agreeable to the rule and temper of christianity, and generally nearer the truth, when we sink our idea of self rather below what seems to us to be our due, and when we raise the idea of our neighbours a little above what appears to belong to them, for they doubtless have some virtues and good qualities unknown to us, and it is certain we have some secret failings which do not usually come within our own notice. But I shall touch upon this subject perhaps once again, and therefore I proceed to the general heads of my discourse.

Here I shall enquire

First, Whence comes it to pass that *St. Paul* forms so diminutive an idea of himself, and calls himself less than the least of all the saints: And

Secondly, What blessed advantages may we obtain by this lessening view of our selves in imitation of such an example.

## S E C T I O N. I.

### *The springs of St. Paul's humility.*

**T**HE first thing to be inquired is, whence comes it to pass that *St. Paul* forms such diminutive ideas of himself? I answer,

I. From a constant sense of his own former iniquities, and an ever-present consciousness of sin that dwells in him. You may read this account in himself in many of his epistles. *1 Cor.* xv. 9. "I am the least of the apostles, and am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." *1 Tim.* i. 13, 15. "I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious: And in this view I am the chief of sinners." *Rom.* vii. 14, 18, 24. "I am carnal, sold under sin. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: O wretched man that I am!" Each of us are best acquainted with our selves, and know best what our own former sins and follies have been. Some of us perhaps have been suffered to fall into more criminal actions and shameful iniquities than others; but there is not one of us who has not sinned enough to make him lie humble in the dust, and think meanly of himself if our former iniquities were always kept in view. But alas! we are much inclined to forget our sins, to cast them behind our back, to turn our eyes away from them; it is a painful and an uneasy sight; while at the same time we vainly turn our eyes to our own fancied excellencies, and with pleasure we dwell long in the survey of our own real or imagined qualifications and virtues: We aggrandize our little worthless selves into idols, and

then we worship the vain image which our pride has made. We pay much incense of self-flattery and praise to the swelling and exalted idea of the little worthless name I or Me; and when we have set up a false god for our own worship, we are fond to have other men bow down and worship it too.

Come, my soul, come, let the holy apostle teach thee to secure thy self against the danger and deceit of this foolish pride: Let him instruct thee how to depress and keep down this rising tumour, this fermenting swelling thing, self. Take a frequent survey of thy former sins and follies; look into thy heart, behold the hourly workings of iniquity there; what abatements of thy fancied honour, what defilements and stains and inward shame wilt thou find upon thee? Methinks, there is something elegant and exalted in the language of a famous *english* poet \*, while he is humbling the vanity of human nature beneath the brute creatures, and even beneath the things which have neither sense nor life.

“ Let the proud peacock his gay feathers spread  
And court the female to his painted bed:  
Let winds and seas together rage and swell;  
This nature teaches, and't becomes them well.  
Pride was not made for man. A conscious sense  
Of guilt and folly and their consequence.  
Destroys the claim, and to beholders tells,  
Here nothing but the shape of manhood dwells.” *Waller.*

As if he should say, “ Here is not that glorious thing, that honourable and holy creature man, as he was first made by the hands of God, and stamped with the divine image: here is nothing but the mere outward shape and figure, shadow and appearance of him, divested of his original dignities, bereft of his inward and superior glories.”

If such a faint as *Paul*, of the first degree, could call himself the chief of sinners and less than the least of all the saints, and would frame a new word for it because there was none ready made in all the copious language of the *greeks*, which was sufficiently diminutive to express his humble thoughts of himself, what new lessening names, what unknown words of abasement must we form to give ourselves our own true character, who fall so far beneath this apostle?

II. While the apostle depresses himself so much below his fellow-saints, he not only remembers his own failings, but he seems to look upon others without their blemishes; and this is one way whereby he comes to sink the idea of his own character in comparison of their's. His goodness and his love cover all their follies and keep them as it were out of sight, while he compares himself with them: “ Charity covers a multitude of sins.” He practises that great duty in his epistle to the *Ephesians* when he calls himself “ less than the least of the saints,” which he recommends in his letter to the christians at *Rome*, *Rom. xii. 10.* Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Oh when shall we arrive at this spirit and learn this holy lesson of love? When shall we think of our fellow christians and leave their faults out of our ideas of them? How ready are we to spy out their blemishes, and fix our eye first upon their little spots and the abatements of their virtue? And then we exalt our selves while we forget our own failings, and imagine that we are higher and better than all around us.

Doft thou not know, O my soul, more of the vices of thy nature and of the sins  
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of thy life, than thou knowest of any of thy fellow-christians? Why then should thy vanity tempt thee to think so much better of thy self than thou dost of them? One would think thy own guilt and follies, which are so well known to thee, should do more to abase thee in thy own eyes, than all thy suspicions of the folly and guilt of thy neighbours should do, to sink their character in thy esteem. Remember this, that for the most part it is but a rumour and suspicion of the sins of thy brethren that lessens thy esteem of them; but thou hast an inward consciousness and assurance of thy own frailties and thy own vileness, which might more powerfully abase thy pride and teach thee to cry out with the apostle, less than the least of all the saints.

III. I might add in the third place, another spring of his humility was an abiding sense of the infinite greatness and holiness of God, and the unsearchable excellencies and glories of his son *Jesus*. This is a sight which stains the glory of all flesh, and brings the haughtiness of man down to the dust. This I confess does not so directly tend to this comparative humility, this abasing himself below his fellows, but it has a mighty influence on this virtue absolutely considered, and therefore I name it.

The apostle maintains upon his spirit grand ideas of the great God, "the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings and lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom belongs honour and power everlasting." *1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.* What an atom, what a dust of being, what a dark and diminutive thing is man under the lively apprehension of a present God, a God of such majesty and brightness? And in the words following my text he is surveying the grandeurs of *Christ*, by whom God created all things, and the unsearchable riches of his grace, *Eph. iii. 8, 9.* And how mean and little must every son of *Adam* appear in the presence of this Son of God? He looks upon himself as poor and contemptible in the view of such unsearchable riches and glory.

A sinful and fallen man, who has been favoured with some attainments above his neighbours, when he stands in the midst of sinful and fallen men, may perhaps appear something great and honourable; but when he sets himself before a holy God and before *Christ* the son of his love, and the express image of his glories, he must then think himself despicably little, and covered with meannesses and dishonours. So a worm or an emmet that is a little larger than his brethren may lift up itself among fellow-emmetts or fellow-worms; but the foot of a man treads it to the dust, and it appears a worthless and unregarded thing.

Oh my soul, if thou wouldst lessen thy self, as a creature and a christian ought to do, live much in the sight of God as seeing him that is invisible. When God appears in the glory of his holiness, God in the person of his son *Jesus* in his pre-existent state, as St. *John* tells us in chapter xii. then the seraphs cover their faces and their feet with their wings in his presence, and the holy prophet cries out, Woe is me, for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips; mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts." *Isai. vi. 2—5.* Once have I spoken of myself, saith *Job*, to maintain my own honours, yea twice, before I had seen God in his glory; but now mine eye has seen thee, behold I am vile, I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I lie down in profound silence, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. *Job. xl. 4, 5. and xlii. 5, 6.* Live much therefore, O my soul, in the views of God, the fairest and the first and the best of beings: Live much in the contemplation of *Christ* his son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily, and who is the first and fairest image of the Father. Thou canst never dare to swell and exalt thyself, thy little  
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worthless self, in the presence of such majesty, in the eye of such adorable and divine excellencies.

The last thing I shall mention as a spring of *St. Paul's* humility, was his frequent view and meditation of the condescension, the lowliness, the meekness, and self-abasement of the blessed *Jesus*. As he charges the *philippian* converts, that the same mind and temper should be in them which was in *Christ Jesus*, *Phil. ii. 5*. So by a continual contemplation of him in his humbled estate, he learned to imitate so divine an example, and he recommends his own conduct as a pattern for men, no farther than as he followed *Christ*.

But this subject will fall in often by the way, while I am representing the grace of humility in it's lovely appearances, and therefore I dismiss it now.

## S E C T I O N II.

### *The advantages of humility in regard of God.*

**I**T is time to proceed to the second general head of discourse, *viz.* what advantages are to be derived from an imitation of this apostle, this great example of humility, what unknown profit will arise from this holy diminution or lessening of self?

Surely many and various will be the benefits of such a pious practice: Some with regard to God, some with regard to our neighbours, and others with regard to ourselves.

The first set of advantages that we shall derive from this practice of humility are such as regard God and religion, and they may be thrown into the following particulars.

**I.** We shall be kept ever dependent on divine providence and grace for every thing, while we are deeply sensible of our own emptiness, and we lie more directly under the promises of divine supplies. While we feel that in and of our selves we are nothing, we shall be continually waiting upon God for every blessing to be conveyed to us according to our wants: We shall never think our selves sufficient for any work, duty, or difficulty without him, and we shall live upon him hourly for light and strength, for grace and comfort. "We are not sufficient of our selves, says the apostle, to think one thought as of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God, *2 Cor. iii. 5*." Humility and dependence go together: Those who have high thoughts of themselves are not so naturally inclined nor easily persuaded to trust in another. "*Psal. x. 4*. The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God." But *David* as a type of *Christ* in his state of infirmity and flesh, cries out, "I am a worm and no man, *Psal. xxii. 6*." And therefore his heart is ever trusting in the Lord: So *St. Paul* ever keeps his hold of the grace of God, and depends on the strength of *Christ*, under a constant and prevailing sense of his own weakness. "*2 Cor. xii. 10*. When I am weak then am I strong: When I feel my own weakness, I am strong by a dependence on the grace of *Christ*." A weak christian and an almighty saviour are a sufficient match for the most formidable enemy: "My grace, O *Paul*, is sufficient for thee against the thorns of the flesh, and the buffets of *Satan*."

The rich gospel of grace was only made for the poor and the humble among the sons and daughters of *Adam*. For whom is all that fulness of righteousness and fulness of grace treasured up in *Christ Jesus*, but for those who are deeply abased under a sense of their own guilt and sinfulness? It is for those who are dying and despairing in themselves

themselves that *Jesus* has brought in hope and life. We can never be christians till we are thus humbled and brought to the foot of God to receive all from his Son.

Remember, O my soul, it is this self-poverty, this emptiness and dependence makes thee a prepared vessel for the largest communications of divine influence and blessing. *Jesus*, the Son of God, came down from heaven furnished with all fullness of heavenly graces, to bestow only upon the poor and needy and the depending creature. He was sent to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to bestow wisdom upon the ignorant, to preach the gospel to the poor, and to call sinners to repentance and salvation; but the self-righteous and the wise, and the exalted haughty things of this world, he hath no blessings for them, for they are full of themselves, they do not feel nor imagine that they have any need of his bounty. The doctrines and benefits of his gospel are hid from the wise, and the mighty, and the sons of pride; but they are revealed to babes and conferred on the poor. The humble soul dwells nearest to the rich treasures of grace, and the empty vessel is best prepared to receive the largest communications.

What is it then, O my heart, that should tempt thee to maintain high thoughts of thy self, of thy own understanding, of thy own sufficiency, when it is the ready way to exclude thee from all the aids of divine grace? *He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away*, Luke i. 53. *God resisteth the proud, but giveth more grace unto the humble*, Jam. iv. 6.

II. When we have low thoughts of our selves, our hearts and lips will be full of acknowledgements for the daily favours of grace and providence. We shall take notice of every favourable dispensation that attends us, every support and relief of divine mercy which is communicated to us, and shall ascribe all to the free and rich grace of God. Learn this language, Oh my soul, "I was sinking and drowning, and God set my feet upon a rock, and established all my goings: I was wandering in foolish and pernicious ways, running down to destruction and death, but the blessed God sent his Son from heaven to seek and save me, and by the voice of his gospel and the secret whispers of his Spirit he has directed my feet into the paths of holiness and peace and life eternal: I was sick and God healed me: I was in trouble and the Lord relieved me: I was in darkness and he shed light upon my path: I was in straits and his hand extricated me out of them: I was on the very borders of death and on the verge of hell, helpless and hopeless in myself, but, glory be to his holy name, he has given me help, and hope, and salvation."

Such is the language of the blessed *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 10, 11. "I am nothing in my self, and if I appear to be any thing, it is by the grace of God I am what I am." Holy *David* in his devotions is full of the same humble acknowledgments: I was poor and needy, but thou hast been my helper and my strength, I was surrounded with enemies thou hast been my salvation:" This is the sense of many of his divine songs. And "who am I or what is my house that thou has brought me hitherto?" 1 Sam. vii. 18.

On the other hand the man who is full of self is ready to assume all the honour of his success and his peaceful circumstances to his own reason, to his own wisdom, to the diligence and strength of his own right hand, or at least to his own merit of these favours from heaven. He gives himself the praise of the blessings that surround him: And if his table is spread plentifully from the earth or from the waters, he ascribes that plenty to his own skill, he sacrifices to his own net and burns incense to his own drag, as the prophet expresses it in a noble metaphor, *Hab. i. 16*. And thus  
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The God of heaven is robbed of his honours, and the praise is given to a creature which is due to the creator only : Thus the proud man multiplies his iniquities and commits sacrilege and idolatry at once.

III. Another advantage of these humbling thoughts of ourselves is this, that we shall bear with more patience the afflicting hand of God upon us, and wait longer for the moment of deliverance without murmuring. These self-abasing sentiments under heavy sorrows will incline us to confess, " Lord, I have deserved them all," and will teach us to speak the language of the prophet *Micah*, chapter vii. verse 9. " I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, till he arise and plead my cause."

When, Oh my soul, wilt thou learn this holy behaviour ? When wilt thou learn this humble language ? If the Lord bestow no temporal blessings upon me, I lie at his foot ; he is not my debtor, I deserve no blessing from his hands : If he take away part of my substance and my wealth, I have deserved to be deprived of it all, for my unprofitableness, for my earthly mind, for my vanity and the pride of my heart. If I have food and raiment I will therewith be content ; it is much more than I have deserved. If I am sick and in pain, I would remember that I am guilty, and he punishes less than my iniquities deserve. If I am stripped naked of my earthly comforts, I resign them to his disposal, I can claim none of them as my merit, or as my property ; " the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away and blessed be the name of the Lord : " He has done no more than he has right to do with a worthless worm, and I lie in the dust before him waiting his good pleasure. Such a temper of mind carries peace and serenity in it, not without some glimpses of pious hope and humble expectation. " I will lay my mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope " in the grace of God, which loves to triumph over the unworthiness of creatures.

But let us now turn the tables, and view the different temper and conduct of the man who has high thoughts of himself. When he is under the afflicting stroke of heaven he imagines he has deserved some better treatment at the hand of God, and though he dares not say this to his maker's face, yet the inward vexation and rage, the disquietude and resentment of his heart under afflictions, is such as would vent itself in loud murmurs and reproaches against heaven if it durst : And because he dares not suffer his passion and fury to rise thus against his creator, he gives it a vent and lets loose his impatience against every creature that comes in his way : Hence arises the impious fretfulness, and the tormenting vexation of spirit that haughty persons feel under pressing calamities ; they throw their fury all around them : Their impatience under the hand of God is expressed by peevishness toward men : They make every one that is near them a witness of that inward indignation and resentment, which they dare not directly aim at him that dwells on high. It is this rising vanity, this fermenting and swelling idea of self that gives us ten-fold agony and smart when we are cast down and pressed under the hand of God. When we sustain evils which we cannot remedy, we multiply and increase their load, and sharpen every sting of calamity by the pride and impatience of our own spirits. God is affronted by us, men grow weary of helping us, we enhance the pain and anguish of every affliction, and we provoke the hand of a holy and jealous God to keep us longer under the weight of sorrow, sickness or distress, till it has done his work and pressed down the haughtiness of our spirit.

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IV. By diminishing thoughts of our selves we shall attain a nearer and greater conformity to the blessed *Jesus* the Son of God. What is there in all the character of our dear redeemer greater and more surprizing than his humble temper and his humbled estate? The merit and honour of his humility and lowliness are aggrandized and brightened by every glorious and divine idea that enters into his character. He is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, yet he humbled himself to the form of a man, and to the likeness of sinful flesh: He is the Son of God and one with the Father, yet he became the son of man and was born of a poor virgin of the despicable country of *Galilee*; and when he was a man here upon earth, how did his meek and gentle and condescending behaviour manifest his self-abasing virtues? He emptied himself of the splendors which he once possessed, *Phil. ii. 6, 7.* He made himself of no reputation, as the english translators have rendered it, and being found in fashion as a man, he behaved like a fellow-creature, a friend and a brother, though he was really superior to angels and one with God, though his name was God with us, and his character was God manifest in the flesh. See what sort of inference the apostle makes from such a view of our blessed Lord? verses 3, 4, 5. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, that is, with a self-flattering and exalted survey of them, but let every man also look on the things of others, paying all due regard to their real worth and dignity. "Let this mind be in you which was also in *Christ Jesus.*" Indeed there is no possibility of lessening our selves comparably to the self-abasement of the Son of God; and yet the nearer we are like him the more shall we partake of the Father's love, and we shall be in the way of divine advancement, in a humble imitation of the advancement of *Christ* himself: Because "he humbled himself to death, therefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name." *Phil. ii. 9.*

V. By a humble opinion of our selves, and by a lowly conduct and behaviour in life we shall bring honour to the gospel, and become the truest ornaments to the divine religion which we profess. Never was any religion founded in so much humility as that of the gospel: The first principle of it requires that we be sensible of our own guilt and sinfulness, our danger and misery, and our utter insufficiency to relieve our selves: And in the progress it shews us to derive all the good we have and hope for from the free mercy of God through a mediator. The first line of that excellent sermon which *Jesus*, the author of the gospel, preached to his people upon the mountain, is this, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." *Matt. v. 3.* Blessed are those who have the lowest and meanest thoughts of themselves, for the heavenly treasures of divine grace are particularly offered to them, and they are most ready to receive them. It is the very design of the gospel to stain the glory of all flesh, and to hide pride from man, to teach man that he is nothing, and that he has nothing in and of himself, "that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord," *1 Cor. i. 19, 31.* Now the man that keeps these self-abasing virtues, and maintains a humbling sense of his own nothingness in himself, and his universal dependence upon the grace of *Christ*, does acceptable honour to the gospel which he professes, and makes it appear in it's own proper and divine light.

## S E C T I O N III.

*The advantages of humility in regard of men.*

**A**S humility towards God is a necessary qualification of every christian, so humble thoughts of our selves in regard of our fellow-creatures belong to the profession and character of this gospel: For what have I to boast of above my brother, when we are all under the sentence of common condemnation before God, all guilty and miserable in his sight, and are all intirely indebted to his free and rich-mercy for every degree of excellency or advantage that we possess? "What hast thou, O my soul, that thou hast not received? Why dost thou then glory and look big upon thy fellows as though thou hast not received it? Who is it that hast made thee differ from another?" 1 Cor iv. 7.

Oh! what a dishonour does it bring upon the gospel of *Christ*, when one, who takes upon him the christian name, exalts himself into conceit and vanity, and swells in his own opinion of himself, when he sets himself on high above his brethren, and looks down upon them with haughtiness and scorn? Can such a wretch be a christian, while he is a reproach to the christian name, and has not the first principle of christianity; has nothing of the temper or spirit of the gospel in him?

But some of these thoughts lead me to the second rank of advantages which may be derived from low and humble thoughts of our selves, and these are such as regard our neighbours or fellow-creatures. And the first of them is this.

I. If we have a mean opinion of self, we shall pay due esteem and honour to every thing that is valuable in other men, and not scorn and despise every body around us, as though they were not worthy to be named the same day with our selves: Nor shall we be so imperious and haughty in our behaviour even where God has given some degrees of superiority.

Perhaps we plume our selves with the honours of our ancestors and look down with disdain upon those whose family is of a lower rank than our's. But a grain of wisdom will put us in mind that the honours of birth are no certain evidences of virtue or merit: There may be some high-born animals with sorry and scoundrel souls, and some who drew their first breath in a cottage, strangers to title and quality, whose eminencies are bright and shining. Add a grain of humility, and it will teach us that all families were one in *Adam*, the first man, when our blood ran in his veins: We are all made of one common earth; we are but the same coarse materials, the same clay moulded up into the form of man; let this dwell upon the heart, and we shall not carry it so disdainfully to our kindred-clods, nor look down with such scorn upon any of our earthly brethren, our fellow-worms, because of those accidental advantages of which we imagine our selves possessed.

Or perhaps we fall into company that are unpolished and unbred, they carry rustic airs about them, while we have got a few forms of behaviour, and we publish our scorn of them to shew our breeding. Foolish insolence and preposterous vanity, which the well-bred and polite are never guilty of! But tell me, man, how long hast thou learned thy genteel and elegant behaviour, these arts and forms of boasted decency? Can thou not remember the time when thy gait, and thy mein, thy speech and all thy airs were almost as awkward and uncouth as the very creature thou deridest? And wouldst thou have been willing to have had thy former awkwardnesses

nesses made the ridicule of the company? Couldst thou so well bear to have been the jest of the man above thee, that thou spendest thy jests so freely upon one in low life, who is the very figure of what thou hast been? Hast thou not humility, nor prudence, nor goodness enough to remember this?

Or perhaps thou art dressed finer, and art a favourite among the great: But is this sufficient reason to scorn the poor? Remember also that he is thy brother by nature: Naked and cast out of the favour of God together with thee: All sons and daughters of *Adam* the great sinner, all by nature children of wrath, strangers to the blessed God, outcasts of paradise, and averse to all that is holy: And if we behold our selves in this state, what is there in one little lump of this wretched and polluted mass of human nature, that it should exalt itself upon any little pretences over the rest of the mass, wherein it lay in common pollution and wretchedness?

Or if we hope that we are called and sanctified and become the children of God, who was it made the difference? Was it not the free mercy of God that called us and wrought the divine change in us? What is there for us to boast of? Let us allow those who we think are yet uncalled and unchanged by grace all the natural excellencies and moral qualifications that belong to them, and not fully and darken the evidences of our own christianity by a haughty and scornful carriage toward our neighbours.

Let us remember yet further, that many others are called and renewed and sanctified as well as we, and perhaps have brighter evidences of their graces, and bear up the character of the children of God with more honour than we do: And we should think so too if our pride and conceit would but suffer us to see their shining virtues, their exalted piety. If we could but maintain such thoughts as these we should not assume such haughty airs, such insolence of language over our fellow worms, that are crept out of the same bed of meanness and defilement, and some of them perhaps have a larger share of purifying grace than our selves.

Or had I but a due degree of self-abatement, how swift and ready should I be to spy out the virtues which my neighbour possesses, and to pay due honour to all his valuable qualifications; even as the proud, the envious, and the malicious spirits are ready to spy out the blemishes of their fellows and to expose them.

It is the voice of the humble man concerning his poor neighbour, "Though he may not have so much of this world as God has given to me, yet, perhaps, he has a larger and fairer interest in the inheritance on high: He may not have such a large acquaintance with human sciences because he has not had the advantages which I have enjoyed, but perhaps he is richer in grace, and has laid up a better treasure against a day to come. It may be he is not so much acquainted with courts and palaces, he has little to do with chariots and horses and rich equipage, but perhaps he is more acquainted with God, oftener at the gates of heaven, and nearer a-kin to the spirits made perfect, to the saints and angels on high." Thus he prefers his neighbour in the honours of the invisible world, while in all things visible he is much superior to him: Thus he fulfils the advice of *St. Paul* to the *Philippians*, chapter ii. verse 3. and "in lowliness of mind esteems others better than himself."

Such a happy spirit as this reigning within us will utterly forbid us to fall in with a word of scandal when it is going current round the room: A wretched but a common crime! Humble souls ever carry about them such a constant sense of their own defects and follies that they dare not help onward the flying reproach. They find so many errors in their own lives that they cannot dwell with delight on the blemishes of their fellow-mortals. An inward consciousness and shame blushes in their bo-

Toms, and imposes silence upon their lips : Or perhaps compassion awakens them to make some apology for the absent sufferer, or to strike the scandal dead with a word of just reproof.

If we have a low opinion of our selves, our eyes will never acquire the disdainful cast, nor learn the scornful airs of those who are full of self. Our lips will never assume the haughty tone and the insolent language of the proud in heart. "Speak not;" say they to their inferior friends, "we do not want your prattle, while I am here : Answer not when I give my opinion : Do what I require, be silent and dumb : Do you not know who it is speaks to you?" At another time they will forbid you their company: "go out of my sight, avoid my presence, it is not fit I should be seen in your company, you have neither dress nor manners fit to appear. So the haughty hypocrites in the days of *Isaiab* the prophet, "Stand by thy self for I am holier and better than thou." *Isai. lxxv. 5.* So the proud mortals of every age publish and pronounce their scorn of those, whom providence has placed but a little below them.

Such sort of language, indeed, should scarce ever be used by masters to their own menial servants, but where the servant is very assuming, or intolerably impertinent : But for persons to treat lower friends or acquaintance at this rate, gives too evident a signal of a proud spirit.

Where the eyes and the lips have learned these disdainful and imperious airs, it is exceeding hard to unlearn them. A peacock may almost as soon be untaught to spread his gay feathers, or the seas and the winds untaught to swell and roar, as a man full of self to put off his insolence, to stand upon a level with his fellows, and to treat those about him with affability and candour, who are in any respect inferior to him.

Watch, O my soul, against the first secret motions of vanity : when thy inward thoughts begin to swell and thy heart to exalt itself, watch against every haughty air, against the high look and the scornful tone ; watch and subdue the earliest workings of pride ; for if they gain but a little indulgence and strength, all the powers of thy reason will not be able to subdue them, and they will create thee long and heavy toil to gain the victory after many sore vexations of spirit, nor wilt thou ever become a humble creature without the abundant aids of divine grace.

II. If we have low thoughts of our selves we shall be thankful for every design of kindness which our neighbours express towards us, nor shall we scorn the good offices of the meanest, though perhaps we can receive little or no advantage by them. God the glorious and the sublime, who inhabits eternity and dwells above the praises of his highest angels, looks down upon the heart of every humble worshipper here on earth, and receives our little worthless services with a smile of approbation : If there be a willing mind the gift is accepted according to what the giver is able to offer ; *2 Cor. viii. 12.* nor are the two mites of a widow neglected or disdained in the treasury of our God, *Luke xxi. 2.* Remember, O my heart, the divine example, and be an imitator of the blessed God in this respect, who made thee to wear his own image.

But mark how the haughty man who is full of self receives the offers of kindness from his inferior. He scarce vouchsafes to cast an eye upon them unless it be in scorn : Thus he upbraids his neighbour with his poverty : He treats his humble civilities with contempt, and despises all his good-will : Merit and modesty blush and sink down before him, and die under his frowns. O vile idea of a haughty scorner, who puts modesty to the blush and lets merit die.

III. The



III. The humble man who has low thoughts of himself is beloved of men as well as of God, and gains the favour of all around him. He remembers that it is of one bloud God has made all nations, and he is moulded of the same dust with his fellows, and he thinks rather of those essentials of human nature wherein he lies upon a level with the meanest son of *Adam*, than of those accidental differences of wit or wealth which have raised him above some of his fellows. He knows that others have a right to some degrees of love and esteem as well as himself, they have some pretence to understanding and merit as well as he.

If the poor and the ignorant ask him a question, though it be an impertinent one, he does not turn short upon them with a smart and surly speech, nor turn away with a disdainful silence: He makes the child and the servant love him by the soft and friendly answer he gives even to their needless queries. His behaviour to his inferiors has something in it so engaging, that there is not the meanest figure of mankind goes from his presence without a pleasing image of his goodness left upon their minds.

When he comes into company with his equals, he does not seize the dictator's chair, nor affect to shew himself in any superior forms. He comes to learn rather than to instruct, and not only gives others leave to speak in their turn, but he hears their opinion with patience and pleasure, and pays due deference to all the appearances of reason in their discourse, though he may sometimes happen to prefer his own sentiment. He is not fond of ingrossing the talk to himself, nor of filling up the hour of conversation with hearing his own discourse, or speaking his own praises: He limits the motions of his tongue, he pays to every one the rights of society, and he enjoys the esteem and love of all. Humility carries in it all the sincere arts of complaisance, and is the shortest way to form and accomplish the man of breeding.

But a swelling haughty creature is a hateful thing. Insolence of heart and tongue are forbidding qualities. "A proud look is an abomination to the Lord," and an abhorred thing amongst men. *Prov.* xvii. 6. Such persons may be feared but they are never loved: They may have many cringes and compliments paid to them by their neighbours, but they have no room in their esteem, no place in their heart. *Prov.* xxiv. 9. "A scorner is an abomination to men:" He that takes this road to grandeur widely mistakes his way, for he often ruins his interest instead of advancing it. And if he should happen to arrive at greatness he leaves behind him the more virtuous and tasteful pleasures of friendship and love: If he could but hear with what contempt and hatred he is treated behind his back, he would indure much anguish of soul with inward shame and lasting vexation: And it is pity but he should hear it sometimes, to punish at least, if not to cure his insolence.

Has divine providence raised me to any accidental degrees of elevation above my neighbours, let my heart seek their love rather than their fear: Let me find proper seasons to place myself as it were upon a level with them with all due and condescending decency, and thus let me seek and obtain the esteem and hearty benevolence of mankind, and particularly of those whom providence has placed beneath me. There is an art of bearing up one's highest character and dignity amongst men without the haughty airs, the exalted eye-brow and the insolent tone of voice.

IV. Low and humble thoughts of our selves will teach us to bear the admonition of our friends with a gentler temper, and receive the blessing with a return of thankfulness: We shall sustain the reproaches of our enemies also with a greater calm of soul, and stand the rudest shock of calumny with a more steady patience.

What

What is it but the pride of our hearts, and the great and sacred image which we frame of our selves, that makes us so hasty to resent the softest admonition of a friend? Our hearts and lips stand always ready pressed to vindicate our whole conduct, and sometimes we let loose our fire and thunder on a sudden upon those who give us the most friendly rebuke. Self is our shining idol, and no man must dare to suppose there is any blemish or spot upon it. Therefore we repay the kindest advice with railing, and revile men for the greatest benefit they can bestow upon us. We form so innocent and so venerable an idea of our selves, we fancy our beloved selves to be wise, so unblameable and perfect, that we cannot endure to hear or suspect there are any failings belonging to us, and we resent it as an high offence when they are pointed out to us by the gentlest hand. We are jealous of every thing that opposes our opinion, that censures our conduct, or in the most friendly language discovers our mistakes: Passion and resentment are ever upon the watch and stand ready to take the alarm; the eyes and the tongue are swift to discover the inward ferment, to publish and betray the pride of the heart. O that each of us would but honestly enquire, "Is this my picture? Are these the features of my soul? Do I ever wear this aspect, or assume these airs?" But alas, which of us, O my friends, is entirely innocent and blameless here? How few follies had any of us carried into aged life, if we had not had too much pride and self-flattery to invite and encourage the admonitions of our acquaintance, who saw these budding fooleries in younger years? But we were too rich, or too wise, or too vain to bear a reprover; and thus our vices are grown up with us to shame our grey hairs, and are now too much mingled with our natures ever to be rooted out.

While we maintain this temper of mind, it is no wonder we cannot bear the ruder reproaches of the world, nor confine our selves in that dangerous moment within any bounds of sobriety or patience. We kindle on a sudden into undue rage, we swell and burn with inward indignation and indulge our lips in a wild revenge: Or sometimes perhaps the pride of our souls mingled with a particular constitution of body sinks under the assaults of scandal with a shameful cowardise, and almost dies with abjectness of spirit; for courage is not always an attendant upon pride: The vain man is not always a hero.

Oh unhappy creature, that is thus galled inwardly with every stroke of the tongues of men! That vexes and frets it's own peace away for want of due honours from the world! All the comforts and blessings of life are insipid or dis-relishing, all the grandeur of circumstances, the sun-shine of heaven, and the gaiety of the seasons, have no power to relieve or support us. The soul of *Haman* amidst all his honours of state and his endless treasures is still pining away with inward vexation, and his life languishes from day to day, because *Mordecai* does not rise up to him and pay his compliments.

Have a care, O my soul, of copying after this wretched character: Have a care of swelling to these painful dimensions of pride, lest thou render all the comforts of life tasteless for want of some little punctilio of honour which the world will not pay thee. Look upon thy self as a weak mortal, as a creature capable of mistake and folly; this thought will keep the avenues of thy soul ever free and open for the counsels and warnings of thy friends, and make a kind and faithful admonition as welcome as a word of vain applause. And even when enemies reproach thee, thou wilt be suspicious of thy self whether thou hast not deserved the reproach: Thou wilt make a fresh scrutiny into thy own heart, and enquire there in secret, what real truth may be mingled with the unjust revilings of men: And thus thou wilt be powerfully awakened to subdue every vice, to abandon every folly that tar-

nishes

nishes thy character, and make use of the rough language of a malicious world to burnish thy virtues and to keep them ever shining.

V. The lower esteem we have of our selves, the more easily shall we be pleased with persons and things round about us: We shall be more unmoved at the little accidents of life which may happen to cross our humour, and we shall rather pity than terrify those who chance to displease us where the will was not in it. What is it that fires our resentment at every little mistake or supposed mistake of those that attend on us? What is it rouses our angry passions at every real or fancied miscarriage of those with whom we converse? What is the spring of all this tumult of soul, this inward disturbance, but the vain and exalted idea which we have conceived of our selves? As though we must be exempted from the common laws and incidents of our frail and mortal state?

Let us colour over our guilt with the kindest salvo's, yet it is a certain truth, pride and passion are near a-kin, and they are most times joined together in the temper of men and in the conduct of life: Passion and pride are thus united in the descriptions of sin and in the rules of duty both in the books of morality and in the language of scripture. *Prov. xxi. 24.* "Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath." *Prov. xiii. 10.* "Only by pride cometh contention." Indulge the one and you support the other: Subdue the one and the other is in a great measure prevented or suppressed.

Indeed a man will much sooner confess his passion than his pride: You will hear him sometimes acknowledging to his friend, "It is the frailty of my nature, this cursed passion! I am of a warm and hasty temper: May God and man forgive me!" But you scarce ever hear him say, "This pride is my folly, this pride is my secret iniquity." Yet I was once acquainted with a christian of a hasty and passionate temper, who has many years since left his frailties in the grave, and he would confess with freedom and with a becoming sense of his sin, that there was no passion without some degrees of pride.

VI. If we maintain a mean opinion of our selves we shall be much more ready to practise benevolence in a disinterested manner, and to deny our selves for the conveniency of those about us: We shall not be ever projecting to exalt and gratify self, nor shall we think it so hard or painful a thing to be put out of our own way and our course a little, and abate of our own convenience in some instances in order to give some greater conveniency to our friends.

Self-denial is one of the first lessons in the school of *Christ*. *Matth. xvi. 34.* "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself:" We must learn to mortify our own humour if we would be approved of *Christ* or beloved of men.

The proud and haughty man is generally so selfish that he can never love his neighbour as he ought to love him, because his opinion of self rises so high as to deserve and engross all his kind affections. Let him make what pretences he will to friendship and goodness; let him labour in works of beneficence and feed the hungry and clothe the naked, yet in all his schemes, contrivances and labours he has still some secret design for his beloved self: As his imagination swells with this dear idea, so his wishes and projects are ever full of it, even when he would fain appear to practise a disinterested zeal for the good of others.

If self and what belongs to self is well, all is well: If self and family be rich and happy, all is right, the man is tolerably easy: But if any thing crosses his purposes and

and the wishes and humours of his heart, nothing is right, nothing is well: His complaints shall be heard aloud and the man can find no rest.

Oh! if we could but keep this dear self from reigning, we should not be so narrow-spirited and begin and end our projects in the little circle of self: We should not fret and storm at every thing that interrupts our pleasures or that interferes with our present designs: We should not rise up in fury nor be lavish of our loud reproaches against every thing that disturbs our ease or our indolence. We shall not then think our selves worthy of such honour and reverence, as though every thing about us must be made to submit to our purposes, and yield to our humours. We shall be content to permit others to have some inclinations, some desires, some conveniencies, as well as our selves; and not imagine that the world was made only for our pleasure, nor even the inferior parts of it merely to obey us. It is only the good and the humble man who tastes satisfaction in the welfare of his inferiors, who relishes the pleasures of his fellow-creatures, and he feels a real and sincere delight to see every one around him made cheerful and easy, though sometimes it may be at the expence of his own ease and convenience. These are joys which pride has never tasted.

The man of haughty thoughts and airs has very little acquaintance with the golden rule of equity that our saviour has given us, "to deal with others as we desire them to deal with us." He scarce ever concerns himself to reflect how tenderly he would wish to be treated, if he were in the place of those whom he treats so rudely. His pride will not suffer him so much as to suppose himself there. He does not ask himself, "How would this disdain, this overbearing insolence, this disturbance and disappointment sit upon my heart if my neighbour treated me in this manner?" Surely no mortal would resent it more painfully than himself; and yet he is utterly regardless what pain he gives to his fellow-creatures by this his scornful behaviour. He may call himself a christian, but I know not who will believe him, while he makes it appear to all men that he has nothing to do with that divine rule of love which our blessed saviour borrowed from *Moses* and gave it to all his followers: "Love thy neighbour as thy self."

When I feel my self impatient of the least disappointment, when I take no thought to make my neighbour easy, but grow furiously zealous to maintain my own humour at the expence of the ease or the conveniency of all about me, how unlike am I to the blessed *Jesus*, who had a nobler self than any mere creature; and yet he denied it, even in the tenderest instances of reputation and of life itself for the good of his people? *Rom. xv. 3.* Whence *St. Paul* derives this holy inference, verse 1, 2. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please our selves: But let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: For even *Christ* pleased not himself." And the blessed apostle has added his own character to confirm and enforce this practice of virtue and goodness. *1 Cor. ix. 19—23.* "I have made myself a servant to all that I might gain the more: To the weak I became as weak that I might win their souls: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some; and this I do, that I may be partaker of the blessings of the gospel together with you." O happy souls, in whom this humble and holy temper prevails! Happy souls indeed, who are so dear to God, so much a-kin to *Christ* and so zealous of the peace and happiness of men!

## S E C T I O N IV.

*The advantages of humility with regard to our selves.*

**T**HUS I have finished the second rank of advantages derived from a low esteem of our selves, *viz.* Those which relate to our fellow-creatures. I come now to consider in the

Last place, What are the advantages of this virtue with regard to our selves, to our own improvement and happiness.

I. We shall not be so positive and rooted in all our own opinions, nor so incapable of discerning or rectifying our mistakes. It is of considerable importance to a fallible creature to know that he is liable to a mistake as well as his fellows, that he may search out and correct his errors: But the man who is full of self is never mistaken: He has no opinion to be dropped or altered, no retractation to make: Rash as he is, yet he has no errors to be corrected in his own esteem, and therefore he lives and dies in full possession of many falsehoods and in the daily practice of many follies. Pride is one vice, but it supports a hundred.

What is it but the over-weening conceit of our being wiser and better than others that renders us constantly so tenacious of all our opinions, and deaf to all further enquiries and reasonings? What is it makes us set up for dictators to the world with so much frontless assurance, and fix our own sentiments as a test and standard of truth? All the learned sciences and the affairs of common life, trade and politics, mechanic arts, poetry and morals, are the daily subjects of these infallible declaimers, both at the table, and the coffee house, and in private visits, and yet more eminently at the tavern: There indeed the wine brightens every idea into truth, it raises the courage and the voice together, and establishes every man triumphant in his own opinion. The vain creature knows all things.

But one would think that the sacred and sublime topics of religion should be treated with a more doubtful and ingenuous modesty; especially where the holy writers themselves are not very express and positive in their determinations. One would think there should be some abatements to our confidence, and that we might sometimes speak with a holy fear and suspicion of our understandings in points of the most abstruse and divine argument, where wise and good men have often been divided. Alas for our pride and folly! For our wretched ignorance and our shameful conceit! Let Mr. *Baxter*, who was a man of great sagacity and a wise observer of human nature, set it before us in this admirable tetra-stich, wherein the verses are superior to many of their neighbours.

“ We croud about a little spark,  
Learnedly striving in the dark,  
Never more bold than when most blind,  
And we run fastest when the truth's behind.”

But we are generally too wise to tread one step back again, though it be to lay hold on the truth which we have out-run in our haste to assurance. We have sometimes found it in our selves and observed it in others that the firmness of a pretended orthodoxy has not been always derived from light and evidence: Want of humility in the heart

is too often the reason why we have no want of confidence in our opinions, whether they be true or false. The boldest and most peremptory assertions are no criterions of truth: Nor are they always the result of a sincere and unbiassed examination, but the fruit of our own conceit and of the high esteem of our own understandings: We are sure we have been in the right even from our early years, or at least from the day of manhood, and we desire to be no wiser, nor can any man make us so.

It is granted there may be some subjects that we have searched to the bottom, we have seen them through and through; and by much labour and argument we are able to pronounce upon them with just assurance. This may be allowed sometimes even to a wise and a modest speaker: But what is it, my friends, that emboldens the bulk of mankind, to talk with such a decisive air upon all manner of themes as they do, when they have read or studied almost nothing of the matter? Hast thou found out, O man, every truth in the heights and the depths, and known every secret thing so well as to be incapable of mistaking? What inspires thee to dictate as though thou only wert the man of knowledge, and wisdom must die with thee? What is it but vanity and fulness of self that gives any man such assuming airs, and such an overbearing manner in conversation, that others must not be suffered to speak, while he must be heard with silence and attention? Nor is silence and attention enough without a submissive faith. If you dare to doubt of what the tongue of pride pronounces, you dare to be impudent in his opinion, and he is ready to tell you so to your face. What is it else but this inward arrogance that casts a scornful eye on any one in the company who dares to offer at an argument against his positions? And a contemptuous scoff is thought sufficient to refute the noblest reasoning. What is it but pride and a domineering spirit that tempts any man to oblige others to bind their understandings and their consciences for ever down to every punctilio of his own opinions, and reverence every sentence as though the pen of the divine truth had written them? Happy had it been for the christian world if this assuming and imposing spirit had never been found, but only and always on the heretical side! Then we should have had a more evident and distinguished token where to seek for truth, that is, where this pride and tyranny of souls had no place. But alas, this is a vain and fruitless wish! Every nation of christendom has felt the infection and the mischief. Even the old idol at *Rome* with all his infallibility and thunder could scarcely demand more sovereignty over our belief than the positive men of our age even in the land of liberty.

But to proceed, What is it but our pride that breaks in upon the discourse of many a wiser person than our selves? We are impatient to set forth our own talent of talking, and at the same time to publish our arrogance and shame, and perhaps our nonsense too. Truth and merit are often modest, while ignorance and folly sound their trumpet, and the brass will make itself heard while gold and jewels shine in silence.

Again, What is it but this fulness of self that makes persons so unable to bear the least contradiction, even in the common affairs of life? They grow pale with anger or kindle into rage when any of their sentiments are opposed; they feel the inward ferment working and boiling up when their neighbour dares to be of another mind: And it is seldom that they have power or inclination to conceal their resentment: It generally boils over at their lips and betrays the secret fire. Some passionate speech, some wrathful word or other breaks from their tongue and gives notice of their impatience and high displeasure. What is all this but the fruit of pride and self-sufficiency?

If men had a lower esteem of themselves, they would not always maintain such a full assurance, that truth and justice are ever on their side. By this assuming behaviour they forbid all instruction, they stop all the avenues of reason and knowledge, by which further light might enter into their souls and rectify any mistaken sentiment. There is no man lies so far out of the road of illumination and true wisdom, as he that is already very sure his opinions are all sun-beams. *Prov. xxvi. 12.* "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him."

It is with secret pleasure and inward esteem that I have often read those four lines which that excellent man doctor *John Owen* wrote under his own effigies.

" Umbra refert fragiles dederint quas cura dolorque  
 Reliquias, studiis assiduusque labor.  
 Mentem humilem sacri servantem limina veri  
 Votis supplicibus qui dedit, ille videt."

Which may be rendered thus in english.

" This shadow shews the frail remains  
 Of care and grief and studious pains.  
 The mind in humble posture waits  
 A suppliant at truth's sacred gates,  
 To find some gleams of light appear,  
 And he that gave it, sees it there."

What an elegance of humility lies couched in the last line, as it were retired from the eye of man, and seen to God only!

But let not any of us imagine that a subscription to this great man's doctrines of grace, or a zealous vindication of his most evangelical opinions is a sufficient proof of a humble spirit. We may depress and even nullify the pride and power of fallen man with a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency. So *Diogenes* the cynic or dogged philosopher is said to have set his dirty feet upon some fine furniture of *Plato's* bed, and then he boasted himself that he had sunk down and humbled the pride of *Plato*: Yes, replied the more civil philosopher, and that with a greater load of pride. We may talk of our own vileness and nothingness with haughty and vain-glorious language, and defend the most self-abasing doctrines of the gospel with an arrogant and imperious temper. Give me the man that lays nature low before God under a living sense and consciousness of it's guilt and wretchedness and impotence; who appears to feel every word that he speaks, and his style and his airs are all as humble as his divine doctrine represents him. It is possible for us to take the language of heaven upon our lips with a hell of fire and pride in our hearts, and support even truth or grace itself with intolerable and shameful haughtiness.

II. As a low esteem of self will help us against many errors of the mind, so it will guard us against the follies of the humourist, which are a vice of the will. The wise and lowly mind has very few humours or unreasonable inclinations, and therefore he feels but little vexation or disquietude. He can conform himself to present circumstances without pain, there is no difficulty to please him, he finds an easy chair in every room of his house. It is the humourist that creates perpetual vexation to himself as well as to all around him: You must watch as for your life, if you would

never offend him; you must be observant of all his motions and comport with every notice of his pleasure: You can hardly move or speak, but you speak or move amiss: And if you would correct your mistake by doing the reverse of what you did before, this may be quite wrong also, and it is scarce possible for you to be in the right. So difficult, so tiresome, so impracticable a thing it is to please these vain animals, these pettish or wayward creatures, these everlasting children, which are grown to the size of men and women.

Methinks I hear them disdain the name of child and resent my description: But let them go on with their disdain and resentment, and swell with their own manly idea: Yet let them know that till they put off these childish and humorous behaviours, they are but infants in longer garments, with all that high opinion and that overgrown esteem they have of themselves. They must begin their education again and unlearn these follies, if ever they would find sincere honour among men of wisdom and goodness. What claim, what pretence has that man to the esteem and love of men whose conduct is insupportable to all those who converse or dwell with him? And what is it but the vast and vain idea he has of himself, that tempts him to suppose, his will must be the absolute rule of duty and submission to all who are near him or concerned with him?

Let such persons declaim against tyranny as often and as loud as they please, and argue upon the theme with much wit and reason; let them talk of liberty and slavery in philosophical and just discourses, and appear the most forward and zealous patrons of the freedom of mankind, yet if they were exalted to a throne they would be very tyrants, and the world around them must be all their slaves. Native vice and inbred iniquity would prevail even above their own good reasonings, and mould their practice into that absolute sovereignty and dominion which their own mind and conscience must ever condemn, and which their own lips at special seasons have so plentifully and so justly exposed.

This is sufficiently evident by their conduct wheresoever they happen to have power: They are already little tyrants in their own little dominions, and if they have but one inferior belongs to them, he shall know and feel that they are lords and masters. If their will be crossed in some common affair of life, their loud complaints shall break out at the windows and the doors: The walls of the house shall echo with the sound of their indignation, till the neighbours are alarmed and enquire into the domestic mischief. You shall see these sons of humour rise from their table in a fury and renounce their food: The breast swells with inward passion and leaves no room for the refreshments of nature: The servants fly scattering into corners for fear: The peace of their dearest relatives is broken, the order of the family thrown into wild confusion, and tempest rises so high in their own bosom, that it will require some hours to calm and compose it. Pride and humour have raised a storm, and it is no small labour to reduce the passions to peace, to smooth all the billows that roar and roll within, and to make the countenance serene again.

And after all, what is the cause of this tumult? What gross and unpardonable crime gave occasion for such resentment and violence? Perhaps dinner was not set upon the table exactly at the appointed moment, the clock has struck five minutes and the table is not covered; or it may be the cook has not performed her part to such a precise degree of nicety and elegance as the master expected, or as the mistress had taught her. "This dish is so insipid and seasoned so low, it is impossible to eat it, and the other is nothing but salt and fire." It is strange that for both these reasons the passions must burn and the heart broil with fury: "What, saith he, shall I never be



be gratified at my own table?" Or it is frosty weather, and the plates are not quite warm enough, and therefore the master kindles; "must I still be served so? Have ye all conspired that I shall eat a cold dinner to day?" And yet this man professes to be a philosopher, a man of virtue; he disdains to be led by that mean and brutal thing called appetite, and talks much of subduing the passions. I wish he could but suppose he had any to be subdued.

Or perhaps a word is inadvertently spoken in the dining room which used to be forbidden there; perhaps some grave and serious theme is started in a jovial hour, or some innocent mirth at another time is thought to be unseasonably introduced. Let the cause be what it will, the ear receives the sudden offence, pride feels the affront, the soul ferments into wrath, the tongue gives reproof in thunder and sets the softer part of the household all in tears.

The next day a plate is let fall from a servant's hand, or a glass is broken and the wine spilled on the floor; and if one were to judge of the mischief done by the degree of the sudden clamour, one would be ready to imagine that the pillars of the house were shaken or thrown down, and the outcry gave notice of immediate ruin and death.

My reader, it may be, will presently enquire, where this house stands? and where is this wretched character to be found?

I confess I was never yet so unhappy as to live in such a family, nor was I ever an eye-witness to these disorders. I must acknowledge also that I know not the persons nor the door of their house: Perhaps they are dead, and the rising generation may be grown calmer and wiser: Nor will I presume to say where any of their kindred dwell; but I fear we need not go far to seek them. It is well if there be any street in this great city which cannot shew us such an inhabitant: It is well if a month can pass away in any town in *Great-Britain*, without some such ferment of pride and passion, some domestic tumult which has this unhappy original\*.

Mark the tempestuous scene, O my soul, mark it wheresoever it occurs with just and everlasting abhorrence; and stand aloof from the vice that raised it. Pursue and practise, O my heart, the lovely virtue of humility: Acquire and maintain a low idea of thy self; then thou wilt bear to have thy humour thwarted, and thy own will opposed without such clamorous and sounding consequences; thou wilt bear the cross incidents of life without the ruffle and disturbance of thy own inward powers; without the pain and terror of thy kindred and friends, and without giving half the street notice of thy folly.

But, "strange doctrine is this," saith the master of the house, "must I not bear rule in my own family? Must I not be heard," says the mistress, "and obeyed by my own servants? Must not the authority of a father appear among his children, and the mother demand due honour?" Yes by all means: And the superior character should always appear and shine bright before the household in the wisdom of the command or reproof, and not by the loud and haughty words or the terrible airs of the

\* I almost reprove my self here and suspect my friends will reprove me for introducing such low scenes of life, and such trivial occurrences into a grave discourse. I have put the matter into the balances as well as I can, and weighed the case, and the result is this. General and distant declamations seldom strike the conscience with such conviction as particular representations do; and since this iniquity often betrays itself in these trivial instances, it is better perhaps to set them forth in their full and proper light than that the guilty should never feel a reproof, who by the very nature of their distemper are unwilling to see or learn their own folly, unless it is set in a glaring view.

the reprover. The authority of a parent or a master has but a poor support where is maintained with such unreasonable and noisy resentments.

Thus far concerning wrath and tyranny of the violent and sonorous kind: But pride and humour in some complexions have their private and fullen airs, as well as in others the founding and the clamorous ones. The soul may be full of self and the man an intolerable humourist, and yet never shake the house, or affright the neighbourhood. Should you happen to cross his will in a trifling instance, he puts on a sudden gloom of countenance and assumes a forbidding brow without a single word from his lips; and sometimes it is hard to know what has offended him. Here the haughty and the fullen humours mingle their cursed influences; the soul is like a prisoner in majesty, the wretch stalks about in dark resentment and supercilious silence: a short and disdainful sentence full of spite and rancour and fire shall break out at certain intervals and give notice of the hell within. The proud wrath which is pent up in the bosom as in a close and boiling furnace, must have time to vent itself by slow degrees; in a day or two, or sometimes more, perhaps the ferment may subside, and the man return to his speech again, and to his hours of business, of food and rest. But after all the poisonous leaven is left still within, and waits only for some new occasion to heave and swell and raise a fresh disturbance. I name the man only in this cursed and hateful character; if the softer sex should find it working in themselves, I leave them to be their own reprovers.

Dread the thoughts, O my heart, of such a frantic and self-punishing iniquity. Suppress all haughty conceits of thy own worth and grandeur, lest meeting with some unhappy ferments of blood and complexion of humours they work up into such a world of mischief. Have a care of magnifying the image of thy self, and thou wilt not become a slave to such unmanly humours, such haughty and fullen airs, or such wild and unruly hurricanes of spirit. Let the fond child cry and roar because his play-thing is broken: Let the fool storm or grow fullen because his will is thwarted; let the dog bark, and the ox bellow, when the brutal choler is roused within them; but remember thou art a man, a reasonable creature, a christian. It becomes thee well to know thy self, and to govern thy conduct and thy temper. Do not over-rate thy own fancy or appetite, nor be too fond of thy own will. Be not violent in any of thy desires: All thy inclinations and thy aversions to the indifferent and common things of life should be but feeble and indifferent: Do not thou imagine thy self worthy of such a profound subjection of the wills and humours of all mankind to thy own will and humour. Remember, O my soul, thou art upon a level with all other men in the world, in many more instances than those few things, wherein providence has raised thee above them.

III. The man who has low thoughts of himself, is not ever in pain to publish his own excellencies, nor seeking to proclaim his own qualifications and honours. Though his zeal for God and his desire of the good of men forbid him to wrap his talent in a napkin, yet you find him rather backward at first to appear, and not hafty and zealous to display himself. He hardly hears even the voice of providence when it calls him forth to arise and shine. He is so fearful of exaltation among the great, so sensible of his own defects, and pays so much honour to his fellows, that he thinks many a one fitter to perform public-offices than himself, and to sustain public honours. "Less than the least is his motto," and therefore he often hides himself as unworthy to be seen, and below the notice of the world.

But

But if the world should happen to be so just to merit and virtue as to raise the humble man from his obscure circumstances, and fix him in a point of light and honour, he shall be the last man that proclaims the justice which the world hath done him, and ascribes it all to the favour of God and man. He carries none of those meannesses about him by which little souls always distinguish themselves, and betray and expose their folly; for they are vainly fond of their own new title and character, and speedy in demanding due notice of it from others. The humble man practised the true sublime in his lower station, and you see nothing exalted in him now, though his inward worth is rendered more conspicuous. His friends and his kindred find the same man still. His garments of honour sit close about him and swell not his figure or appearance. His titles add nothing to his own idea of himself, nor do they tempt him to assume any peculiar airs. He does not imagine that his opinions are now grown more sacred or more worthy to be imposed, nor does he give a loose to any of his passions with more freedom or sovereignty. Before the hour of his advancement he was a diamond in a cabinet, and he shone at home and gave light and beauty to what was near him: And now he is the same jewel set in a public ornament of gold to glitter and give light to the world, but he owns that he borrows it all from heaven. Place him on high and displace him again, his constant business is to approve himself to God and to remember that he is but a man.

How different a character is this from what multitudes assume in our day? How many are impatient of obscurity and yet worthless of observation! They are daily and hourly pushing forward into every company and fond of shewing themselves to the world betimes, while their talents are very few and their furniture exceeding slender. The vain man is not content to enjoy the common pleasures of conversation, but he assumes the first place in it, and affects to outshine all the circle. He is not satisfied to have said a wise or a witty thing upon a proper occasion, or to tell it perhaps to a friend, but without any occasion at all, he must once a week, repeat his wise sayings to the world: He makes them often hear his jests over again till they are weary, and is ever acquainting new company with the pert repartees that he had made some days before. These forward and conceited creatures will make the world know all their talents of body and mind, and will carefully spread abroad those possessions of equipage or title, which help to support their pride: and as a noble author expresses, "they are so top-full of self that they spill it upon all the company:" and a nobler person than he confirms the reason, "Out of the abundance of their heart the mouth speaketh:" *Matth. xii. 34.* And surely if the vessel of the heart were not brim-full of self it would not be always running over at the lips. They regard not the advice of the wisest of men, *Prov. xxvii. 2.* "Let another praise thee and not thy own mouth; not thy lips, but the lips of a stranger."

Besides these vain and shameless boasters there is another tribe of creatures who are as vain adorers of self; but they put on a disguise that they may more effectually and secretly secure the praises of their dear and beloved idol. You shall hear them now and then invent an occasion, without any incident leading to it, to drop some lessening word concerning themselves that the company may give them the pleasure of contradicting them. It is not that these appearing self-abasers believe a word of what they say, nor is it said with a desire that you should believe them when they express their mean esteem of their own talents or virtues; but they are exceeding fond to hear themselves talked of to advantage, and when they give you this occasion they expect your civility should incline you to take it. These persons are always angling for praise, and some of them practise it in so gross and inartificial a manner,

that

that the design of their vanity too plainly discovers itself. The bait is lost because the hook appears; and when they have made a speech of their own unworthiness, the company sometimes is so just and so wise as to allow them to be in the right, and so complaisant as not to contradict them: But then how abject, how mortified and simple they look under the painful disappointment! They fished for honour and to their sore regret they caught the truth.

O when shall this haughty thing self unlearn all its vanity? When shall we be content to be unseen and unnoticed in the world? To be unknown, as *Jesus* the Son of God was, for thirty years together? *Jesus* the brightness of his Father's glory was content to be unknown in a world which he himself created: "He came into the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not," *John* i. 10. When shall it be that the professed followers of the blessed *Jesus* shall have no vain boasters among them, no seekers of their own glory, nor any greedy devourers of their own praises? The appetite of praise in the sense of the wisest of men is like the relish of honey: To eat too much of it takes away the refined pleasure, and to search out our own glory is not glory, *Prov.* xxv. 27. But in vain hath *Solomon* been preaching to these men from his own age till this day, for the voice of wisdom is not heard where pride and self maintain their dominion. They are blind and deaf to all instructors.

Yet it must be confessed there are some hours and occasions, there are some companies and occurrences in life which make it proper and almost necessary to speak of one's self to advantage: Prudence and religion should direct us how to distinguish those seasons and those occasions. A wise man when he is constrained to speak of his own character, or to support his own honour, feels a sort of inward uneasiness lest he should be taken for a vain glorious fool, and is even ashamed to speak, what is necessary for his own vindication, lest it appear like vanity and boasting. See this notably exemplified in the conduct of *St. Paul* the greatest of the apostles, who was furnished with more sublime talents and blessed with more illustrious success than all the messengers of the gospel of *Christ*. This very man who counts himself less than the least of all the saints, was once reviled by some upstarts in the *corinthian* church, who pretended to rival his office, and thus they lead his converts away from the truth: Then he was compelled to produce his own credentials, to display his own divine commission, and to make his superior qualifications known to the people. See the *2 Cor.* xi. 5, 6. "I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles: though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge: We have been throughly made manifest among you in all things:" And then he recounts his abundant labours, his abundant sufferings and his services to *Christ* and souls: But mark how often this man of heavenly wisdom represents this his conduct as acting like a fool, and he seems to blush at himself while he boasts himself a little, verse 16, &c. Let no man think me a fool indeed; but if you will think me so then as a fool receive me and permit me to proceed foolishly in this confidence of boasting: Are my rivals *Israelites*? So am I: Are they ministers of *Christ*? I speak as a fool, I am more: In labours, in sufferings, in deaths, more abundant than all of them can ever pretend to. Boasting of one's self in the judgment of a great apostle is so foolish a thing, that when wisdom itself requires him to practise it, he is quite ashamed of it, and almost expects that he shall be taken for a fool.

It is the sentiment of a very famous french author *Mr. Pascal*, that "true philosophy teaches men to be humble, to conceal self, to banish the word I, for the most part, out of our conversation; but christianity and the gospel have nullified and destroyed it." Yet, alas! what would some persons have to say in company, if you cut off from

from their lips the beloved theme of self? What could they find to talk of, if you debarred them of all the language of pride and envy; the language of pride wherein self is perpetually exalted, and the language of envy wherein their neighbours are lessened and reproached?

IV. The man who has a low opinion of himself is not so often affronted: he does not so easily take offence; and when he meets with real disgrace and contempt, he does not feel so sharp and painful a sensation of it as galls the heart of the sons of pride. He can bear with more ease that others should think meanly of him, because he first thinks meanly of himself: He is much better fitted to go through the world where every one must meet with some trials and some reproaches: He learns to bear the scandal of the world with a happy indifference, because he is not so solicitous about their applause: He does not lie so much exposed to disquieting passions by any inroads made upon his honour and fame, because he has a low esteem of himself, and is content without fame and honour.

But the proud and vain creatures who are full of self and have a high esteem of their own persons and their qualifications, you can hardly speak either to them: or of them, but you affront them, unless it be done in a flattering and submissive manner: and some are so humourful in their pride, that the very manner of this submission must be polite and fashionable, must be agreeable to their fancy, or else they are affronted and their choler is raised. The man of vanity imagines his character and his figure so exalted, as though he had a right to claim honour from all around him; and upon this account he has an unhappy right to assume to himself more affronts than others, and to vex himself with many resentments above and beyond his neighbours: The idea of his own quality entitles him to it.

“Well, let the vain man swell thus with his own idea, his grandeurs and his honours, let him maintain and exercise this painful and vexatious prerogative of continual resentment, while the God of heaven fills my heart with humility and peace. Then shall I stand aloof from these honourable follies, and be delivered from this disquieting and uneasy consciousness of my own merit: I shall be free from this troublesome and tormenting right of taking offence at every thing: I shall no more resent the little supposed neglects of my inferiors, nor tease my own heart with those shadows of an affront which a vain and busy fancy can create hourly. Grant, O my God, thou Father of my spirit, that there may be no dark corner in my heart to keep such hellish tinder in it, lest I should be kindled and fired with every flying spark.”

V. The man who is not wont to raise a great and high idea of himself can much more easily content himself in a middle station of life, without a fond and anxious pursuit of wealth and grandeur either for himself, or for his household. He can rest satisfied in a mean estate, if the providence of God so appoint it; for what is there in me, saith he, to deserve or expect riches or greatness among men? But he that carries about him an exalted image of his own worth is pushed on by ambition to climb up to pinnacles, and to venture upon methods dangerous to his soul and conscience, in order to acquire wealth as the support of equipage and grandeur. It is hardly possible for a mortal to be full of self, but he must be worldly-minded: Whereas if we are christians and the sons of heaven in this vain and perishing world, God speaks to us for the most part as he did to *Baruch*, Jer. xlv. 5. “Seekest thou great things for thy self, seek them not.”

“Stand thou, O my soul, among the ranks of humble christians; look on thy self as a pilgrim and stranger here; travel as a foreigner through this dangerous wilderness, and having food and raiment to supply thy wants and support thy journey, be content. It is not of much importance whether thou acquire large treasures of that sort of coin which will not pass in the city to which thou art travelling, nor can ever be remitted to thee by any forms of exchange. It is not of great moment whether thou receive titles and honours among foreigners in this strange country: These honours and titles, are the contempt of angels, and are of no account in thy native land, for thou art born from above. Live upon the views and hopes of thy fair inheritance on high, of honours prepared for thee at home in thy Father’s house, among the sons and daughters of God, among the angels of heaven, and spirits of just men made perfect.”

Alas! How contrary is the spirit of a christian to the spirit of this world! The one is all for self and shew and grandeur; the other abases self, lies at the foot of God, and is content without honour from men. This fulness of self is opposite to the very temper of the gospel, which requires us to be poor in spirit; and yet how ready are we to indulge it? How few are there among those who take up the name of christian that watch against this vice and labour to subdue it? Which of us can lay his hand upon his heart and say, “there is no pride dwells here?”

## S E C T I O N V.

### *The pretences of the poor, and the faint-hearted answered.*

**U**PON this challenge there are two sorts of men that rise up and deny the charge, and with their hand on their heart solemnly declare, there is no pride within them. These are the poor and the faint-hearted. Let us see what their pretences are to avoid this general accusation,

Can I be proud, saith the poor wretch, that labours for his daily bread, and can hardly procure it? If you would search for pride you must go to palaces and knock at the gates of quality. It is only the great and the rich among mankind who look big and despise their neighbour. They who prosper in the world, and increase in riches, who are surrounded with servants, and would be worshipped as little gods. *Psalms*. lxxiii. 6, 7, 8, 12. “It is their eyes which stand out with fatness, and because they have more than heart could wish, pride compasseth them about as a chain; it is they who talk loftily, and set their mouth against the heavens, they speak wickedly concerning the oppression of the poor: But what pride can be found with us? Our clothing is mean and tattered, our food is coarse and scanty, we have nothing to boast of, for we have hardly enough to live upon, and therefore we must needs be humble.

But search thy own heart, O man of poverty, nor let the poor among women neglect the same inward enquiry. Tell me, art thou content with that low station in which God hath placed thee? Is thy will and humour so far mortified, as to be brought down to thy condition? Dost thou not fancy thyself to have deserved something better? Dost thou submit to the will of God as wise, in making thee poor and not rich, a servant and not a master? Art thou so well acquainted with thy sins and follies as to lie low at the foot of God, and receive all the little portion that he gives thee as from mere grace? Art thou thankful for every mercy, and patient under all the pressing afflictions that attend thy low estate? Doth thy heart never rise against God the governor of the world, nor repine at his dispensations as though he had not treated thee

thee according to thy merit? Art thou humble enough to receive alms, if God hath given thee nothing of thy own? And art thou willing to be beholden to others for thy daily bread, and to accept thy portion in that way wherein God is pleased to dispense it without murmuring; He that promises his children in this world food and raiment, has never promised to give it them without dependence: There is no promise which binds him to maintain thy body and thy pride too.

: But let us search a little farther. Thou canst not swell among the great ones, nor talk much of thy self among thy equals, and affect a superiority and esteem above them? Dost thou not aggrandize thy self and swell in thy little station upon some supposed excellencies, either of beauty of the face, or strength of limbs, or sharpness of wit, or tallness of stature? Or perhaps thou art vain enough to betray thy pride even in the tokens of thy servitude, because thy livery is finer, or has more lace upon it than the coat of thy neighbour?

Ask thy self again, dost thou never set up for a chief talker in company, and dost thy heart never presume that thou art wiser than those above thee, without any just reason for it? Canst thou bear to be commanded by others, and contradicted by others and reprov'd by others without an inward rising ferment of wrath, and without returning a word of rash provocation? Art thou never inclined to rage and passion when thy ears take in a reproach? Canst thou bear an injury with such humble silence and forgive thy enemy as a christian ought to do? Art thou not as ready to give or to take offence as any of the rich and the great? And is it thy humility that inclines thee to take offence or to give it? Where there is little forbearance and little care to please in our conduct surely there is some pride at heart.

Upon the whole I suspect there are more quarrels and contentions among the poorest and meanest of the people than among the rich, and the high-born: And the wise man says, "*Prov. xiii. 10.* It is only from pride cometh contention." The polite education of the great teaches them to imitate humility and good humour, and by this means many a quarrel is prevented; whereas the poor who have been unbred and untaught betray their pride often, and often rush into clamorous contentions.

Let me ask thee yet further, art thou not too fond of some pre-eminence and honour even on a dunghill? Dost thou never despise in thy heart, and disdain those who seem to be inferior to thee in any respect? And yet at other times, art thou not too much ashamed of the rank of life where God has placed thee? Dost thou never abstain from any duties of religion, or duties of common life, merely because thou canst not make so good a figure among men as others do, and as thou desirest?

Enquire of thy self again, is thy behaviour among thy equals modest and meek, and always courteous and obliging? Dost thou never refuse any offices of friendly assistance to thy inferiors or thy equals, from a principle of pride working within thee? Dost thou never disdain to be taught by them; even in some things which thou dost not well know? There is no creature humble who is not teachable, and willing to learn what is necessary and proper to be known?

Ask thy self at last, art thou never humourfome and self-willed, never obstinate and unreasonably positive, answering thy superiors with wrath and rudeness? Art thou never gloomy and sullen after a rebuke? Is not thy spirit fretful when thy will is crossed, and thy humour thwarted? Dost thou never meditate revenge?

And now tell me, O son or daughter of poverty, tell me, hast thou no pride? Hast thou none of these symptoms of this mortal malady? No spots of this defilement of soul? No share in this universal crime of the children of Adam? Dost thou think that pride never inhabits a cottage, and never travels but in chariots and coaches?

Art thou so weak as to imagine that a thread-bare garment must needs cover a humble heart?

When thou hast honestly made all these enquiries which I have pointed out, I hope thy own heart will unlearn this mistake, and teach thee that thou hast not escaped this general guilt and folly. Some of the poorest of mankind have happened to be some of the proudest in my observation that I ever met with, and it is possible that others have made the same remark, though it must be owned their temptations to pride are less.

Let us enquire next of the faint-hearted man, the coward of soul, who flatters his infirmity, and thinks himself to be all humility and meekness. I own, saith he, I have a tenderness for my self, but I have no pride. If I am injured and reproached, I cannot well bear it, but I am all in tears; I tremble and answer not again: my soul sinks within me at the words of slander, and I die at the voice of a proud oppressor, surely this heart of mine is humble.

But tell me, O man, if thou hadst courage and power to revenge the affront, would thou be thus patient? If thou hadst wealth and dignity in the world to support thee, wouldst thou not retort the reproaches of thy adversary, and look down with a sort of disdain upon him who now disdains thee? It is impotence then and cowardice, but not humility which makes thee imitate patience and meekness. It is abjectness of spirit and want of power, and not christian lowliness, that renders thee so silent under injuries. *Christ Jesus* could command legions of angels to destroy his blasphemers; yet when he was reviled, he bore it patiently, and reviled not again: he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.

But tell me, friend, dost thou never revile those in secret who have reviled thee in public, and that without any plain call of providence to publish their crimes or follies and to expose them? Art thou not impatient and inwardly fretful under the hand of God or man beyond all reasonable degrees? Are not thy lips open in slander where those whom thou slanderest cannot hear thee? Art thou not ready sometimes to take offence at some innocent words that are spoken, and where perhaps an affront was never designed? How dost thou bear a contradiction to thy sayings or opposition to thy will? Dost thou not kindle into secret resentment, and let wrath burn inwardly on such occasions? Dost not thy bosom swell with indignation at such a season, though thou art afraid to vent it? What is it but an excessive tenderness for thy self, and undue love of honour and applause, and the high opinion that thou hadst formed of thy worth, that makes thee bear contempt and reproach so ill, and die under a word of slander?

Say again, What is it but the pride of thy heart that tempts thee never to acknowledge a mistake, but always to colour it over with a semblance of truth? Art thou a son or a daughter of *Eve*, and yet infallible and not capable of mistaking? Canst thou ever look back and remember the time when thou didst readily confess any folly, or say, I was mistaken or I acted amiss, and yet has not thy heart been sometimes sensible that thou wert in the wrong? What is it but pride then that makes these words so hard to be pronounced? It is not thy vanity of mind, and unreasonable esteem of thy self that forbids thee even to see thy error, or to confess thy fault, while all that are around thee behold thy mistake and thy misconduct? Is it thy humility that makes thee abound so much in thy own sense? Is it humility that raises such an anguish of heart, and such a painful vexation within, when thou art treated with small indecencies by thy fellow-creatures? Is it humility that ruffles thy temper, and tears thy spirit



spirit when thou art not esteemed and honoured according to thy worth? Or is it not rather excessive and criminal tenderness for self, and an overvalue of thy own merit? That is but poor virtue that cannot bear to be despised, but faints under a word of contempt and scorn; poor pretence to virtue indeed that cannot support itself under an affront from a fellow-worm.

I will readily grant that the rich and the mighty, and the bold and the high-spirited and the high-born among men, lie much more under temptations to pride; it is the very sin of their constitution or their condition in life, and perhaps they are more frequently guilty of this iniquity; but if we would all of us search our hearts honestly, and examine our conduct by sincere enquiries, there is not one of us either in high or low state would be able to excuse ourselves from this universal contagion and guilt, this original degeneracy and over-spreading blemish of human nature.

## S E C T I O N VI.

*The humility and exaltation of Christ proposed as our pattern.*

**A**MONG all the hearts that God ever made there have never been but three entirely free from this stain and poison; two of them were the hearts of *Adam* and *Eve* in the day of their innocence, and happy had it been for us, if pride had never found an entrance there. The third was the heart of the man *Jesus* who is God's most beloved son. It was amazing humility indeed in this glorious person the Son of God that he would condescend to be born a son of man, that he should leave the bosom of the Father and all the glories there to dwell in flesh and blood: And when he entered our world there was nothing round him but the signs of humiliation and the marks of deep abasement: He became the child of a poor maid in *Galilee*, he was content to be born in a stable, for there was no room for him in the house: He lay down to take his first nap in a manger, below the rank and condition of men; and as though he were a companion for meaner creatures, he borrowed his dwelling from the ox and the ass. This was the accommodation, this the presence-chamber of the king of *Israel*, of the Son of God. Come let us thus contemplate the glorious humility of the blessed *Jesus*, the humble infancy of our adored saviour, and let us become infants and humble.

Let us follow and observe him in the progress of life, when he appeared as a young carpenter, when he sweat and laboured in the trade of his father *Joseph*, when he assisted him, as ancient history informs us, to make yokes for oxen, and lived in a lowly cottage suited to those circumstances. No rooms of state, no rich hangings, no carpets or furniture of silk and gold, no costly and glittering things about him. And when he began his ministry, he travelled through the country on foot to preach his divine gospel, when he might have been borne on the wings of angels. He was content with mean lodging in the tents of fishermen, and sometimes the Lord of glory had not where to lay his head. He never accepted but of one gaudy day in the period of his life, and then his highest triumph was to ride upon the colt of an ass into *Jerusalem*: His way was strewed with branches of trees, and the garments of the poor, and he was attended with a shouting train of the lower ranks of the people: But his more constant dwelling was in cottages, and his accoutrements betrayed universal poverty and meanness: An obscure life on earth veiled the majesty of the king of heaven:  
Contempt

Contempt and scorn, infamy and reproach were his daily companions in the streets of *Jerusalem*, and his table and his lodging were with poor fishermen in *Galilee*, the most contemptible part of all the country of the *Jews*.

And let it be observed here, that every instance of meanness and poverty in the life and circumstances of the blessed *Jesus* was a distinct token of the humility of his soul, for it was chosen poverty, it was assumed meanness: When he was rich in the glories and splendors of his Father's court in heaven, he laid them all aside for our sakes, and became poor on earth, that through his poverty we might be made rich. *2 Cor. viii. 9.*

What a shameful dimness and disgrace, what divine contempt has the Son of God cast on all the lustre and glory of this world, by his choice of so mean accommodations and so poor an equipage? What a holy disdain of all earthly grandeur and magnificence should we learn from the incarnation and the life of the holy *Jesus*? Even meanness and poverty should lose their disgraceful appearances, and seem almost an amiable sort of apparel to us, when we remember they were worn by the Son of God.

“Think with thy self, O my soul, what if thou art not seated among the glittering idols of this world, the men of figure and quality and exalted station? Remember the blessed *Jesus* was thy forerunner in a low and humble rank of life; *Jesus*, who went through the deeps of abasement to the temple of the highest honour; and divine wisdom assures thee, “that before honour is humility.” *Prov. xv. 33.* What if thou hast not the favour of the rich and the society of the great ones of the earth? Dost thou not hear the promise of the God of heaven and feel the divine encouragement with surprizing delight? “Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place: With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit will I dwell, *Isa. lvii. 15.* I will be his life and his support.” The soul that is truly humble upon religious principles, when he is cast out of the company of the great and the wealthy with scorn, is a partner of the sufferings of the holy *Jesus*, is an imitator of his virtues, and he shall share in his sacred honours: he shall have the great and blessed God come down and dwell with him here on earth, to enrich him with grace, and he shall be raised to dwell for ever in the courts of heaven with God and with his son *Jesus*, who is the Lord of glory.

“Think yet further, O my soul, what if thy station and place in the visible church should be low and mean, as a door-keeper in the house of thy God, this will not give thy heart any sensible disquietude, while thou canst assume *St. Paul's* motto in my text, “Less than the least of all the saints.” *Jesus* and his disciples were even cast out of the synagogue, *John ix. 22.* *Luke iv. 28.* Yet he was the first beloved Son of God and the chief of all the saints both in the lower and in the upper worlds. Look up, my eyes, and behold him now on the throne of heaven, and there also the humblest among the holy ones sits nearest to his majesty; for that seat is prepared for those who are most like himself.

“Labour hourly to subdue thy pride and fulness of self, O my soul, pursue the grace of humility here below in the deepest degrees of it, and this shall prepare thee for some exalted station on high. I am verily persuaded the man who called himself the least of saints in this world has a place of honour provided for him among the highest in the world above; and perhaps he sits next to the right hand of *Jesus* who is enthroned in glory at the right hand of God.

“Farewell

“ Farewell then vanity and pride! Farewell ye scenes of grandeur, ye flattering and fading glories of this life! Farewell ye vain and ambitious titles among my fellow worms! Be my ears deaf and my heart dead to all the noisy pomp, to all the sounding honours of this world! Let me be a humble and a holy follower of the holy and the humble *Jesus!* I adore him, I love him, I would fain be more like him. He is my divine example and my forerunner to the world of joy above: He has a crown there provided for every humble soul, a crown which shall never fade: he has names of dignity for all his saints, but on his own sacred head are many crowns, and to his name belong superior honours: To the lamb that was slain ascribe glory and majesty and universal blessing for ever and ever.

A D E-



A  
D E F E N C E

Against the T E M P T A T I O N to

S E L F - M U R T H E R .

W H E R E I N T H E

C R I M I N A L N A T U R E and G U I L T  
of it are displayed :

The various P R E T E N C E S for it are examined:  
and answered :

Seasonable Advice is proposed to those who are Tempted, and  
to those who have been delivered from this Temptation.

T O G E T H E R W I T H

Some Reflexions on Excess in strong Liquors, Duelling, and other  
Practices a-kin to this heinous Sin.



T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**I**T can be of no importance to the world to know the particular occasion of this composition. It is sufficient to say, that the rude draughts and sketches of it thrown into the form of a letter have been so far honoured by divine grace, as to save a soul from perishing.

The numerous self-murthers which we read in our papers of weekly news, inform us that the tempter is not asleep. The last general bill of mortality tells us of fifty nine who are known to have destroyed themselves the year past; besides seventy four who were drowned, and forty three who were said to be found dead: Now among these hundred and seventeen, who can tell how many might be necessary also to their own death, though surviving relatives might conceal it from the notice of the public? This very week I have read four more. Such numbers of these tragical events are a very unhappy, yet a sensible argument that *Satan* the cruel adversary walks about through every street of this great city as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. It is the design of this little treatise to discover the infinite mischief of his temptations, and to teach mankind how they may resist him, and defeat his fatal purposes.

I grant that the sceptical humour and growing atheism of the age, with the disbelief of a future state and of all the terrors of another world, are the profane and deadly principles which influence some of these unnatural and murderous practices.

But professed atheism and infidelity are not the only causes. Suicide is often owing to the shameful neglect of all religion even by those who pretend to believe it; and to their strange thoughtlessness of God and heaven and hell. The wild and ungoverned lusts and passions of mankind, their secret criminal practices and shameful iniquities that are afraid of the light, the frequent crosses and calamities of this life, their raging impatience of mind under disappointments, with a certain horror of poverty and contempt and shame, hurry on foolish and guilty creatures to hide themselves in death and the grave. Besides all this, the dark and sullen complexion and the gloomy melancholy of some persons, their inward uneasiness, their jealousies, and fretful disposition, are such unhappy circumstances as a subtil devil improves for his own pernicious designs. These are the fatal springs of such tragical events in our day: These are the dismal seeds of many a bloody harvest, which the great enemy of God and man reaps daily amongst us.

May the blessed Spirit of God lift up a standard against the destroyer, and make these papers useful to support, defend and relieve those poor deluded creatures, who are worried by his rage and ensnared by his devices! And in the day of the Lord, when every secret thing shall be revealed, may this discourse appear to have been a

successful, though a humble, instrument in the hand of the Spirit of God for the deliverance and salvation of those who have been tempted, and for the rescue of many a soul from present death and everlasting burnings.

I had some thoughts of adding a few pages at the end of this book concerning a melancholy temper of mind, whether it arises from the disorders of animal nature, or from an uneasy set of thoughts relating to this world or the next. But when I came to review what Mr. *Timothy Rogers* had written on that subject, and the little discourse that Mr. *Clifford* had collected out of the writings of the late eminent Mr. *Richard Baxter*, which was recommended by several ministers, I found it needless for me to attempt any thing further. In those treatises the reader will meet with so particular an account of the nature of this affliction, of the causes of it, and of the methods of relief, as may be rendered very serviceable through the blessing of heaven to those who are thus afflicted, or to their friends about them who are concerned for their welfare. And may these methods prove happily successful for their relief! That by the divine aids of providence and grace they may be preserved from so dismal and mournful a death, wherein surviving friends can find little comfort or hope, but what arises from the former religious life of those unhappy creatures, and the apparent symptoms of present distraction.

Though such themes as these are not a very delightful entertainment either to him that writes or reads, yet the calamitous and wretched circumstances both of flesh and spirit in this feeble and dangerous state of frailty, sin and temptation, make such discourses necessary at some seasons to prevent the ruin of mankind. O blessed state of souls in the upper world who are released from this body of sin and death, and enjoy a glorious and sublime security from all the mischievous influences of the tempter: Though we dare not cut the thread of our own lives, nor fly from our present state of trial till our creator appoint the day of our deliverance, it is yet our duty and our interest to get our souls weaned daily from all the scenes of this lower world, since we know we must shortly leave them. Let us labour cheerfully here on earth in the various services of God and men, but with our spirits so attempered to the business and the blessedness of heaven, that we may as cheerfully obey the divine summons, and pass the important hour of death with holy serenity and triumph. Amen.

London, *January*

28, 1725-6.

T H E



A

D E F E N C E

Against the TEMPTATION to

S E L F - M U R T H E R.

S E C T I O N I.

*The unlawfulness of it displayed.*

**W**HEN an atheist is tempted to destroy himself, he has no concern whether it be lawful or no, for he knows of no law nor power that can reach to punish him. Such a wretch doth not believe there is any other world to receive him when he dies out of this, nor any God there to call him to account. He supposes his soul vanishes into air, and his dust is safe from vengeance. These are the sentiments of atheism; and vile and irrational as they are, yet they are the only principles that can give any tolerable colour or pretence for self-murder.

But if a man believes there is a God that made him, if he believes his soul is immortal, and that his creator has ordained it to dwell in a human body for a season, and to pass a state of probation there in order to eternal reward or punishment, surely this man must confess himself accountable to God hereafter for all his conduct here: And one would think such a person should never doubt, whether the destruction of his body by his own hands, and the wilful dismissal of his soul, were a crime or no. Especially if he professes to believe his bible, one would wonder he could ever imagine it an innocent thing for him to do violence to himself, and to shed his own blood. But the follies of mankind are amazing, and the strange turns of thought under the deceitful impressions of the tempter are unaccountable. Poor deluded creatures are first tempted to hope, that they shall put an end to their present sorrows by a wilful death, then they wink their eyes against the glaring guilt of it, and try to persuade themselves that it is no sin.

Some persons have been so hardy as to reason upon this point, and to argue that self-murder has nothing criminal in it. Strange, that hell and destruction should have advocates among the sons of men! that death should have such accomplices in the land of the living! But since it has been so, let us plead against them in the name  
of

of the living God; let us try whether we cannot by the force of reasoning drawn from the word of God, as well as from the light of nature, make it appear with bright evidence, that suicide or self-destruction is prohibited by the divine law, both natural and revealed; that it includes aggravated guilt in the nature of it; and consequently that the person who dares commit this crime, stands exposed to severe and terrible punishments in the invisible world.

I. Consider that the great God, the maker of all things, has assumed to himself the power and lordship of life and death; "I kill and I make alive." *Deut. xxxii. 39.* It is he sends us into this world, and he expects that we should wait his will to send us out of it. Has not our creator formed us with infinite wisdom, and placed us by providence to act our parts, maintain our posts, and fulfil some service for him in this part of his dominions? Has he not a right to determine the time of our continuance here, and the moment of our removal? Is it not an invasion of that divine right and prerogative, if we will appoint the time for our selves without his order and contrary to the rules he has given us for our government? Where is his licence for any man to dismiss himself? A spirit, who is ordained to dwell in flesh, what warrant has he to destroy that flesh at his own pleasure, to quit his appointed station in this visible world, and to force his way into God's invisible dominions, before he obtain the leave of his maker? Or dares he do this at a venture, according to his own capricious humour without a warrant from on high?

Can a soldier who is fixed in his post, though it rain and blow at midnight, forsake his guard before his general permit? Can such a faithless sentinel expect any thing but frowns and death from the general? Is it excuse enough to say, "I broke the orders of my superior because it rained?" What a piece of shameful cowardise is this? And dares a soul that is placed by it's creator to act in a human body dismiss itself, and fly from it's appointed station, as far as the distance of two worlds, and yet hope for approbation? Dares such a soul run from it's post, into the immediate presence of it's sovereign Lord, in the world of spirits, and say, "I have fled from my post because I found it troublesome, I have done it indeed without leave, and yet I expect a reward?" May not such a wretch rather justly expect to be banished for ever from the presence of his maker, and be doomed to suffer eternal penalties without mercy and without hope?

Perhaps you will tell me, "There is no want of courage discovered in self-murder: And that it was not accounted cowardise but a noble instance of fortitude in many of the heathen heroes, who put an end to their lives with their own hands, on various occasions."

Answer. Concerning the heathens who destroyed themselves, I shall speak in another place. It is enough at present to say this, that whatsoever degrees of courage a mistaken fancy may ascribe to those ancients, I must confess I am of a very different opinion concerning the suicides in our day: The attribution of any honour to a self-murderer has but little reason or justice in it, at any time when it is thoroughly examined: And perhaps such a bare supposition may administer too much fuel to so dreadful a temptation, rather than quench the sparks of it.

It is evident to me that the uneasy and impatient man has not courage enough to bear the arrows of adverse providence; he has not firmness of mind sufficient to stand the shock of sickness or pain; or perhaps his heart has not resolution enough to endure the thoughts of poverty or contempt; he is frightened at the sounds of reproach and infamy; he turns his back and flies from the scene of battle, when poverty or shame stare him in the face: Or perhaps the mere imaginary terrors which himself

has

has raised, put him to flight; and because he cannot get far enough from them in this world, he throws himself headlong from the stage of life, and leaps into the world of spirits.

Now, if there be any point of courage in this practice, it is an impious and diabolical one: It is a rushing into the presence of an almighty and dreadful God, to tell him face to face, that you have quitted the station he hath appointed you, that you have broken his commission, you have disobeyed his orders, and you expect his sentence for eternity. This is tremendous courage indeed; and an outrageous fit of impious rashness. All the rest is mere weakness of mind; it is egregious cowardise mingled with extreme folly.

II. Consider the express prohibitions of murder in the word of God, and the frequent occasional and severe denunciations of God's wrath against murderers in various parts of scripture.

The sixth command offers it self with bright evidence to this service, *Exod. xx. 13.* "Thou shalt not kill, or thou shalt do no murder," that is, thou shalt not take away the life of man.

You will say, "I may have power and right to take away my own life, though I must not take away my neighbour's." I answer

First, The command is expressed in general terms, which include both our selves and our neighbours: Now there is no subsequent limitation of it only to our neighbour either in the word of God, or in the reason of things; and who has given you authority to limit it?

The rest of the commands of the second table which are capable of being referred to our selves, do as much exclude the same practices against our selves, as against our neighbours. I must not commit adultery with another person, nor must I defile my self with adultery. I must not bear false witness against my neighbour, nor must I speak a false thing about or against my self. I must honour my own parents, and by the same reason, if I am a parent, I must not do any thing to dishonour my own person or parental character in the sight of children. Now since our selves, as well as our neighbours are taken into consideration in all these commands, wheresoever it is possible in the nature of the thing, I think the destruction of our selves as well as of our neighbours is equally forbidden by the sixth command.

Thus this law secures the life of every man, woman and child in the world, who have not forfeited their lives to the public justice by some capital crime: And even then it is only the public officer, or the person authorized by the law of the land, who has right to take away the life of the criminal.

Secondly, I answer, The injury forbidden in the sixth command does not only reach to the person who is slain, but to his friends, his relations, his country, and the community to which he belongs. It is upon this account chiefly that human penalties are annexed to murder by men, because the community is hereby deprived of a member, or the prince of a subject, and the various parts of that community are deprived of a helper. It is also upon this account of the injury done to our fellow-creatures, that God has appointed blood to be repaid with blood, as he is the sovereign guardian of human society.

Now I would ask, Whether the same injury is not done to our friends, our kindred and our country, if we murder our selves as if another hand murdered us? Yes surely, and in some respects a greater injury too, especially to our friends, as shall appear hereafter.

But

But besides all this, the injury reaches to God our creator; it is he has appointed to each person his station in this world for some special service to himself as well as to our fellow-creatures. And as another man must not injure and affront our creator by removing us from this station, so neither must we do it our selves.

It is not for any man to say, "I can be of no service to God or man in this world; I am rather a burthen to the earth, a piece of usefess lumber; therefore I throw my self out of the way." But can you tell for what services God has reserved you? Are you one of his council? Do you know what future events may arise, wherein you may be made use of, if not in an active manner, yet at least in a passive way, to carry on some part of the divine scheme of providence? Now for this reason no sort of murder is permitted, that so no man may be cut off from all future and possible capacities of service to God or his fellow-creatures. God has not made any man a judge in his own case, to determine for himself concerning his own life and usefulness in opposition to the general sense both of nature and scripture, and the constant judgment of divine as well as human laws.

Since therefore all the injuries that I have mentioned against God and man are committed by the murder of one's self as well as one's neighbour, it has pleased God severely to prohibit all murder, and he has fixed the sixth commandment in the table of his moral law, where it stands like a cannon planted with open mouth against the man that dares such a public and spreading injury to God and man. It is a piece of divine artillery charged with eternal death. I *John* iii. 15. "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," that is, has no right to eternal life, for he has not the principles or seeds of it in his heart; and then surely eternal death belongs to him, and must be his portion.

Another prohibition of murder is found among the first laws that God gave to the new race of men after the flood, *Gen.* ix. 6. "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." I confess there is some difficulty in determining precisely in what sense we must take the image of God in this place: For the moral image of God which consisted in righteousness and holiness was lost by the fall, whereas that part of the divine image which stands here as an argument against the destruction of man is supposed to continue in his fallen estate.

Shall we then suppose it has a reference to the erect posture of his body, or the shape and figure of mankind, in which God might appear to our first parents? Then murder is forbid upon this account because it destroys the honourable figure and character of human nature, whereby it is superior to all brutal animals, and whereby it is superior to all brutal animals, and whereby it was dignified either by the appearance of God the Father, or rather his son *Jesus Christ* in it: Now this reason stands firm against the destruction of our selves as well as of others.

Or does it mean the dominion of man over brute creatures, wherein he bears some image or resemblance of God's dominion over this lower world? But that reaches not beyond this life, and therefore there is an end put to this dominion, to this part of the divine image by all murder, whether of others or of our selves.

Or shall we say, that the immortality of the soul of man is that image of God which is here designed? Now though the soul cannot be slain, yet by murder, an immortal creature is sent into a certain and determined state of happiness or misery, for a long eternity, and the great God will not suffer any man to take upon him to send an immortal soul into so awful an estate on a sudden, and by the mere caprices of his own will: And therefore he hath required blood for blood; and since he hath appointed

pointed that man should execute that sentence on the murderer of another man in this world, we have abundant reason to believe that he will take care to execute his own just vengeance upon a self-murderer in the invisible world, though he hath put himself out of the reach of human vengeance.

Or suppose after all I have not hit upon the exact sense of the image of God in this place, yet this is very certain, that let the image of God signify what it will, this image is as much injured by the murder of one's self, as by the murder of one's neighbour, and therefore the prohibition stands in the same force against both.

III. Consider that our saviour himself when he had a body prepared for him by the Father, and was sent into the world, seems to acknowledge that as he stood in the rank of men, he had not power or authority to lay down his own life, but by the commandment of God his Father. He speaks of it as a special and peculiar commission, that he had power to lay down his life as well as power to take it again, neither of which other mortals are invested with, *John x. 18.* "I lay down my life of my self; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again: This commandment have I received of my Father. The original word for power is *ἐξουσία*, which signifies right or authority, which he derived from the peculiarity of his divine commission. Otherwise he had been obliged to have used all his native power and skill to have saved himself from the hands of his enemies. Now if our saviour himself considered merely as man, and abstracted from his divine nature, had not a right to dispose of his own life at pleasure, without divine commission, certainly no other man may claim this right.

IV. Consider that had this practice been lawful, all the pious persons from *Adam* to this day, who had been plunged into extreme distress and anguish of mind or body in this world, might have relieved themselves by this method; all the martyrs and confessors of scripture who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who were put into lions dens, who were scourged and tortured, seem to be guilty of great folly, if they themselves might lawfully have put an end to their miseries by this shorter method: And the honours that the bible casts upon these men are vain honours, if they endured these terrible trials, when they might have escaped them all without guilt or transgression.

Let it be noted also, that many good men of old have earnestly wished to die, particularly *Elijah*, *Job*, *Jeremiah*, &c. but not one of them durst indulge a thought of procuring death to themselves, as being under the most certain impressions of the horrible and crying impiety of such a practice: The utmost efforts they made toward it was to pray God to release them, but they never dared to attempt their own release.

V. Consider what sort of men they have been who are recorded in scripture as self-murderers. *Achitophel*, a false traitor, who counselled *Abshalom* to rebel against his father *David*. *Saul*, a bloody man, who forsook God and was forsaken of God. *Zimri*, a most wicked king of *Israel*, and *Judas* who betrayed our blessed saviour, &c. Good men may be tempted sorely in this matter, but we do not find that they have been given up to comply with the temptation.

You will readily reply, "but what was *Samson*? Is he not numbered among the ancient and sacred heroes who lived and died in faith? *Heb. xi. 22.* And did he not destroy himself together with the *Philistines* when he pulled down the house upon their heads? And was not this done also with design and resolution, when he said, "let me die with the *Philistines*."

Answer 1. It is evident the apostle in that chapter is reckoning up all the glorious effects of faith, whether it be faith of miracles which may be found with sinners, or

faith which accompanies salvation and belongs only to the saints. Now there is very little of the character of a saint that belongs to *Samson* either in his life or in his death. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, indeed, as a spirit of miracles, for the deliverance of *Israel* from oppression, but his life seems to be stained with many crimes; and in the moment of his death he desired to be avenged of the *Philistines* for his two eyes: So that we find little or nothing of the fruits of the Spirit in him, which the apostle describes, *Gal. v. 22.* "Gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance," &c.

Answer 2. If it should be granted that *Samson* had religion and virtue enough in him to be called a good man, yet as the other exercises of his miraculous strength were performed under the influence of the Spirit, or by inspiration, so we may suppose that at his death he had a divine call, or inspiration, as he had certainly miraculous aid, to destroy the *Philistines*, though he himself fell with them; and though it must be confessed there was a mixture of his own sinful revenge in his heart, yet the Spirit of God might dictate that action in general, though not as mingled with his own revenge. Now since this was done by a special divine commission, it cannot be drawn by us into an example for our imitation.

Well, if suicide cannot be justified by the examples of scripture, you will try what the *roman* and *greek* historians can do towards it. Perhaps, you will say, "Surely had it been so criminal an action, the great and wise men of antiquity would not have indulged the practice of it, nor would their names have been enrolled among the sons of honour. But we find *Curtius* and *Cato*, *Brutus* and *Otho*, and others who destroyed themselves, celebrated as men of virtue, as noble patriots, and great heroes, even on the account of their death as well as their life."

Answer. Alas, to what purpose should a christian cite the heathens to justify that which the scripture forbids? They had very little knowledge of the true God, very dark and doubtful notions of their duty to their creator, to themselves, and to their fellow-creatures: And though the light of nature would have taught them better had they duly and carefully consulted it, yet it is evident that they actually mistook their duty in many instances that were obvious enough to common reason. They imagined that the destruction of a tyrant, the preservation of their country, or the mere honour of their own nation, or the guard of their real or fancied virtues, was sufficient to license and sanctify almost any practices whatsoever.

They had many false and foolish notions of courage, greatness and honour, which betrayed them into real iniquities. They sent forth their armies to rob and plunder nations to satisfy their own ambition and thirst of honour; they could murder thousands of mankind in order to enlarge their bounds of empire, and for the glory of their king or of their native city: It was no wonder that men of such principles should imbrue their hands in their own blood under the influence of such sort of motives and pretences. Besides this, they were animated with the expectation of fame after death: Immortal memory and renown were the rewards of what they called heroic actions. And thus the heathens might glory in their own shame, but they are not set up for our guides or patterns. A christian must regulate his whole conduct by the law of his God, by the rules of the gospel, by the views and hopes and fears of eternal rewards or punishments, which are revealed to him in a diviner light.

Let it be considered yet further, that the motives, by which some of these heathen heroes were drawn to self destruction, are such as scarce ever come into the question now a-days, and do by no means respect men in the ordinary situation of human life. Which of us has any view or hope or pretence to benefit thousands by our death? To  
save

save a nation from civil war? to deliver our country from the anger of God and a pestilence by offering ourselves as a sacrifice? To sink in one ruin with the liberties of a state, which we ourselves have long supported? These are the excuses that are made for those ancient heathens, and covered their names from infamy in such a bloody action. The history of these men, and the honour done them by pagan writers, can give no manner of sanction to those mean and ridiculous motives which are the occasions of self-murder in our weekly news-papers, in the present age. The *romans* themselves would have made a jest of those, who pretended to imitate these their heroes, without being placed in the same circumstances, or having equal motives; and, as a modern writer well expresses it, "Should any man now have it in his power to acquaint the ghost of *Cato* or *Brutus* that there was a country in which men often deliberately and coolly dispatch themselves, and voluntarily flee out of life; one because his mistress is not propitious to his passion; another, because his sordid love of money has been disappointed; another, because he has dissipated his whole fortune in the most dissolute and abandoned luxury and debauchery; another because his scheme for advancement to honour has been dashed to pieces; another, because in the midst of hoards of money, he is terrified with the dread of future want; and others, perhaps, because the weather lies heavy upon them, and the wind blows from an unfavourable corner: And should they be acquainted, that in all these cases, their names and their examples are appealed to; what would they say? They would declare it a country of mad-men and fools, and lament their own fate, to be cited for the justification, or excuse of odious, base and unseemly actions, which have no pretence worthy of a man, to cover them.

"Not that I am at all, says this writer, designing to justify those great men themselves. On the contrary many things might be urged against those ancients, even upon their own scheme, and the principles of reason. If I should say that the death of *Cato* was a mixture of impatience and pride; that he ought in love to his country to have reserved himself for a better opportunity of serving it; that it is probable, from the events which followed, that he might afterwards have been an instrument of good to it; that he rashly, and in a passion, judged of what he could not well judge of, that it was a fullen pride of heart not to deign to live, because in one trial, his cause had not been successful; and that a true greatness of soul had been more seen, even in accepting his life, if that had been necessary, at the hands of the man, in whose power omnipotent providence or fate, which he believed irresistible, had put it: And this would be hard to refute upon the principles of any philosophy."

I might add yet further, that though some of the philosophers among the heathens did allow, yet the best of them did utterly condemn this practice, as a rash forsaking the station in which the providence of their gods had placed men. Though I have argued particularly on this head already, yet in this place I cannot forbid my self the pleasure of citing the strong expressions of some of these heathens against self-murder, as they are agreeably represented by Dr. *Samuel Clarke*, in his discourse of natural and revealed religion. Proposition the first.

"He that sent us into the world, and alone knows for how long time he appointed us our station here, and when we have finished all the business he intended we should do, can alone judge when it is fit for us to be taken hence, and has alone authority to dismiss and discharge us. This reasoning has been admirably applied by *Plato*, *Cicero*, and others of the best philosophers; so that though the *stoics* of old, and the deists of late, have in their ranting discourses, and some few of them in their rash practice, contradicted it; yet they have never been able, with any colour of reason,

to answer or evade their force of the argument: Which indeed to speak the truth has been urged by the forementioned philosophers, with such singular beauty, as well as invincible strength, that it seems not capable of having any thing added to it. Wherefore I shall give it you only in some of their own words." "We men," says *Plato* in the person of *Socrates*, "are all by the appointment of God in a certain prison or custody, which we ought not to break out of, and run away. We are as servants, or as cattle in the hand of God: And would not any of us, saith he, if one of our servants should contrary to our direction, and to escape out of our service, kill himself, think we had just reason to be very angry, and, if it was in our power, punish him for it? So likewise *Cicero*: God, says he, the supreme governor of all things, forbids us to depart hence without his order: And though when the divine providence does it self offer us a just occasion of leaving this world," as when a man chuses to suffer death rather than commit wickedness, "a wise man will then indeed depart joyfully, as out of a place of sorrow and darkness into light; yet he will not be in such haste as to break his prison contrary to law; but will go when God calls him, as a prisoner when dismissed by the magistrate or lawful power. "*Tusculan. questionum libro primo.*" Again; "That short remainder of life," saith he, "which old men have a prospect of, they ought neither too eagerly to desire, nor yet on the contrary unreasonably and discontentedly deprive themselves of it; for as *Pythagoras* teaches, it is as unlawful for a man without the command of God, to remove himself out of the world; as for a soldier to leave his post without his general's order, *de Senectute.* And in another place: "Unless that God," saith he, "whose temple and palace this whole world is, discharges you himself out of the prison of the body, you can never be received to his favour. Wherefore you, and all pious men, ought to have patience to continue in the body, as long as God shall please, who sent us hither; and not force your selves out of the world before he calls for you; lest you be deserters of the station appointed you by God. *Somnium Scipionis.* And, to mention no more; that excellent author, *Arrian*, book the first. "Wait," saith he, "the good pleasure of God: When he signifies it to be his will, that you should be discharged from this service, then depart willingly; but in the mean time have patience, and tarry in the place where he has appointed you: Wait, and do not hurry your selves away wilfully and unreasonably." "The objections, which the author of the defence of self-murder, prefixed to the oracles of reason, has attempted to advance against this argument, are so weak and childish, that it is evident he could not, at the time he wrote them, believe in earnest that there was any force in them: As when he says, that the reason why it is not lawful for a centinel to leave his station without his commander's order, is because he entered into the service by his own consent; as if God had not a just power to lay any commands upon his creatures, without their own consent: Or when he says, that there are many lawful ways to seek death in; as if, because a man may lawfully venture his life in many public services, therefore it was lawful for him directly to throw it away upon any foolish discontent. Thus far *Dr. Clarke.*

This objection drawn from the practice of the heathens has diverted me from my train of arguments: But I proceed,

VI. Reflect upon the nature of the fact: Perhaps it is the most unnatural practice that can come within the reach of man. Self-preservation is such a law of nature, that it is written as it were in the animal as well as in the mind, it is mingled with our flesh and blood and our very constitution; we must sin therefore against our bodies and our souls together, when we perpetrate this wickedness. It is well expressed by a late writer that "our creator would not have armed life with such a dread of death, which



which is rarely overcome, nor involved the contemplation of death in so many appalling doubts and apprehensions, if the quitting of life of our own accord had been agreeable to his schemes of providence. It is evident God hath way-laid the roads to death with ambuscades of terror, on purpose to prevent our voluntary approaches to it. Nature itself is passionately abhorrent from it; it throws our whole frame into a tumult, and the man who hath resolved it, finds a drawback within himself that silently withholds him."

Upon these accounts, it is hardly supposed to be done without some strong temptations of the devil, that evil and cruel spirit, who is a murderer from the beginning: And it is he only who finds his account in it, and regales his hellish passions of malice and envy against God and man. This vile spirit is eminently gratified when we give ear to such a temptation: He had the impudence to tempt our blessed Lord in this manner. "Cast thy self down from the pinnacle of the temple:" but our Lord repelled him with indignation, and left us an example: The hour, in which his Father had appointed him to yield up his life, was not yet come.

VII. Consider that if it be lawful for you to put an end to your own life because you are weary of it, perhaps it would also be lawful for any other man to do the same for you with your leave and at your request. But it is not lawful for another man to do it, therefore, not for your self. I borrow my argument from this consideration, that since it is lawful for me to cut off a gangrened or a broken limb in order to save life, it is lawful to give my arm to the surgeon and to desire him to cut it off; and the surgeon does it without blame in the sight of God or man. This he could not do without my leave. But my own right to do it being conveyed to him does in this case authorize him to do it. So if I had right to destroy my self, my own right would authorize another to destroy me.

I grant there are some cases, wherein a man may possess an inalienable right which he cannot convey to another, such are rights of honour, as nobility, magistracy, rights of natural relation, as paternity, filiation, &c. because these relate to other persons. But so far as any man has a right to injure, or maim, or destroy his own body, I see no reason why it may not be conveyed to another by his authority: And if a man might lawfully stab himself, I think the same right might be conveyed to another man to stab him.

Now ask your self, if a person were weary of his life and begged that you would knock him on the head, would you not think it unlawful, and consequently be afraid to destroy him, though at his own request? Do you not think this in the common nature of things would be a great injury to his relations, to his friends, to his country and to human society, though the person himself desired it? Do you not imagine this would be true murder both in the sight of God and man, and justly expose you to punishment? But it seems to me, that he might as well give you power to murder him, as assume the power himself. If the taking away the life of such a person would be murder, then the taking away your own life is murder too, and therefore by no means is it an act allowable or lawful in the sight of God.

VIII. Consider how many practices there are which God has forbidden in his word as being injurious to our own bodies, yet each of them seem to be far less pernicious in their nature, and in their consequences than self-murder is; and thence we may draw a strong argument to prove that self-murder is not only sinful but a very heinous sin. All manner of intemperance is forbidden by the word of God; gluttony and drunkenness have a tendency to ruin our health and destroy our natures, and these are prohibited in the old testament, and in the new. Whoredom, or fornication, is a sin against the body, and as such it is exposed in scripture as an aggravated iniquity

quity that a man should sin against his own body, 1 Cor. vi. 18. The body of a christian is said to be the temple of the holy Spirit, and him that defiles this temple God will destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. Now are there such denunciations against those iniquities that injure or defile the human body, and must we not suppose the guilt of the person is more aggravated, and that his punishment shall be more severe who wilfully destroys the body which God has given him?

God has been pleased to set a guard upon human life by forbidding all those excesses and irregularities of appetite and passion which injure health, and tend to the ruin of our natures; and doubtless the actual destruction of our natures is a more heinous crime in his sight.

IX. Consider further, how inconsistent is this practice with that dependence on the providence of the almighty, that humble waiting for God, that trust and hope in divine mercy, and that patience, resignation and quiet submission which are due to God our supreme governor. Suppose he is pleased to try us with a delay of answer to our prayers, with poverty, disappointment, sickness, pain or trouble in the flesh, must we resolve to die presently? This is breaking away from God's hand in an unwarrantable manner: It is a renouncing of that self-dedication and surrender which we have made of our selves to God: It is utterly contrary to that humble devotedness to the will of God which christianity requires of all it's professors. How can I say, I am the Lord's, or thy will be done, when I will not so much as let him determine in which world I shall serve him, the visible or the invisible?

Perhaps it is the present purpose of God to put you under this instance of probation, as part of the trial of your obedience in order to a future reward: It is the language of divine providence when we are exercised with any pressing affliction, "Let me see how you will honour my sovereignty with holy submission, with constancy and patience; let me see whether you will glorify your creator, your governor, and your Lord, in the passive as well as in the active parts of life. No, says the self-murderer, I will not endure this trial; I will rid my self of this hardship; I will bear it no longer; I have no patience, nor will I submit to this method of divine probation; I will hasten my appearance before the judgment seat; there let my judge determine my final estate according to the days of my past life and past trials, for I will not suffer my state of probation to be prolonged any farther." How is it possible now that such a rebellious creature can ever expect favour or absolution at the hands of God his judge?

Thus I have finished the considerations which in my opinion give abundant proof of the unlawfulness of such a practice, and I would conclude them with this solemn sentence, the man who can take all these arguments into his view, and in the full exercise of his reason will after all venture upon so unnatural and aggravated a crime, and will plunge himself into eternity on such groundless presumptions of divine pardon, must in the common sense of mankind here and in his own awakened conscience hereafter be deemed a just sacrifice of divine wrath, and for ever unworthy of pardoning grace.

## S E C T I O N II.

*Some general dissuasions from self-murder, by shewing the folly and danger of it.*

**W**HEN this bloody practice has been proved to be highly criminal in the sight of God, we can hardly suppose that any other considerations should be more effectual to deter a man who professes christianity from the guilt of so aggravated a sin: Yet it may be possible to set the dangerous and dreadful consequences of this practice in a fuller view, a more diffusive and affecting light: For if you turn it on all sides it has still some new appearances of terror, and furnishes out new dissuatives from the execution of it.

I. Consider that it is too dangerous an attempt to venture upon it unless you had a full assurance of it's lawfulness. Now suppose the power of your own iniquities, the artifices of the tempter, and the prevailing ill humours of animal nature should join together so fatally as to blind your eyes against the full conviction of it's sinfulness, yet you can never prove that self-murder is certainly a lawful thing. The furthest you can go is to suppose, that possibly it may be lawful; but on the other hand, if you should be under a mistake, it is a dreadful, it is a fatal, it is an eternal one. You put your self beyond all possibility of rectifying this error through all the long ages of futurity.

Whatsoever vain fancies some of the heathens have indulged who knew not God, and had very little and dark apprehensions of a future state, yet in the christian world the utmost that the most sanguine or most melancholy among this tribe can well pretend is, that perhaps it may be lawful, or at least that it is a little and a very pardonable crime; and they have been forced to wink their eyes against the light to arrive at this perhaps. But if it be not pardonable, then nothing remains for the criminal but everlasting punishment. That terrible word, eternal, eternal, eternal misery, carries such a long doleful accent with it, and includes such an immense train of agonies without hope, that it is infinitely better to bear the sorrows, the trials and uneasinesses of this life for a few short and uncertain years, than rashly to venture upon such a practice, whose pretended and doubtful advantages bear no proportion at all to the infinite and extreme hazard of an endless state of torment.

II. Suppose you could by any false reasonings persuade your consciences that the act of self-destruction was no sin, yet are you so sure of the present goodness of your state towards God, and that all your other sins are pardoned, that you could plunge your self this moment into eternity? It is generally under a fit of impatience that persons are tempted to destroy themselves; now is the present frame and temper of your soul such as is fit to appear in before the great tribunal of heaven? You well know that "as the tree falls, so it must lie, to the north or to the south." *Eccles. xi. 3.* "After death judgment immediately succeeds," *Heb. ix. 27.* "There is no faith and repentance in the grave, nor pardoning grace to be implored when the state of trial is past," *Eccles. ix. 10.* "They that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth." *Isa. xxxviii. 18.* Are you now so sure of your creator's love, and of your perfect conformity to his laws of judgment? Are you so holy, so innocent, so righteous in your self, of so certain of your interest in the merits of a mediator, that you dare rush this moment before the bar of a great and terrible God, and tell him that you are come to have your state determined for all everlasting? If not, be wise and bethink your self a lit:

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tle: Use and improve the delay and opportunity which his grace and providence offer you in this life, for a more effectual securing a better life hereafter.

But if we go a little farther and suppose the action in it self to be criminal, then remember that you send your self out of this world with the guilt of a wilful criminal action on your conscience; you preclude your own repentance of this sin in this world, and the other world knows no repentance that is available to any good purpose. You shoot your self headlong into an eternal state; and are you sure that you shall never repent of it in the long future ages of your existence? But, alas! all that repentance comes too late to relieve you from the dismal effects of your rashness. All the repentance of that invisible world, is but the sting of conscience, which, will add exquisite pain to your appointed punishment. Surely you should have the most evident and undeniable proofs of the goodness of that action which can never be reversed, and which puts you for ever beyond all possibility of useful repentance.

Give me leave to add in this place, what is the constant doctrine of the bible and the sense of christians, *viz.* that a wilful sinner dying impenitent cannot be saved. Now if there be no space given for serious reflexion and penitence in the case of a self-murderer, what room is there for hope hereafter? except only where the persons are really distracted, and the great God our judge knows how to distinguish exactly how far every action is influenced by bodily distempers. This is the only hope of surviving friends.

III. Think yet again, what an odium, what scandal and everlasting shame you bring upon your name and character by such a fact. It is a reproach that spreads wide among the kindred of the self-murderer; It descends to his posterity and follows him through many generations.

It may be observed also that in the rubric of the church of *England* before the burial service, self-murderers are ranked with excommunicated persons: The church has no hope of them as true christians: And as the church denies them christian burial, so the civil government did heretofore appoint that they should be put into the earth with utmost contempt; and this was generally done in some public cross-way, that the shame and infamy might be made known to every passenger; and that this infamy might be lasting, they were ordained to have a stake driven through their dead bodies, which was not to be removed. It is pity this practice has been omitted of late years by the too favourable sentence of their neighbours on the jury, who generally pronounce them distracted: And thus they are excused from this public mark of abhorrence. Perhaps it were much better if this practice were revived again; for since the laws of men cannot punish their persons, therefore their dead bodies should be exposed to just and deserved shame, that so this injury might be laid under all the odium that human power and law can cast upon it, to testify a just abhorrence of the fact, and to deter survivors from the like practice.

IV. Can any man of a generous or kind disposition think of all the mischief done to his friends and kindred by the destruction of himself, and yet practise it? Think of the public scandal and disgrace that it spreads over the whole family; think of the shame and inward anguish of spirit that it necessarily gives to surviving friends and relatives; what sorrow of heart for the loss of a father, or mother, or brother, a sister, a daughter, or a son, in such a sudden, such a dreadful, and such a shameful manner of death? What terrible perplexity of spirit, what inconsolable vexation of mind, what fears of eternal misery for the soul of the deceased? This gives them a wound beyond what they are able to bear, and sometimes wears out their life in sorrow, and brings them down to the grave. One would think that the injury done to friends and dear relations would be a sufficient bar against it, to souls who have any  
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sense of justice, or any pretence to goodness and love. If it be so hard for you to bear a little poverty, shame, sorrow, reproach, &c. that you will die rather than bear it, why will you entail these on your kindred and on those who love you best?

In order to work upon persons that have any compassion for their surviving kindred, it is fit they should know also that the english law calls a self-murderer, "Felo de se," or a felon to himself, and upon this account the estate and effects of the deceased are forfeited by law, and cannot descend to the relatives, unless it appear that the person who laid violent hands upon himself was distracted. Now in this case bishop *Fleetwood* finds fault severely with juries, who now a-days bring in almost all self-murderers distracted, and he desires them to consider, "Whether the constant mitigation of the rigours of the law against self-murderers, may not give some encouragement to that practice; and whether the favourable verdict they bring in, be always so righteous and so seasonable as they imagine? And since the wisdom of the law intends that the confiscation of estates, the undoing a family, and the shameful burial shall deter them from these horrible attempts, whether the mercy that defeats all these intentions be not more like to continue than to repress these cruel violences? Were a person sure that his estate would be forfeited, and his effects carried away from his wife, children and family, were he sure that his dead body should be publicly exposed, buried in the high-way, and with a stake driven through it as a mark of huge infamy, perhaps he would give way to calmer counsels, and be content to bear a little shame, or pain, or loss, till God saw fit to put an end to all his sufferings by natural means: And therefore an instance or two of such severity, as is legal, well and wisely chosen, might prove a greater preservative against these violences than such a constant and expected mercy, as we always find on these occasions: For men have now no fear of laws; and when they have laid aside the fear of God, they go about this business with great readiness, they are sure of favour in this world, and they will venture the other."

V. Think in the last place, how fatal an influence your example may have to bring death and ruin on others, and that on their immortal souls as well as their mortal life. Remember what an effect the self-murder of *Saul* had, when his armour-bearer followed him, and died also by his own sword. And oftentimes where self-murder is practised, it fills the heads of other melancholy and uneasy persons with the same bloody thoughts, and teaches them to enter into the same temptation.

Think then with your self, "What if I should not only destroy my own soul for ever, but become the dreadful occasion of others destroying their souls, and flinging themselves into the same place of torture? What sharp accents will this add to my anguish of conscience, in hell, that I have led others into the same wretchedness without remedy, without hope, and without end? Think and enquire whether every self-murderer who may be influenced hereafter by your example to this impious fact, may not be sent particularly to visit your ghost in those invisible regions, and become a new tormentor. Whether all such future events may not be turned by the just judgment of God to encrease your agonies and horrors of soul in that world of despair and misery.

## SECTION III.

*The pretences for self-murder, and the motives to it examined and answered.*

SOME of the pretences for this criminal practice have been obviated already, while we were displaying the guilt, the folly, and the danger of it: Let us now come to consider the rest of the chief motives wherewith this temptation is enforced: And here we shall see what mere shadows, most of them are, what poor thin colours of argument, such as one would think should never pass upon a creature who retains the exercise of his reason, and pretends to any share of understanding or forethought, since the infinite concerns of an eternal futurity so vastly over-balance all present appearances.

I. Pretence. One person finds his circumstances sinking in the world, or it may be, he is over-whelmed at once with the loss of his estate; "I cannot bear," saith he, "the thoughts of poverty. What! to be brought to a morsel of bread, and live like a beggar! I had rather die than be beholden to charity to keep me alive."

Answer. This is the pride of thy spirit, O man; but is it not incomparably better to mortify this pride, and submit to the will and providence of thy creator, for a few days here on earth in a state of trial, than to plunge thyself into a state of certain and everlasting wretchedness?

Perhaps it will be replied, "but I am in starving circumstances, I am afraid I shall perish with want, why may I not then hasten my dismissal from this world and prevent my fears?"

I answer, whatever fears are prevented by this rash and bloody experiment, your real and more dreadful sorrows will be hastened. You want the supports of life here, but will you therefore send yourself into a world of universal want and sorrow, where you shall have no supply, where your necessities of various and unknown kinds shall be ever raging and violent, and where you shall obtain no manner of relief, no, not a drop of water to cool your tongue in the midst of torments?

Besides, I think there are no persons in such a condition in our nation, but that either by the laws of the land, or by a proper application to persons of beneficence, they may find relief from starving, if they are but sincerely willing to labour as far as their capacity admits, and then apply themselves to proper methods and to proper persons, in order to obtain this relief. The providence of God corresponds with his promises: *Psalms* xxxiv. 10. "Though the lions roar and suffer hunger, yet they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing, that is necessary for them." *Psalms* xxxiii. 18, 19. "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." *Psalms* xxxvii. 3. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

II. Pretence. Another will say, "I have lived in some credit and reputation in the world, and I am now falling into universal disgrace and infamy, and in my opinion shame is worse than death."

Answer. But is shame worse than hell too? That is a proud spirit indeed, that had rather commit the greatest sin against God, than undergo disgrace from men: That had rather venture the weight of the arm of God, in a way of vengeance, than a little noisy and scornful breath of poor perishing mortals. Mortify thy pride, O sinner, and the temptation is at an end; or despise the shame, if it be undeserved.

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But perhaps thou hast committed some foul and shameful sin, and thou art afraid of punishment and disgrace together, and therefore thou fliest to the sword, or the halter, to a pond of water, or to poison, to secure thyself from that disgrace.

Wretched reasoning this, and foolish hope! What is there casts a greater blot upon the name of any man, so long as his memory lives in the world, than to say, he hanged, or drowned, he poisoned, or stabbed himself? This is a stain shall never be wiped away: And when thou risest out of thy grave, at the last day, thou shalt arise to everlasting shame and contempt. Besides all thy other sins, this shall be published before angels and men, that thou wert guilty of the most unnatural wickedness in the world. What a senseless practice is it for men to bring upon themselves eternal shame and confusion only for this end, that they may escape what is temporal?

III. The third pretence is this. "I have been disappointed in the greatest and most important affairs of life. When my hopes rose highest they were blasted on a sudden, and quite destroyed. My heart was entirely set upon this blessing, my expectations are dashed, and my heart is broke. All the world besides is insignificant emptiness, or a painful vexation to me, and what should I do any longer in such a world, where I meet with nothing but vexation and emptiness?"

Answer. And do you not know that vanity and vexation has been written upon all this world, by the wisest of men long before you were born? Has not this lesson been taught most men by sad experience in every age? And must you resolve to die because you have learned it? Have not the most flourishing hopes of a thousand other persons been blasted as well as your's, and the fairest blessings of life withered in their hands? And yet the wise and the foolish have survived this loss; what a poor reason is this for you to doom your self to death, and to make your self your own executioner? Are there no comforts, no friends, no hopes left in this world to support you under the present disquietude and pain of mind? Will not time and patience make that burden easy which now seems unsupportable? Patience and time with their soft and gentle hand have applied medicines to a thousand broken hearts and healed them. Is your wound incurable? Is there no balm on earth, and no physician in heaven?

Suppose there is a huge vacancy made in your soul by some great and surprising loss, turn your thoughts to that great and almighty God, in whose hands are all the springs of life, and all the blessings of time and eternity: He can fill up that huge vacancy with better blessings and with his own presence. This shall make your loss grow lighter, and set your soul at ease. He can wean your heart from every creature by uniting it more nearly to himself. And since you have acted foolishly in setting up a creature in the room of God, he can set up himself as chief in your heart in the room of that idol creature: And you shall be able to say, "God is my all, what have I to do any more with idols?" By the wonderful methods of his wisdom and providence, he can make your losses turn to your advantage; and instead of hopes or enjoyments that have forsaken and disappointed you, he can give you an interest in his promises, his holy covenant, in the riches of his grace, and the inheritance of his glory. These are hopes which will never fail; these are enjoyments which will never vanish or leave you empty and disappointed. And besides all this, he has all the stores of nature in his hand, and all the comforts of life: He can furnish you with blessings in this world, that may in some measure answer the losses which you mourn, or turn the stream of your thoughts into such a peaceful channel as shall make you forget your sorrows.

Thus much to relieve and support the mourner. But give me leave to reason with you in a more awful manner against the temptation which at present you seem to indulge.

What if you have lost every thing that is desirable on earth, and that without hope of reparation, will you resolve therefore to lose heaven too? Is this world become painful to you, and can you find at present no comforts to be enjoyed in it, and will you therefore throw your self headlong into a world of eternal pain, where comfort can never come, nor any shadow of pleasure, where there is no rest, no peace, no hope, through all the ages of immortality? Are you disappointed in your dreams of happiness in a creature, and will you therefore abandon your hope in God? Will you profanely say "he shall not be my happiness?" Will the everlasting wrath of God, the anguish of conscience, and the rage of devils in another world, heal that heart which was broken in this? What monstrous folly and absurdity appears in such pretences! A strange way of relieving our selves under the loss of a temporal blessing, to plunge into the ocean of eternal misery, and fly into that world which is under the unchangeable curse of God!

IV. Pretence. "But my temptation is yet greater still," says another person, who is contriving to destroy himself; "my circumstances are such that I shall only prolong a life of misery, and pass through a lingering death of greater pain and torment unless I anticipate the hour, and put an end to my life at once, in an easier and shorter way: I am in captivity or in prison, and sentenced to a dreadful execution; or I am languishing out my life in extreme torments of body, the gout or the stone; or my limbs are broken, and I have no hope of ease or healing, why should I not then cut short my life and my anguish together?"

Answer. Think what instances of the same kind may be found in scripture, what their various characters were, and what their practice. Bloody *Saul* will die by his own hands rather than that the *Philistines* should slay him, 1 *Sam.* xxxi. 4. *Achitophel* was afraid of being taken and executed for his treason, and therefore he hanged himself. 2 *Sam.* xvii. 23. When *Zimri*, a wicked king, saw that the city was taken, and that he must fall into the hands of his enemies, he burned the king's house over him and died. 1 *Kings* xvi. 18. The heathen jaylor fearing his prisoners had escaped, drew his sword and would have killed himself, lest he should be put to death in the room of his prisoners. *Acts* xvi. 27. These are the men that have chosen sin rather than affliction: They would destroy themselves rather than stay for other men to do it. Are these fit precedents for a christian to follow? Art thou fond of imitating these examples, whose names and characters are loaded with divine contempt in the book of God, except only the jaylor, who was prevented by divine mercy from the bloody fact, and became afterwards a penitent and a convert to the christian faith.

On the other hand think of the holy prophets and martyrs, who had the most dreadful sufferings in view, and rather trusted to divine grace for their support under them, than they would indulge such a guilty method of escape; and their names are crowned with honour on earth and in heaven. *Job* was a very monument of misery, had lost his estate and his children and all his comforts, he was smitten with sore boils from head to foot, so that "his soul, that is, his natural inclination chose strangling, and death rather than life," *Job* vii. 15. and his wife became an instrument of *Satan*, and bid him "curse God and die," *Job* ii. 9. yet he resisted all these temptations through the victorious grace of God, he survived all his sorrows, he became a most honourable monument of divine mercy, and a glorious example of patience.

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Whatsoever thy condition be, it is better to trust thy self in the hands of divine mercy in a way of duty here on earth, than to rush into the hands of God's avenging justice in hell, in order to escape any of the terrors of this life: *Matth. x. 28.* "Fear not them who can kill the body and can do no more; but fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell-fire."

Besides, though thou seest no way open for thy relief, yet the infinite wisdom of God, may open a door of escape. He can heal the most deplorable maladies of the flesh; he can give ease to the acutest pains; he can change thy captive and forlorn estate, into peace, liberty and joy. Remember the history of *Job*, consider the patience of that holy man, and the happy end of his sufferings through the goodness of the Lord. Art thou in the hands of bloody men, the great God has a thousand ways to rescue thee? He can change the purposes of men and the nature of savage beasts, though they gape to devour thee, though they seem resolved and bent upon cruelty and violence. Remember *Daniel* in the lions den. Remember also the deliverance of *St. Paul* and *St. Peter* out of prison. He can give thee a dismissal from life with his own hand, and prevent thy fears and the rage of men, or he can arm thy soul with divine courage and strength, to bear up under the sharpest agonies, and to glorify him even in the fires: And surely the hope of such a death in the certain favour of God is infinitely to be preferred before a death procured to our selves, and under a divine curse.

V. Pretence. "Distress of soul through surrounding sorrows within and without, the departure of God, the agonies of conscience, and the fears of eternal damnation; these things become the spring of many a temptation to self-murder." *Saul* was under some such sort of distress, when God was departed from him, and the *philistines* were coming upon him: He refused to eat bread all that day and all night; and as he stabbed himself the next day, so some suppose he would have starved himself the day before. *1 Sam. xxviii. 15, 20, 22, 23.* *Judas* was in horrible distress of conscience when he had betrayed our Lord, and then he betakes himself to the halter. "I have sinned, says he, and betrayed innocent blood," *Matth. xxvii. 4, 5.* I cannot bear my own thoughts, and I will die by my own hands. And when inward and outward troubles meet together, as they often do, *Satan* takes the advantage to propose this dreadful experiment for relief. "I am a poor reprobate creature for God has left me," says a person under temptation, "and I am sure I shall never be saved; I cannot bear the anguish of my own mind, I cannot bear to live: And besides, if I destroy my self now, I shall have fewer sins to answer for than if I lived longer, and thus my guilt and punishment will be less."

Answer. But how knowest thou that God has utterly left thee, and that thou shalt never be saved? It is not God, but *Satan* who tells thee thou art a reprobate. The God of heaven says no such thing to thee, but he calls thee to look unto him from the ends of the earth, from the borders of hell and despair, that thou mayest be saved *Isa. xlv. 22.* Wilt thou plunge thy self into certain destruction, and make thy damnation sure, which is not certain, whilst thou art here in this life, for amongst the living there is hope? The Son of God stands ready to receive the worst of sinners to the arms of his mercy, "The blood of *Christ* can cleanse from all sin," *1 John i. 7, 9.* "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that *Jesus Christ* came to save the chief of sinners," *1 Tim. i. 15.* And none who ever came to him has been or shall be cast out," *Job. vi. 37.* Why wilt thou seal and confirm for ever the sentence of thy own condemnation? Why wilt thou reject the condescending grace of the saviour, who delights to relieve the distressed sinner? Art thou so rash and desperately wicked, as to employ thy last moments and thy latest powers in this world,

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to commit a bold and horrid sin against the God of all grace, to preclude thy own repentance, and forbid the son of God to save thee?

Besides, This is not true that thy punishment will be the less if thou destroy thy self. For damnation and punishment in hell will be the greater and deeper according to the aggravations of the sins which have brought the sinner thither: Now self-murder is a sin so heinous and aggravated, that if thou die impenitently under the guilt of it, thy damnation will doubtless be the greater for it, and thy torments the more intolerable.

It is a vain and deceitful hope that some persons may have indulged under such a temptation, *viz.* "That God will not impute sin to them in this matter, because their anguish of mind is so great; and that if it be a crime, they will pray for the pardon of it before they commit it." This is a mere vain delusion of the tempter. Canst thou ever imagine that God will hear such prayers? *David* was of another mind, *Psal.* lxxvi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." If thou comest before God with bloody resolutions in thy heart, God will not accept of thy petitions. *Isa.* i. 15. "When you make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood." The prayer for pardon of a wilful intended sin, before it is committed, is a most flagrant and complicated piece of folly and impiety, and can never find access even to a throne of grace.

VI. The last pretence I shall mention for the practice of self-murder, is this. Some poor melancholy creature may say, "I am so hurried with vile, wicked, blasphemous thoughts that my life is a burden to me, and I would fain be rid of it. I am surrounded and overwhelmed night and day with such a croud and tumult of distracting fears, and dismal imaginations, that I can hardly get a moment's rest. My soul longs to be quit of this body, and free from the impetuous, and never-ceasing assault of vexing and disquieting thoughts." Or perhaps the soul complains thus, "I am importuned with the endless buzz and clamour of diabolical suggestions to put an end to my life; almost every thing I see is proposed to me as an instrument of self-destruction, and I fear I shall not be able always to resist; sometimes I am tempted to believe if I would but once comply, I should sleep in silence, and there would be an end of these disquietudes.

Answer. This is a dangerous form of the temptation: When the natural humours of the body are ruffled by any disease, the great enemy of the soul is swift to make his advantage of it. When the brain is disturbed almost to a degree of distraction, the mind has not a full power over its own thoughts, resolutions and conduct. But let such a one consider, that whether these hurrying wicked thoughts may arise from the disorders of the body or from *Satan*, while thou mournest, hatest and resistest them, they shall not be laid to thy charge: But when they are knowingly and willingly indulged, they bring great guilt on the soul: And if they are once complied with, and put in practice, the guilt is highly aggravated, and perhaps no space left for actual repentance, nor grace to practise it.

It is better, infinitely better, to fight and wrestle against these hurries of mind, by dwelling upon some sacred sentences of the word of God. It is incomparably preferable to bear the fatigue of this combat, to strive against the tempter every moment with all thy powers and with perpetual prayers, to renounce these suggestions with the utmost abhorrence, and with equal vehemence to resist such vehement assaults as these. Think this with thy self, poor distressed creature, that if thou yield to the bloody temptation, and send thy soul at once into those regions of darkness, there unclean spirits shall have more complete power over thee,  
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there every devil shall insult thee as a sentenced criminal, and that with double fury and with juster pretences. There thou wilt find the stroke of thy own murder to be so far from being a means of relief and silent rest, that it will but plunge thee into agonies of the same kind, much more terrible and without hope of relief. Thou art sensible these are the suggestions of the wicked spirit; for that reason therefore abandon, abhor, detest them, and by the grace of God maintain a perpetual opposition till he give thee complete victory. The conflict cannot be very long, the crown and triumph are eternal. God will not always suffer the adversary to contend thus with thee, lest thy spirit should fail before him, and the soul which he has made be lost for ever.

## S E C T I O N IV.

*Means of security against this temptation, or advices to the tempted.*

**T**HUS I am led on to the next enquiry, and that is, "What course should we take to secure our selves against this bloody temptation, and by what means may we most successfully resist and vanquish the great destroyer in such assaults as these?"

**I.** Advice. Maintain upon your spirit a constant sense of the crying sin of murder. The voice of blood cries to the Lord for vengeance, whoever sheds it. Have a care of indulging a favourable thought of self-murder; look upon it always with an eye of abhorrence, as an unnatural and abominable iniquity, and as one of the most wretched and hopeless practices that a man can be guilty of. Let the terrors of God which set themselves in array against this bloody crime, be set before your minds whensoever this temptation assaults you.

Give me leave here to borrow a page or two from a sermon preached long ago on this subject by the late venerable doctor *Increase Mather*, of *New-England* whence also I have derived some other sentiments in this discourse. "It is an evil thing, says he, to speak favourably either of self-murder or of self-murderers. There have been those that have undertaken an unhappy work, to justify self-murder in some cases. Pagan writers have celebrated persons who murdered themselves: Famous is the story of *Lucretia*, who stabbed herself to secure her chastity. In what we call, the second book of the *Maccabees*, we find celebrated an action of one *Rafis*, for which the *Jews* cry him up as a martyr; but *Austin* censures him for a criminal self-murderer, with reasons that cannot be answered.

"Yea, some christians have commended those, who to save their chastity, and so themselves from disgrace, have destroyed their own lives. And the crying up of such a fact, has given occasion to many others, to become guilty of that unnatural sin.

"To exalt the persons of self-murderers to heaven, is an evil and a dangerous practice. We should rather leave secret things to God, and to the discoveries of the great day. Indeed if a man's life and conversation were as becomes the gospel, we are not positively and absolutely to say, that he is damned, though he killed himself: Because we know not but that he might be, at that time, under the power of distraction: And it is not impossible, but that God may suffer *Satan* to possess, and torment and kill the bodies of some, whose souls may yet be saved in the day of the Lord. Yet on the other hand; if there were no sign of distraction, appearing in persons before they went to destroy themselves, nor any evidence of repentance after such attempts, we should not say such persons are gone to heaven, lest by being over-charitable

able to the dead, we become cruel to the living. The asserting that such persons are saved, may occasion and encourage others to do the like, and the everlasting destruction of bodies and souls follow upon it."

II. Advice. Maintain the universal practice of piety, and of every moral virtue. Such temptations to self-murder frequently arise from some indulged iniquity. Men oftentimes run headlong into death, with a design to deliver themselves from some of the natural consequences of their own crimes in this world. Now it is easier far to watch against those notorious crimes, and to avoid those follies, than when they are committed to guard our minds against the wicked suggestions that may arise. "A man in innocence," says a great writer, "has a mighty command over himself, above what he has when guilt and fear, shame, vexation and remorse have taken a full possession of him, have bewildered his thoughts, scattered his recollection, and inebriated his judgment."

Be just in your dealings with men, be sober and temperate in all your personal conduct. Do not indulge your self in any unlawful and unblest practices to swell and enlarge your estate, such as gaming or cheating. Do not run into any extravagancies of life, which may waste your estate or your health, or make inroads upon your reason. A thief, a cheat and a gamester, a covetous miser, and a spend-thrift, a glutton and a drunkard, lie much exposed to such wicked suggestions of self-murder in an evil hour.

Watch against all enticements to luxury and lewdness. Remember that riot and adultery and midnight scenes of debauch often lead the way to blood. Secret uncleanness is the frequent spring of murder; and that not only of the unlawful offspring, but of the criminal parent too, and that by their own hands. The wanton person cannot bear the just and public shame of his private iniquities, and he plunges himself headlong into hell and the grave in hopes to cover his head from scandal and the day light.

Love not any thing in this world so much, as that the loss of it should throw you quite off your guard, and make you abandon your self to wild and extravagant methods of relief. Let your affections be so subdued and kept in so good order, that the common calamities of life may not utterly confound, though they may surprize you. If you place your whole happiness in any of the attainments of this world, you expose your selves to this bloody temptation, when you suffer the loss of those idols.

Set a strict guard upon all the ruffling and disquieting passions of human nature. Avoid envy, resentment, indignation, revenge, fretfulness and vexation of spirit. These often lead the unhappy mind of man into this temptation. Persons who break out into violent passion without check or controul, and give a loose to the wild and unreasonable disquietudes both of animal nature and of the mind, they expose themselves to be made the instruments of the devil in their own destruction, or perhaps to destroy themselves without any fresh influences from the tempter. Learn the practice of meekness, and maintain a strict hand over your sudden risings of resentment. The man of rage is always near to bloody practices: The same sort of passions which excite a person to give an unhappy and murderous wound to his neighbour, may some time or other most unhappily imbrue his hands in his own blood.

Remember this, that it has scarce ever been known that a man of temperance, sobriety and virtue, and who in the general course of his life has kept his lusts and passions under due restraint, has been much assaulted with this temptation to self-murder, except only in cases of great bodily disorders of prevailing melancholy, and the loss of reason.

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The third direction I shall copy from doctor *Mather*.

III. Advice. "Beware of such sins as may provoke the holy and righteous God to leave thee unto this horrid evil.

"Beware of pride. When men will rather not be at all, than be what God would have them be; what cursed pride is that? and how dangerous a step toward this sin? This produces murmurings at the providence of God; and causes people to say, 2 *Kings* vi. 33. "What should I wait for the Lord any longer?"

"Beware of self confidence. Be sensible of thy weakness; 1 *Cor.* x. 13. Let him that stands take heed lest he fall. Be not confident of thy own strength to encounter the adversary. If God should let *Satan* loose upon thee, he will be too hard for thee.

"Beware of a heart glued to the world. When the world is a man's idol, he will rather part with his life, with his own hands he will give it away, rather than part with the world, and be content to live in poverty.

"Beware of unbelief. Distrust not the fatherly care of thy heavenly Father." The dread of poverty and starving, has been sometimes the cause of self-destruction; but it is the effect of distrust in God.

"Beware of despair; 1 *Thes.* v. 8. "Putting on for a helmet the hope of salvation." Say not, the day of grace is over with me. Say not, I have sinned unpardonably! Vain imaginations.

"Beware of the more hainous crimes; which are in a special manner god-provoking evils. The sins against nature are so. Some that have been guilty of such sins in secret and have not repented of them, God has for such things left them to this, which is a sin against nature too!

"There are other atrocious crimes; whereof this has been the consequence. *Judas* and *Pilate*, are two fearful examples of it!" The sacred history informs us of the tragical end of *Judas*, and the histories of the church tell us that *Pilate* also destroyed himself some years afterward at *Lyons* in *France*.

"Finally; Beware of backslidings from God, and from good beginnings in religion. Remember that word; *Hes.* viii. 3. "He hath cast off the thing that is good; the enemy shall pursue him. Some have left off prayer in their families; left off their attendance on sermons; left off godly exercises which they have been used to perform. Therefore the enemy of their souls is let loose upon them; and he pursues them, even to self-destruction."

IV. Advice. Suffer not your self to dwell too much alone. Do not indulge solitude and retirement beyond the time that is actually employed in devotion: Nor let your appointed seasons of retired devotion be long. In such a case short and frequent worship is best. Lonesome hours and melancholy solitudes, if they are too much indulged, do not only allow the devil an opportunity to pursue his temptations with vigour, but furnish the bewildered soul with means and instruments of death: Whensoever therefore you are alone, you should be with God.

For the same reason should a person under this temptation avoid all waters, precipices, dangerous places, the use of weapons, &c. And remove every thing as far as may be from his sight that may supply him with the means of self-destruction.

V. Advice. As far as possible endeavour to be always employed; that the powers of your nature, both soul and body, may be engaged in some proper business. Be always doing something, if it be but a mere amusement, a diversion for the thoughts: This is far preferable to idleness. When the hand and the mind have nothing to do, the devil seizes such an opportunity to employ them both for his own wicked purposes.

Do not make the alehouse or the tavern a refuge from your sorrows, but rather drive

out your uneasy thoughts by some proper business that may employ them. A sober glass or two may be used to refresh animal nature and revive a sinking spirit at some particular seasons; but if you once begin to make strong liquors your daily and constant relief, you will be led hereby into a train of mischiefs. When you have drunk a little too freely and your thoughts grow a little confused, you stand then most dreadfully exposed to all the evil impressions of the tempter. Those who may have vanquished huge temptations, while they have been temperate and sober, have been fatally betrayed into the deadly snare by wine and strong drink. A loose, intemperate and unguarded hour has become a hour of blood and death.

VI. Advice. Keep not the devil's counsel, but discover his temptations. It is by no means proper indeed to publish them to the world, but let them be made known to some faithful minister, or to some wise and judicious christian. This will go a great way to break the snare. Entreat the assistance, the advice and prayers of one or two intimate religious friends for you: This method, I am persuaded, has been effectual to prevent the execution of such horrid purposes. Doctor *Mather* informs us that one who cut his own throat acknowledged this before his expiration; "O that I had told," said he, "how I was tempted! if I had, I believe, I should never come to this."

VII. Advice. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, *James iv. 7*. This is a divine counsel. Maintain a perpetual conflict with him and a vigorous opposition. Suffer not your self in a melancholy season to hold a parley with the tempter, or rather suffer him not to plead and dispute with you, but abandon and renounce and abhor all his suggestions. Let him not have the honour or the advantage of arguing with you upon so dangerous a subject in a gloomy and melancholy hour.

Let your memory be well stored with proper scriptures, and employ the word of God in resisting the devil. This was the practice of *Luther*, under his great and fore temptations. This has been the successful instrument of defence for all the saints: And this sword of the Spirit will put *Satan* to flight. *Jesus*, the captain of our salvation has given us himself for a glorious example; he defeated the tempter in all his assaults with these words, "It is written," *Matth. iv. 4, 7, 10*.

And I would give this word of advice to tempted souls, that they every day take some particular useful text of scripture into their minds, that they may run to it perpetually as a refuge, and dwell upon it with a resolute constancy in the midst of their hurries of mind; as a sailor in the midst of a storm ties himself on to the mast, that he may not be driven off into the sea by the violence of the winds and the waves. Some divine word of promise in such a dark and dismal day, will be as a sacred anchor of hope to the poor weather-beaten spirit, that is tost to and fro upon the billows of this temptation.

VIII. Advice. But after all, the most effectual and successful relief under this temptation is faith and prayer. Be frequent and importunate in prayer to God. Fly to the throne of grace whensoever you are assaulted, "that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help you in this time of need." *Heb. iv. 16*. Entreat the aids of your creator against his and your enemy. Trust in his mercy, and seek his power to resist the tempter: The holy Spirit of God, is superior to all the spirits of hell: Depend on his aid, and thus by faith and prayer quench the fiery darts of the evil one.

Commit thy self afresh, by earnest requests, to the protection of the Son of God; he is almighty and compassionate, and the appointed guardian of tempted souls; being sheltered by faith in the hands of the saviour, *Satan* shall not pluck thee out of his hands. *Christ* has conquered the adversary, and led him captive in his chains, nor can he stir beyond the limits of his permission. If the enemy pursue thee, make haste

haste and betake thee to *Jesus* as to a city of refuge: His name *Jesus* assures us that he is and will be a saviour: "This name of the Lord is a strong tower, the tempted soul flies to it and finds safety." *Prov. xviii. 10.* "They that have known this name, will put their trust therein." *Psal. ix. 10.*

Remember, O poor tempted souls, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* has been tempted himself; and that in the same manner too, on the pinnacle of the temple, he knows how to succour them that are tempted, *Heb. ii. 18.* He can teach you how to put *Satan* to flight.

Beg that the Lord your saviour would secure you from the hurries of your own thoughts: Run to his protection hourly being conscious of your own weakness. Plead with him to keep you from this unreasonable and comprehensive temptation, that aims at the ruin of soul and body at once: And though you may think it long to wait and pray under such a fore conflict, yet resolve to continue at the mercy-seat, and go on praying and waiting: "The needy and distressed soul shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," *Psal. ix. 18.* In the proper and appointed time the Lord will awake for your deliverance, and give you a glorious victory. The shepherd of *Israel* may permit a beloved sheep to be worried by the roaring lion, but the sheep that keeps near to the great shepherd shall not be given up to the mouth of the destroyer.

These are the chief advices of a spiritual or intellectual kind, which at present occur to my thoughts, and which I have here proposed to the reason and conscience of men, as proper means to secure them from the dangerous and dreadful practice of self-murder: And I am well assured that if such counsels as these had been followed, we should not have heard of such frequent and bloody instances of persons in the full exercise of reason putting an end to their own lives, as our weekly news-papers inform us of.

But it must be confessed that where this temptation dwells upon the mind, and hangs heavy upon the spirits, where the soul is vexed and hurried with it from day to day, or where there is a melancholy temper of spirit indulging gloomy apprehensions both of things present and things to come, there is much ground to suspect that reason is clouded, that the humours of the body are discomposed, and that animal nature is under the power of some distemper. In this case all the directions that are applied to reason and conscience are likely to become useless and ineffectual without the skill of the physician and the application of proper medicines to correct the peccant humours of the body. Friends and kindred and those which dwell in the same house should make wise observations, where they suspect a person to labour under the power of such a malady, or to indulge such a temptation: For many times they are better judges than the person who is thus afflicted and tempted.

And while they are using proper remedies to remove the disorders of nature, they may also take seasonable hours to set before the mind of a melancholy creature such considerations drawn out of the several parts of this little treatise, as are most suitable to the present case: Let them join their hearty prayers together with all the friendly methods of treatment to soften and relieve their distress of spirit: No harsh or severe usage from their friends is proper in this case: Bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort them that they may not be unwilling to live. Make every thing easy round about them in this world, and encourage them to hope in the mercies of God for eternal life, if they do not wilfully sling themselves out of the reach of his covenant, and all the appointed methods of his pardoning love. Treat them gently with all the united influences of advice and medicine. By daily prayer commit them to the heal-

ing power and the saving mercy of that God, in whose hands are all the springs of nature and grace. And may the God of all grace condescend to hear and to deliver the lives of the tempted from such a dismal period! May he rescue them by his mercy from the power of the tempter, that they may not plunge their souls into an eternal and unchangeable state at so dreadful an uncertainty! Dreadful indeed, wherein their surviving relatives can find but little room for comfort or hope concerning them, except what arises from the supposition of their loss of reason.

## S E C T I O N V.

### *Admonitions to those who have been rescued from this temptation.*

**W**E have good reason to believe, that there are multitudes in every age, who in some season of their lives have been assaulted with this temptation, and have been delivered from the power of it by some interposing methods of divine providence or special grace. Surely such persons will be ready to receive a word of admonition how to behave themselves after so merciful an escape from death and hell.

I. Admonition: Think sometimes with your selves how nigh you have been to the borders of the pit, and what rich grace preserved you from plunging into destruction. Think how dreadfully near you were to death, and to the regions of eternal sorrow, and what an arm of almighty mercy hath rescued you. Say thus to your selves, "I who now behold the light of this world, and am in the land of hope, might have been roaring out under agonies of spirit in the land of darkness and despair, if the great and blessed God had not prevented it."

Perhaps your conscience was awakened and the temptation broken, before it prevailed so far as to fix the fatal resolve of your own death, or when you were nearest to it, opportunity was wanting. Perhaps there was some person came happily into the room, at the time of your bloody purpose, or you were not then furnished with some proper instrument of death: Perhaps you were prevented from finishing the fatal stroke when you had begun it, or the murderous attempt of your hands was not so strong and so successful as your wretched heart wished and designed it: Perhaps your heart relented as you were just going to give death to your selves; or some sudden turn of thought, some happy word of scripture was brought into your mind, that forbid the mischief and rescued your soul. Let the method of prevention be what it will, it is certain God was there, divine providence was there, divine mercy was there: *Psalms* lxxviii. 20. "Our God is the God of salvation: To God the Lord belong all the issues or escapes from death." Stand therefore and wonder at the riches of divine grace, and give God the glory of thy rescue from the arms of death and the flames of hell. Amongst thy solemn thanksgivings for received mercies recount this illustrious instance of it. With great humility fall down before the throne of God, and with thy warmest devotions and gratitude appear there at his foot as a humble monument of his surprizing kindness. Remember the nearer thou wert to destruction, the greater and more evident is the mercy of thy deliverance. "Let thy soul and all that is within thee join to praise the name of the Lord, thy deliverer." *Psalms* ciii. 1, 2.

II. Admonition. Take shame to your self in the sight of God for every murderous thought, every degree of compliance with this temptation. Repent deeply, O sinner, if thou hast indulged any bloody purpose in thy heart, and cry for divine forgiveness. Confess thy sin at the mercy-seat, and seek pardon through the atoning sacrifice



sacrifice of the Son of God. Remember that the blood of *Christ* cleanses us from all sin, even from the crimes of murder and blood. God has snatched thee from the mischief of thy own hands, lift up those hands to heaven to implore pardoning grace in the name of *Jesus* the great reconciler: Repent and receive the blessing.

III. Admonition. Meditate on the long train of benefits derived from this deliverance, and survey the weighty obligations that are laid on your soul thereby. Say thus to your selves, "Every hour of rest and peace that I enjoy is the effect of this peculiar mercy, this divine rescue from death. Every sermon that I hear, every season of grace that is afforded me, is a special favour from that God who delivered me from this destruction. Every opportunity that I have of bending my knees before the throne of grace, every comfortable promise that I read in the gospel, every beam of mercy that I see, and every word of hope that I hear, are all owing to that happy hour of my escape from the violence of my own hands. Wretch that I was! I was cutting off all my hopes, I was cancelling my name out of all the promises, and putting my self beyond the reach of them all. I was sending my self into a world where there is no gospel; no promises, no prayer, no word of salvation, no beam of mercy. For ever adored be the compassion of my God, that over-ruled all my wicked thoughts, and at last gave me victory over this dreadful temptation! And blessed of the Lord be those relatives, those friends, that were the happy instruments in the hand of God to break this fatal snare!"

Then think of the weighty obligations that lie on you to love and serve the Lord with all your powers. Say, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" *Psalms* cxvi. 14. "He hath delivered me from the gates of the grave when I was just ready to leap into it, while the gates of hell stood open to receive my soul. He is indeed the God of my life, for he has not only given me life at first, and preserved it by the common bounty of his providence, but he has rescued my life out of the hands of the tempter when he would have persuaded me to destroy it. O may every moment of this rescued life be some way or other devoted to his fear and honour! Lord, what wilt thou have me do, to make it manifest that I am entirely thine? I would fain shew to my friends who were acquainted with my dreadful danger, that the vows and the bonds of God are strong upon me, and that this deliverance was not bestowed on me in vain."

IV. Admonition. At some special seasons make an enquiry what you have done for God, or for the welfare of your own soul since your deliverance. In the successive course of time, when a new year begins, or when you take notice of your returning birth-day, or when the annual season of this deliverance returns, which is like another birth-day, or a new beginning of life, ask your conscience this solemn question, "Have I improved my moments and my mercies answerable to the infinite obligations I lie under?" It may be you had done little for the honour of God in the world before that time; what have you done since? It may be you had never been diligent to make your calling and election sure before; and are they now made sure? Enquire of your own souls and say, "Some months or years are past since the Lord has recovered me from the most pernicious snare of the tempter, and do I still continue his slave in another form, bound in the chains of my own lusts and passions? Surely I was at that time very unfit to die; Have I now attained a greater fitness?"

Perhaps you had then acquired but little acquaintance with the grace of *Christ*, with experimental religion and practical godliness: And are you still a stranger to *Christ*, a stranger to the pleasure of secret religion, and to holiness in the power and life of it? You stood in that day on the very borders of hell and destruction, the God of mercy

mercy secured you from the pit : Is your face now set heaven-ward ? And are you arrived within the hopes and confines of heaven ? Have you any comfortable or settled expectation of that inheritance of the saints in light ? Your mind perhaps was vain and carnal, and made the pleasures, the profits, or the honours of this life the objects of your chief pursuit, and your only happiness ; how stands the temper of your spirit now ? Is it refined ? Is it exalted to pursue diviner interests and hopes ? Or think you that God rescued you from the grave, for no other purpose, but to eat and drink and live a brutal life, to grovel in the mire still, and to feed upon the dust, or follow after the wind ? God has with-held you from executing the devil's sentence of death on your self ; And are you content still to live under the guilt and condemnation of sin in the sight of God, and wait only till his providence execute his divine sentence upon you ? Is this, O sinner, is this all the design for which thy reprieve was given thee ? Was it not that thou mightest seek a complete pardon, and obtain a right to heaven through the grace of the gospel ? And wilt thou go on to abuse the compassion and the long suffering of God ? Shall that soul perish at last, which has had so loud a warning, and which has been rescued from the very jaws of the pit by the hand of divine love ?

Or, it may be, thou hadst made a profession of religion long before the season of thy temptation, and thou hadst backsliden from the Lord, days without number. His hand has saved thee from present death ; but is thy soul recovered from it's great backslidings ? One would think it should be a very awakening hour, when thou wert just within the verge of hell, and plucked as a brand out of the burning : Art thou returned to thy old drowsiness, and fallen asleep again in careless security ? How wilt thou lift up thy face before God when he shall make at last a solemn enquiry ; "What hast thou done with that life, with those months, with those years ? What hast thou done with those sermons and those seasons of grace that I gave thee since the day of thy rescue from thy own bloody purposes, and from the assaults of the tempter ?"

V. Admonition. Search into the causes and springs of this temptation which hath assaulted you, and watch against all those things that have had any tendency toward it or any share in it.

Search into your own heart, see what secret seeds of iniquity lurk there which may have grown up to this dangerous height. Read over the second and third advices of the foregoing section, see if any of the vicious practices, or the criminal neglects there mentioned, have been indulged by you, which might lay a foundation for this mischief. These are so many avenues which the adversary hath found to insinuate his wicked suggestions, and convey them to your heart : Watch against all these avenues of that great destroyer, and set a guard on your self all round from the assaults of the like temptation in time to come.

VI. Admonition. Since you have found by dangerous experience how unsafe you are in your own hands, and that your life and soul are not secure there, commit your self daily by repeated exercises of faith and importunate prayer into the hands of *Christ* : His great office and divine employment is to take care of the souls which are committed to him, and those "who come unto him shall in no wise be cast out." *John* vi. 37. The holy apostle "knew whom he had believed, or trusted in, and was assured that he was able to keep what he had committed to him against the great day," *2 Tim.* i. 12.

By holy devotions rise often up to heaven ; "Dwell in the secret place of the most high, abide under the shadow of the almighty. Say to the Lord, be thou my refuge and my fortress, my God, in thee will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare

snare of the fowler. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. The lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet. Thou shalt call and God will answer thee: He will be with thee in trouble, he will deliver and honour thee. With long life he will satisfy thee, and shew thee his salvation," *Psalms* xci. 1, 2, 3, 11, 13, 15, 16.

Thus joyn the two excellent advices of our saviour together, "watch and pray daily that ye enter not into temptation," and wait for success from heaven: "May the God of peace sanctify you throughout, and may your spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*," 1 *Thess.* v. 23. Amen.

## S E C T I O N VI.

*Cautions against all approaches to self-murder, viz. intemperance, duelling, &c.*

**I**F I were to add any thing to this discourse concerning the sin of self-murder, I think it might not be utterly improper to put in a caveat against those practices which have a tendency to this sin, and which in some measure partake of the guilt of it, though the sinner himself does not intend violence against his own life. Give me leave then to name a few of these practices, which when set in this light, will appear highly criminal, how innocent soever they are esteemed by thoughtless men.

I. The first of this kind that I shall mention is intemperance, and an unguarded indulgence of all the appetites of nature, and the sensualities of the animal life.

Frequent feasting to the full on rich and savoury dishes, gratifying the palate with varieties of high-seasoned food, and loading the stomach with daily excesses, is one way of destroying life.

It was a most just and happy censure that a late ingenious writer casts on the gluttony of a modern meal, as he expresses it. "Would not one of the ancient philosophers think a man mad, had he seen him devour fowl, fish and flesh; swallow oil and vinegar, wines and spices, throw down sallads of twenty different herbs, saucers of a hundred ingredients, confections and fruits of numberless sweets and flavours? What unnatural motions and counterferments must such a medley of intemperance produce in the body? For my part, when I behold a fashionable table set out in all its magnificence, I fancy that I see gout and dropsies, fevers and lethargies, with other innumerable distempers lying in ambuscade among the dishes\*.

Surely this author would agree that the indulgence of a riotous appetite in such various and improper food as disturbs and oppresses nature, inflames the blood, and fills the body with distempers, has a plain tendency to self-destruction: and yet how many are there that call themselves christians, who must fall under this accusation, and cannot excuse their guilt? Have we never heard a person say, "I know this dish will make me sick, yet I cannot forbear it? Or I have frequently found this food,

or

\* Nature, saith this author, delights in the most plain and simple diet. Were I to consider my readers as my patients, and to prescribe such a kind of temperance as is accommodated to all persons, and such as is particularly suitable to our climate and way of living, I would copy the following rules of a very eminent physician. "Make your whole repast out of one dish. If you indulge in a second, avoid drinking any thing strong till you have finished your meal; at the same time abstain from all such saucers as are not the most plain and simple." A man could not well be guilty of gluttony if he stuck to these few obvious and easy rules. In the first case, there would be no variety of tastes to solicit his palate and occasion excess; nor in the second, any artificial provocatives to relieve satiety and create a false appetite." Thus that great and approved writer *Mr. Addison*.

or these fauces are hurtful for me, and yet I will venture on them?" There is a common proverb that charges this sort of sensuality with the guilt of self-murder, such a man digs his grave with his teeth: And though he feels his health languish, and his body sinking toward the dust, yet he goes on to dig his grave with his teeth daily, till at last he tumbles into it. The God of life is the judge of men, and he hath a terrible charge against such wilful transgressors: For intemperance is a slow poison.

It is the same sort of crime when persons get a habit of drinking, and from a cup of strong drink, which might refresh nature, they grow up to quarts and gallons: From a few moderate glasses at first they learn in time to swallow the contents of whole bottles. They swill wine without measure, and when the common and natural juice of the grape is made so habitual and customary that it ceases to be strong enough to support their spirits, then they have recourse to brandy, and other intoxicating liquors: The art of the chymist is employed to extract burning spirits out of various materials: These make a fearful waste of the vitals, and destroy all the inward springs of nature and life. Many a poor feeble creature has been deluded into death and the grave by the false and flattering supports which they imagine they had received from their daily drams: Where this custom prevails, it is most pernicious and fatal: The bottle of cordials is perpetually frequented: They want it almost hourly; the stomach is palled, the natural appetite to food is ruined, the pulse continues to beat a few weeks, or a few days, by the force of their beloved liquors, and then they drop into the pit. It is strange that persons should make such haste to their own destruction, especially when friends and physicians around them have given them so many warnings, and would fain call them back from their precipitate and fatal career to the grave!

There are many of the wealthy and polite parts of mankind, and too many of the fairer pieces of human nature, who are betrayed into this snare, and ruined beyond relief, without suspecting the guilt of what they daily practise. All the art of medicine labours in vain to rescue life from the prevailing force of diseases, where the thoughtless patient is perpetually nourishing the disease and takes part with death against the physician. Their conduct is a medley of inconsistencies; they pray for life, and make no conscience of sinning against their own prayers. Little do those unhappy creatures think how they violate the sixth commandment of the law of God, while they are sipping their deadly potions: And though they are often admonished, yet they will not believe, but go on to drink and die.

And as for the lowest rank of mankind, they send themselves out of the world at all ages in haste by these hot and fiery liquors. Little young wretches are taught the use of drams in the most early parts of life, and begin to destroy their nature betimes. If they survive childhood, they become a sickly race and useless pieces of the nation. The elder people of that rank reel in our streets till the grave receives them: And unless the venders of these strong liquors be in some measure limited, and their mortal trade restrained, it is certain the church-yards must be enlarged to receive the dead. If a tomb-stone could be well afforded for every such sinner, the inscription of it ought to be this, "Here lies a self-murderer."

II. Another instance wherein some persons thoughtlessly approach to the guilt of self-murder, is, that when they feel nature impaired, and distemper growing apace upon them, yet they obstinately refuse the most necessary means of health and recovery.

Some are so passionately engaged in the pursuit of riches or honours, that in opposition to all the warnings of death, which they receive both from their own disorders of body, and the kind admonition of friends, yet they will fatigue their flesh daily,  
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waste their best spirits, and wear out life apace to accomplish their secular designs. Though it often happens that before they compassed their end they die; their schemes are broken, their projects vanish; and they are gone to appear before the judgment-seat of *Christ*, to give an account how their life was spent, and why they died so soon.

It is granted indeed that there may be some loud and plain calls of providence to risque our health and even life it-self on some special occasions. And when persons of a lower rank amongst mankind must labour for daily food to support themselves and their families, it is very hard to determine precisely how far they should obey the craving necessities of their household, by exposing themselves to great inconveniencies and dangers in their daily labours, or how far they should confine themselves in a medicinal way for the recovery of their strength. In such cases every man must put all circumstances into the balance, and by seeking divine direction, and consulting his friends he must determine for himself according to his best prudence: And if death seizes him in the course of his labour and duty, he resigns up his life to providence, and his soul into the hands of a faithful creator and redeemer.

But my designed reproof lies here, *viz.* when it is evident that persons are under no such necessity, and they have no plain call either from God or men, to waste nature and health at so prodigal a rate, yet they wilfully lavish their strength and throw away life it-self in the pursuit of things that are by no means necessary in their circumstances. This sort of conduct shews that their hearts are set too eagerly upon this world, and they precipitate themselves rashly into eternity by too vehement a desire of the things of time.

There is another way, also, whereby persons may be said to hasten their own death, and that is, when sickness comes upon them, and yet, out of mere humour and obstinacy, they renounce all the aids of medicine. They refuse the friendly touch of the lancet, because they were never let blood in their lives, nor their fathers before them. They will not endure a blister to be raised in the most important case that requires it, for, "I am resolved," say they, "never to be dead alive, but will go to the grave with a whole skin."

Or perhaps from the silly squeamishness of a nice imagination they set themselves against those necessary medicines which are the only visible methods of relief. Like children they refuse a potion because it is bitter or nauseous; and yet they can neither be bribed nor flattered, as children are, into a self denial in this case, nor be persuaded by all the force of reason to displease their palates and save their own lives. Such a humorous conduct will afford their departing souls but small comfort in the reflexion; "I went on in a course of resolute sickness, and death, because the doses of physic were bitter to the taste, and the methods of health were troublesome and painful."

I know some will be ready to suppose this a needless page in the book, for they can hardly conceive any part of mankind can be so obstinately foolish, as to lose health and life in this manner. I wish there might be no future examples of this kind found in the world; but what has been, may be: Human nature is like itself, and all these follies of our species have their rounds; the repetition of them is too often seen in every age, though some of my readers may not have happened to meet with them. Such as have been trained up in a humorous niceness from the cradle, who have been indulged in the strength of their wills, and never been taught to think, nor to use their understandings, are in a fair way to remain in a state of childhood all their lives, and to die for want of learning to obey reason.

III. An ambitious pursuit of glory, in such feats of activity and strength as throw life into the most imminent hazard, this is another frequent method of self-destruction.

There are some persons who assume to themselves so much pride and vanity, from the firmness of their constitution, or the agility of limbs, that God their creator has bestowed upon them, that they are fond of gaining public applause upon this account. They enter into foolish contracts, and they lay wild wagers of their strength or swiftness: They impose on themselves most excessive burdens, they labour beyond all their strength, they engage to run or ride most unreasonable stages in a few hours, or endure some incredible hardships and fatigues. Hereby they oftentimes break all their boasted powers of nature, and bring themselves in haste to the grave; and they leave their names behind them upon the lists of folly among the men who have sold their lives for a trifle.

There have been others, who have bound themselves by wagers to more brutal and more guilty follies, and their death hath been highly criminal and unpitied. One has gloried in the prodigious power of his appetite to devour flesh, and the equal capacity of his stomach for the stowage of a most unreasonable load of eatables. Another hath boasted of his ability to drain whole gallons of common liquors dry, or to swill down amazing quantities of stronger drink. Such wretches are only fit to enter the lists with bears or swine. It is a mortal shame to human nature that such creatures should belong to it, and that any other men should become their rivals. Some of these have died upon the spot, and been made public martyrs to their own madness. Others having their natures overpowered with these extravagances, have languished and sunk down to death by degrees. But I doubt the holy and righteous sentence of God will excuse neither one nor the other of them from the guilt of self-destroyers.

IV. The bloody trade of prize-fighting is another vile practice, wherein the flesh and limbs, and lives of men, are willingly exposed to the strokes of clubs and swords, without any pretence of necessity, or any call from divine providence. What is it but a degree of self-murder, when men out of frolic or humour, out of low ambition of honour, or for the gain of a little pelf, challenge each other to these brutal combats? Their flesh is hacked and hewed with many a wound, their limbs are bruised and battered sorely, their blood is spilt upon a public stage, and life it self sometimes pays for their folly.

I do not suppose indeed that this sort of combatants will ever come within the reach of conviction by any thing that I can write: They are generally too thoughtless of God and religion, too senseless of all that is serious, to look into treatises that relate to sin and duty. But methinks, I would not have such bloody practices encouraged, by drawing in any spectators, that ever pretend to godliness. I confess I am not acquainted with any persons that make the sight of these combats, a part of their entertainment, but it would be well if such things were utterly cashiered and renounced by a nation that professes christianity.

Did we but read with what just and severe reproof the primitive fathers of the church used to inveigh against the barbarous, cruel and murdering spectacles of the gladiators at *Rome*, we should find that in their sense they were so highly offensive to God, that it was disgraceful for any person, who bore the name of a christian, to appear at such entertainments: And I persuade my self, we should be ready to join with these venerable ancients in an endeavour, as far as lies in us, to root out this practice. Those who go to behold them as a matter of delight, and support and encourage them by their contribution to such criminal combats, are in some sense partakers of their guilt.

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I might add also, that if we feast our eyes with such inhuman sights as these, it makes blood and wounds too familiar to us, it sets human flesh and life at too vile and cheap a rate, it hardens the temper by degrees, and is ready to induce something of cruelty and brutal roughness, into a constitution, that before might have much of humanity in it.

V. The wicked pride of duelling, when men stab and shoot each other by contract and consent, has much of the guilt of self-murder belonging to it.

Is it not a strange madness for men who are called christians, and who profess to be followers of the meek and holy *Jesus*, to challenge one another to give or receive present death for a little common affront, and to resolve to kill or be killed for a trifling pique of honour? If professed gamesters will quarrel about the cast of a dye, or if two known adulterers will contend about the possession or the reputation of one shameless woman, and resolve to decide their quarrels by the sword or pistol, let them go on to die like atheists as they live: Let them be convinced of their madness at the great tribunal of God, who would hearken to no conviction from men: They deserve to feel the terrors of that awful being in the other world, whom they renounced in this. But let not a man pretend to the name of a disciple of *Christ*, and run so directly counter to the pattern and the laws of his holy Lord and master.

How is it possible, these combatants can excuse themselves from the guilt of wilful-murder in the sight of God? Do they not go into the field to meet a wilful death, or to give it? Do they not freely expose their breasts to each other's murdering weapons, and mutually yield up their lives either to the more happy or the more skilful push of the sword? Doth not one of them frequently fall and die on the bloody spot of ground? And sometimes both of them are wounded mortally. Is it not the real language of their fury, "I will send him to the devil, or he shall send me thither?" And which soever of them is slain, I think it is evident, that each of them, in the sight of God is guilty, at least intentionally, of a double murder. Each duellist offers up his own life to the other's weapon of destruction, and invites his neighbour to slay him, while each endeavours to slay his neighbour. Here is intended murder on both sides; this is guilt of a dye, and the "Lord will bring upon them both the day of vengeance and destroy them with a double destruction," as the prophet *Jeremy* expresses it, chapter xvii. verse 18. "Their own and their brother's blood shall be dreadfully required at the hand of both of them, by that God who is the avenger of murder." For I fear there are but few of these criminals that practise sincere repentance; even if time and space be allowed for it.

But you will say, "Must a man bear all affronts and have no reparation? Must he have the lie given him and take it tamely? Must he be called a fool or a sot without any satisfaction? Our laws have made no provision for the injuries done to a man's honour, therefore I will revenge the injury my self."

Answer. 1. For any important injuries done to a man's honour, credit and reputation in the world, whereby he sustains real damage, there are some provisions in the law: But for giving the lie, or calling a man's understanding in question, these are supposed to be such common inconsiderable things, that it was not worth while to make laws about them. Let a man live so as to render all these imputations incredible; then those names of reproach will die, and do him no hurt. Let him avoid the company where he is so abused, and put himself out of the way of reproach and temptation for time to come.

Answer 2. What if our laws have not provided reparation for every little affront, because it was thought below the notice of governors, yet the law hath provided a gib-

bet for him that escapes the sword, in a duel wherein he hath killed his neighbour. The law of the land calls this murder, and condemns and punishes the murderer by a shameful manner of death. Now because you have been called a liar or a sot, will you therefore resolve either to be stabbed or to be hanged? What strange reasoning is this for a man, who pretends to the sense and education of a gentleman?

Answer 3. But let it be further observed, that the law of *Christ* requires meekness and patience under many injuries: The law of *Christ* forbids all revenge and murder: His law absolutely prohibits you to kill your neighbour, or to expose yourself to wilful death on the account of such trifles. Come learn to bridle your passions, and mortify your pride, and then such reproaches will not sit so heavy upon you.

But if you are obstinately resolved to die for a point of honour, go, rush into the other world by the sword, or by the gibbet, and make your appeal for injured honour to the most righteous and supreme tribunal of justice there: God is a just judge; he weighs every circumstance to a grain in a divine balance: but you will find to your terror, that the court of heaven will be so far from approving your conduct, that you will be sentenced to everlasting infamy and shame, as a punishment of your pride: You will be doomed to immortal agonies of conscience, and the wrath of that God whose laws you have impiously broken: And notwithstanding all your fancied self-defence, you will be treated like a man that is guilty of his own and his brother's blood.

Give me leave to finish this head with a few sentiments borrowed from mr. *Collier's* discourse of duelling, in the first volume of his essays, which I would recommend to the perusal of those who may be exposed to the danger and temptation of such combats. "It is great pity, saith he, that men who have such opportunities for sense, should be entangled in so monstrous an absurdity! That those who might be the ornament of their age, and defence of their country, should make themselves a misfortune to both. Perhaps the danger of the adventure, may make them think it honourable: But to risk the main, that is, the concerns of life and eternity, without reason or warrant is mere rashness: It is to be more stupid than brave. If a man should leap from a garret, or vault down the monument, do you imagine he would leave the memory of a hero behind him? Religion will not endure the duelling principle, any more than all the heresies since *Simon Magus*. It is a principle so full of pride and passion and revenge; so tempestuous and absurd; so absolutely unallied to reason and good nature, that polished heathenism would be ashamed of it. In a word, it is as contrary to the tendency and temper of christianity, as *Hobbes's* creed is to the apostles, as light is to darkness, as God is to the devil."

Perhaps, you imagine you must part with the character of a gentleman, or a man of honour, if you refuse a challenge: But "fear it not. As long as the laws are on our side, the heraldry is all safe. And if it were otherwise, let us remember we are christians. If there happens a competition between these two pretensions, let us drop the gentleman and keep the christian; for he is a person of the best quality.

"But you are afraid your rival will post you up for a coward, and what then? Why then, you should mind it no more than the railing of a man in a fever, or a proclamation from *Bedlam*." Thus far that ingenious writer.

But the case is far different, if your enemy draw upon you and assault you: For then, your first business is to keep within the compass of self-defence, as long as you can; and if any mischief happen afterwards, and bloody events ensue, you stand justified by the laws of God and man, and may answer for it with innocence and honour whether in this world or the next.

C O N-



## C O N C L U S I O N .

**T**HUS I think it hath been made abundantly evident, both by the light of reason and scripture, that the practice of self-murder can never be justified, and that it is a crime of hainous and flagrant guilt both in the account of God and man. These immortal spirits of our's are ordained for a season to dwell in tabernacles of flesh and blood: Curious tabernacles they are indeed, the work of inimitable skill, and the structure of a divine architect. The almighty builder is the great proprietor of his own work. We must remember therefore we are but tenants, and not lords: We have no right to demolish these fleshly buildings at our pleasure, but are bound to maintain and repair them under all their totterings and decays, till they become untenable and can be sustained no longer. If we presume to destroy these earthly dwellings, or suffer them to fall by our ill management, we must give a solemn account of such a guilty conduct to our great and sovereign Lord. I have therefore endeavoured to manifest in various instances, that every step and tendency toward the destruction of one's self has something highly criminal in it, and partakes of the guilt of this sin. We throw our selves wilfully out of the hope of the favour of God, when we wilfully violate his laws, and especially in such awful and important instances as relate to life and blood.

When we read therefore the histories of such tragical occurrences, let us endeavour to make a wise and pious improvement of those mischiefs which we cannot prevent. When we hear fresh tidings weekly of such unhappy creatures as lay violent hands on themselves; such as lavish away their lives by riotous extravagances, or thoughtless intemperance; such as run along on the precipices of death, and the very edge of destruction, being hurried on by vain glory or wild wagering; such as expose their blood, their souls, and their eternal hopes, in foolish contests of honour, and upon trifling quarrels; I say, when we hear of these things, let us lift up our eyes and our hearts to heaven, and give thanks to the distinguishing mercy of God, which hath preserved us from these guilty and fatal mischiefs. Blessed be the Lord, that our names are not written in those dreadful stories! That we have been secured by his grace from those temptations, and have been kept thus far walking in the paths of life and peace! and at the same time let us by a devout wish entrust our lives and souls to his keeping. Then let us pity poor mankind who are subject to the rage of such criminal and destructive passions, and who feel the dreadful effects of them: And with a spirit of sacred compassion, let us offer up an humble complaint and prayer to our God, and say, "How long, O Lord, how long shall *Satan* reign and triumph among the children of men? How long shall the adversary of God and souls make use of the weakness, the folly and the madness of mankind to hurry them off from the stage of life, and to drag them down to his own dark dominions? O send forth thy light and thy truth, and the power of divine love, to rescue and heal a sinful world, and to save souls from perishing!" Amen.

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