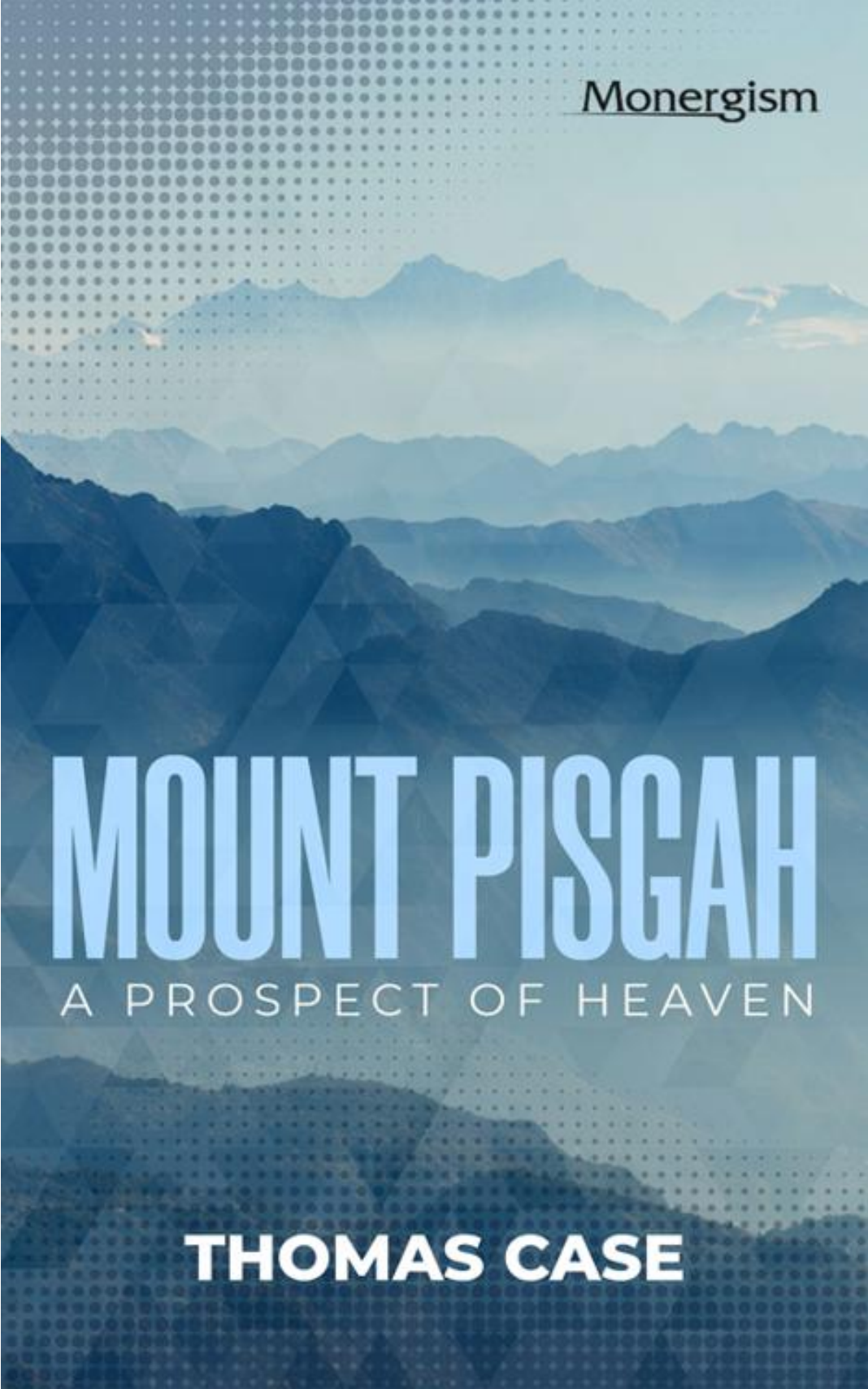


Monergism

# MOUNT PISGAH

A PROSPECT OF HEAVEN

**THOMAS CASE**



*Monergism*

# MOUNT PISGAH

A PROSPECT OF HEAVEN

**THOMAS CASE**

Copyright ©Monergism Books

# Mount Pisgah

## A Prospect of Heaven

SOMETIME STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,  
PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL, AND A MEMBER OF THE  
WESTMINISTER ASSEMBLY

### Table of Contents

[The Epistle Dedicatory #1](#)

[The Epistle Dedicatory #2](#)

[To the Reader](#)

[Mount Pisgah, or A Prospect of Heaven](#)

TO

THE HONOURABLE,

AND HIS MUCH HONOURED SON-IN-LAW,

SIR ROBERT BOOTH, KNT.,

Lord Chief Justice of the Common-Pleas in Ireland,

## GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE.

DEAR SIR,

THESE meditations presented to you, were first intended for a diversion to your and my sorrow, Conceived by the death of that excellent child, your first-born, your Ben-jamin;\* but his precious mother's Ben-oni,† for she brought him forth, not with the hazard only, but with the loss of her own life; his birth was her death: from which very moment of time you were pleased to intrust his education to his tender grandmother, your pious mother, and myself; a deposit, than which there could nothing have been more sacred to us in the world: I am sure we were as tender of it, as of our own lives; yea, verily, our lives were bound up in the child's life. He was indeed a delectable child, in whom nature and grace seemed to be at a strife, which should excel in her workmanship: and as he grew in age, so he grew in sweetness of disposition, and in all natural and moral endowments, of which his age was capable: yea, he outgrew his age, and was always beforehand with his education; imbibing instruction faster than we durst rationally infuse it, for fear of hurting the tender vessel; so that he seemed to be a man before his childhood was expired. As many loved him as knew him; and were in dispute with themselves, whether such maturity did prophesy an eminent life, or an immature death. I must confess, whether my infirmity or no, I know not, I was often offended at the mention of the latter, as too boldly entrenching upon God's prerogative; but such, it seems, was the Divine decree; so it proved. His work was done betimes, and ours about him before we thought of it; and while we said of him in our hearts, as once Lamech said of his son Noah, This child shall comfort us, Gen. 5:29; he shall live with us; God said, Nay, he shall leave you, and shall live with me: for before he was eleven years old, God snatched him out of our tuition, and removed him into a higher form; where he should learn no more by the sight of the eye, and hearing of the ear, which are subject to mistake, but by clear and perfect vision; where he knows more than we could teach him; yea, is able to teach us what we are not capable of understanding: while we

see but in a glass darkly, he is seeing face to face. Oh could I but write what he is able to dictate concerning the facial vision,\* which I am now, with fear and trembling, but peeping into; what a rare exposition should I publish to the world, upon the present context before us! Such as eye never read, and ear never heard, nor can ever enter into the heart of man, until we enter into that light where he is; where his intellectual eye is married to the Sun of righteousness, and his naked will is swimming and bathing itself in rivers of pleasures for ever. This may be indeed, what these papers wished to be, and that is all, a perfumed handkerchief to wipe off tears from your eyes, and fill your soul with joy. Your loss is his infinite gain.

It was a satisfaction good enough for a heathen, who, when one brought him the tidings of his eldest son's death, was able to reply, "I knew my son was mortal." Your comfort may express itself in a higher strain, I know my son is immortal; for though nature did not make him immortal by his generation, grace hath made him immortal by his regeneration: so that all that you and I have to do, is but to breathe after that perfection, of which, through grace, I am humbly confident he is already possessed: "Let us so run that we may obtain." As for myself, so many deaths have been rushing in upon me, "deep calling unto deep," as have not only retarded this work, but threatened its destruction. But since it hath pleased the living God to let me live to publish this work, such as it is, dear son, I dedicate it to your name, to be as an Absalom's pillar, until God may raise up a living monument in the room of that which he hath removed: and because this may be too weak and obscure, let me provoke you, sir, to erect to yourself a monument that may be worthy of you; let your own life be a name to you when you are dead; a name better than of sons and daughters; by filling that honourable station wherein God hath fixed you, and all your other relations, with such fruitfulness, wisdom, and fidelity, that all who know you, may rise up and call you blessed; yea, that your name may be as a sweet perfume to posterity. Live your own life and your son's too.

As for me, I cannot long survive, having so often received in myself the sentence of death, 2 Cor. 1:9; I have lived already one full age of man, and am now in the third year\* of my labour and sorrow, Psa. 90:10, and it is little I can do for God. I must decrease, but may you increase; yet pray for me, that I may live much in a little time; and that myself and your aged mother may, like those trees of God, Psa. 92:14, 15, bring forth more fruit in old age than in the beginning, to show that the Lord is upright, &c.

Farewell, honoured son, and God Almighty make you amends for the loan which you have lent to God, if not in the stream, yet in the fountain. May He bless you, and make you a blessing. So prayeth

Your faithful, and most

affectionate Father-in-law,

THOMAS CASE.

TO MY WORTHY SON-IN-LAW,

WILLIAM HAWES,

DOCTOR IN PHYSIC;

AND TO MRS. ELIZABETH HAWES

HIS VIRTUOUS CONSORT,

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE.

DEAR SON AND DAUGHTER,

It is not, certainly, without some special design of Providence, that these meditations, which were conceived upon the death of your hopeful nephew, the only son of your elder brother, Sir Robert Booth, now in Ireland; should not, by reason of those distempers which have ever since pursued me incessantly, as you, to your trouble, know; be published until this time, when our sorrows are doubled in the death of your precious child, Martin Hawes, your first-born: possibly, as we may rationally conjecture, that we should not too soon forget the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall; but that our souls having them continually in remembrance, might be humbled in us, Lam. 3:19, 20. Possibly, that the children being every way alike, both in person and in disposition, one and the same plaster might give ease and cure to the wound; and one and the same monument perpetuate their memorial unto posterity.

Truly they were a pair of lovely babes; babes in age, though men in knowledge and understanding; of whom we may, in their capacity, sing, as David once in his funeral elegies of Saul and Jonathan, "They were pleasant in their lives, in their death they were not divided."

Their lives indeed were short; so it seemed good to the Divine wisdom, after he had showed two such excellent pieces in the light for a while, timely to lay them up amongst his jewels, lest they should receive hurt or stain from a present evil world. But although their lives were short, yet verily they were precious, such, as allowing them this abatement, that they were children; neither parents nor standers-by could rationally have wished they had been otherwise than they were. And though there were some distance of years, yet the rewas the greatest parity of persons observed between them, that though they were but the brother's and sister's sons, you could not, had they been together, have distinguished them from brethren, or twins.

For elegance of person, loveliness of countenance, solidness of judgment, acuteness of wit, tenaciousness of memory, sweetness of disposition, universal innocence, and modesty in behaviour;



obedience to parents, next or remote, submission to governors, observance to superiors, love to equals, condescension to inferiors, and candour to all.

And, that which deservedly is of higher value with God, reverend attention to his word read or preached, together with some suitable ability to give a methodical repetition of both; studious in learning catechisms, of which they were able to give such a rational account, as if they had been candidates for the university; as many, both of the nobility and others in the parish of Giles'-in-the-Fields can, at this day, witness; love to the best things, and a due respect to the best men; with a more than a childish dislike of, and adverseness to what they understood to be evil, &c.

These desirablenesses, according to, yea, and above the rate of children, rendered them so like one another, as if one soul had animated two bodies.

And as they were alike in their lives, so in their death they were not divided; or if a little in time, not at all in the manner and circumstances.

They both lived with us, but died with you; they lived with the divine, but died with the physician, to show that neither religion doth kill, nor physic can keep alive.

Nevertheless, though they died with you, they came not to die, any further than the hidden decree of the Divine will had before determined.

They died alive, as it were, death gave them so little warning. Neither parents nor children understood wherefore they came; until within a very few days, death showed his commission, and as soon executed it.

They died, both of them, in the absence of their trustees, who, though one step higher in the parental line, were not, I am sure, half a step

lower in parental affection, which the Divine eye saw and pitied; and, therefore, out of compassion, hiding from us what he was about to do; as he snatched us from the elder, by sending us abroad; so he snatched the younger from us by sending him home to his father's house: so pitying our infirmity, who otherwise, possibly, might not have parted with them so willingly, nor have borne their loss so patiently. The loss of two such choice patterns of Divine workmanship, could not but have been a heart-breaking object to us, as it was to you, but that their constant absence from you was a preparative, whereby the terror of death was something abated: their very absence so long before was a little death.

That which sweeteneth it to us all, is, (that God hath not left us to mourn as men without hope,) that in the context before us, the children are not dead, but sleep, they sleep in Jesus.

If any stander by shall judge, possibly, that my affection hath transported my charity into excess, my apology is this, that I had rather be guilty of an excess in charity, than a defect in thankfulness. I know we cannot expect such rational accounts of grace in children, as may be found in adult saints; but that that doxology, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength," Psa. 8:2, doth not exclude children, though not confine the meaning of the words so narrow, is the judgment of old St. Ignatius; who from those scripture instances of Samuel, Josiah, and others, denieth not but that the Spirit of God working in young ones, doth many times give out early discoveries of the grace of the covenant, when elder persons do only carry their gray hairs as a badge of their ingratitude to God.

As for your dear children, God hath not left himself without further witness in their death, of an interest in them; those heavenly whispers which the tender aunt, laying her ear to the pale lips of her dying nephew, as he lay upon his back, with eyes fixed heavenward, when he wanted strength to make his heart audible,— "God—Christ—Grace," &c.

And her own dear child's delight in that little book, "A Guide to Heaven;" a book little in bulk, but great in excellency; which, as it caused him to make it his vade-mecum while he lived; his golden cup, out of which he drank his morning's draught every morning in his bed: so it caused him to take it with him as his viaticum to heaven, when he came to die; for it was found with him when dead. These, I say, are overplusses of Divine grace, and witnesses of Divine love, to those dying babes from their heavenly Father.

Wherefore, dear children, let not the consolations of God seem small unto you, but improve them for your own comfort and quickening, in the holy education of the surviving treasures of your blood; that if they live, you may have comfort in their lives; or if they die, you may have hope in their deaths.

"Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

And accept of this imperfect monument, set up for your continual inspection, and the blessed children's memorial: by

Your faithful and most affectionate

Father-in-law,

THOMAS CASE.

TO THE READER

THE AUTHOR WISHETH GRACE AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER, AND FROM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

READER,—To help the weaker sort of christians in the understanding of this more dark and difficult context, which containeth the description of our Lord's last coming; and to quicken the more slow and drowsy spirits, to a greater vigour in the pursuit of the glory which is to be revealed at that coming; have I, not without the importunity of divers friends, sensible of their need of the meanest helps, put myself upon the publishing of these more private essays calculated only for the use of my own family.

Yet since they may, by the blessing of God, be of a larger influence; and knowing that good is so much the more good, by how much it is a more diffusive good, I chose rather to adventure my name, than be guilty of sacrilege, in not casting in my mite into the public treasury of the church's service.

Being, by the good providence of God, hitherto spared and kept alive, I have looked upon it as my duty, (the death-watch every night, in my bed, sounding in my ears,) to leave some watch-word behind me, to awaken this sleepy and secure generation; wherein the most, I would it might not be said the better part, of christians have lost the sight of heaven, and are digging hard into the earth, to search whether, possibly, they might not meet with a chief good between this and the centre!

But oh, that before they go off the superficies, they would look back, to see from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works, Rev. 2:5.

Behold, I am here showing you the thing which you are so eagerly pursuing; it is risen, it is not here. Oh that you would, with Moses, get up into the mount, from whence you might take the prospect of that good land, where only blessedness dwelleth.

I must confess the vision is much darkened by the dimness of the eye, and the feebleness of the hand, which drew this imperfect landscape; but this I dare be bold to say, that by the optic glass of faith, upon the knee of prayer, a man may make such a discovery of glory here, as, when he cometh down from this mount, may serve quite to extinguish all the glory of this nether world, and to fix the eye, with that proto-martyr, stedfastly looking up into heaven, to see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, Acts 7:55. Which, if it may be in any measure the fruit of these poor labours; let them take the praise of men, whose portion it is; while I shall, with more alacrity, leave these tents of Kedar, where my pilgrimage hath been thus far prolonged, and mount up to that full-eyed vision, where blessedness and eternity are of one length, ever with the Lord. Ambitious of that epitaph, by a learned hand, set upon the monument of that incomparable Culverwell:

What this to know, as we are known should be,  
The author could not tell, but's gone to see.

And who, for that little moment, is thine, christian reader, in tears  
and prayers.

THOMAS CASE

MOUNT PISGAH;

OR,

WORDS OF COMFORT ON THE DEATH OF OUR GRACIOUS  
RELATIONS

WHEREFORE, COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE  
WORDS. - 1 THESSALONIANS 4:18.

THESE words! What words are these? Scripture words in their general nature; more particularly the words of comfort contained in this context from ver. 13, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren," &c., down to my text.

For therein doth the apostle, by the dictate of the Holy Ghost, lay down a model or platform of consolatory arguments, as so many sovereign antidotes against immoderate sorrow for our godly relations which are departed: and with these words the apostle would have christians to comfort themselves, and one another. Comfort one another with these words. I will improve these words, First, for comfort; Secondly, for counsel.

The words of comfort laid down by the apostle in this model may be reduced unto ten heads, some of them very comprehensive, and all of them exceedingly cordial and restorative.

I. The first word of comfort is this, namely, that our gracious relations, over whose departure we stand mourning and weeping, are but fallen asleep; "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." We may say of departed saints,

as our Saviour said concerning the damsel, Matt. 9:24, they are not dead, but sleep: the same phrase he also used to his disciples concerning Lazarus; "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," John 11:11. That which we call death is not death indeed to the saints of God; it is but the image of death, the shadow and metaphor of death, death's younger brother, a mere sleep, and no more. There are two main properties of death which do carry in them a lively resemblance of sleep. The first is, that sleep is nothing else but the binding up of the senses for a little time; a locking up of the doors, and shutting of the windows of the body for a season, that so nature may take the sweeter rest and repose, being freed from all disturbance and distractions: sleep is but a mere parenthesis to the labours and travails of this present life. Secondly, sleep is but a partial privation, a privation of the act only, not of the habit of reason. They that sleep in the night, do awake again in the morning; then the soul returneth to the discharge of all her offices again: in the internal faculties, to the act of judging, and discourse in the intellect; to recalling things for the present, and recording things for future use in the memory; to its empire and command in the will, to its judicature in the conscience: so likewise the soul returns again to the execution of all her functions in the external senses; to seeing in the eye, to hearing in the ear, to tasting in the palate; as also to working in the hands, to walking in the feet, and so as to the rest. In a word, the whole man is restored again to itself, as it were by a new creation; that which lay as senseless and useless all the night, is raised again more fresh and active in the morning than it lay down at night.

Such as this is what we commonly call death, but with this considerable advantage, that in the interim of death the soul acts more vigorously than before, as being released from the weights and entanglements of the body.

First, it is but a longer and closer binding up of the senses; nature's long vacation. The grave is a bed, wherein the body is laid to rest, with its curtains drawn close about it, that it may not be disturbed in its repose; so the Holy Ghost pleaseth to phrase it: "He shall enter

into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness," Isa. 57:2. Death is nothing else but a writ of ease to the poor weary servants of Christ, a total cessation from all their labour of nature, sin, and affliction. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours," &c. Rev. 14:13. While the souls of the saints do rest in Abraham's bosom, their bodies do sweetly sleep in their beds of dust, as in a safe and consecrated dormitory. Thus death is but a sleep.

Secondly, and then again, as they that sleep in the night do awake in the morning, so shall the saints of God do: this heaviness may endure for a night, (this night of mortality,) but joy cometh in the morning: in the morning of the resurrection they shall awake again, Ps. 17:15. It will not be an everlasting night, an endless sleep, but as surely as we awake in the morning, when we have slept comfortably all night, so surely shall the saints then awake, and shall stand upon their feet, and we shall behold them again with exceeding joy.

Oh, blessed morning! How should we long and wait for that morning, more than they that watch for the dawning of the day?

Let this teach us to moderate our sorrow over departed christian friends; for, do we sigh and lament when any of the family are gone to bed before us, in the evening? Do we cry out, Woe and alas, my father is fallen asleep, my mother is laid to rest; my sweet child, the delight of mine eyes, the joy of my heart, his eyes have closed, and the curtains drawn close about him? Do we, I say, thus take on, and afflict ourselves in this case? no surely; why then do we so here? the case is the same; only if the night be a little longer, the morning will be infinitely more joyous, and make us more abundant compensation for our patience and expectation. We call also the absence of our friends by a wrong name. We say, My father is dead, my mother is dead, my Isaac is dead. Dead! the letter killeth. Death is the most terrible of all terrible things; the very name of it strikes a chilness and coldness into our hearts. Let us then call things as God calls them; let us make use of the notions which God hath suggested to us;



let us say, My parent is at rest, my beloved babe is fallen asleep, and, behold the terror of death will cease.

If God hath clothed this horrid thing, death, with softer notions for our comfort, let not the consolations of the Almighty be a small thing with us. Oh, how comfortable lives might we live, had we but the right notions of things, and faith to realize them! Our friends are not dead but sleep. Comfort one another with this word.

II. The next consolatory argument is, the hopeful condition of these our sleeping relations; blessed be God, we are not without hope of their happiness, even while they thus sleep.

There be indeed those that die, and neither carry away any hope with them, nor leave any hope behind them, to their surviving relations: "but the righteous hath hope in his death," Prov. 14:32. When our gracious relations die, we must use the word sometimes, that we may be understood, there is hope; they are infinite gainers by their death. Sometimes they die full of hope, Job 19:25–27. Thus holy Paul, "We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. 5:1. Glorious triumph! And thus again, we may find him in his own name, and in the name of other of his brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, marching out of the field of this world in a victorious manner, with colours flying, and drums beating; and thus insulting over death as a conqueror; "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" 1 Cor. 15:56, 57. Oh, the superabundant consolation of the heirs of promise! And if the departure of any of the saints of God is under a cloud, so that they are not able to express their own hopes, yet they leave behind them solid scripture evidences of their interest in God's everlasting electing love, and of their effectual vocation out of the world into the kingdom and fellowship of his dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Gal. 5:22, 23. Such evidences as their poverty of

spirit; their holy mourning for their own and other men's sins, Matt. 5:3; their hungering and thirsting after righteousness, ver. 6; their purity of heart, visible in the holiness of their lives, ver. 8; their peaceable and peace-making dispositions, ver. 9; their patient bearing of the cross, ver. 10–12; their keeping of the word of God in the precepts of it, and keeping close to it in the truth of it, ch. 7:24; their superlative love to Christ, Matt. 10:37; their cordial love to the saints, 1 John 3:14; their contempt of the world, 1 John 2:15; their desire of Christ's appearance, 2 Tim. 4:8; in a word, their conformity to Christ their head, Rom. 8:29.

The remembrance of these graces of the Spirit may well administer abundant matter of hope and rejoicing to surviving friends, that those relations which are fallen asleep, were a people whom God hath set apart for himself, precious in his sight, honourable and beloved of him; a people formed for himself, to show forth his praise, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. 1:12.

They who bury their relations and their hopes together in one grave, have just cause for mourning, yea, for excessive mourning; but with you that (upon these scripture evidences) have good hope through grace, concerning your deceased friends, it is otherwise; you know that while you are mourning on earth, they are rejoicing in heaven; that while you are clothed with black, they are clothed in white, even in the long, white robe of Christ's righteousness; that while you are rolling yourselves in the dust, they are sitting with Christ upon his throne. Do not then, I beseech you, profane your scriptural hope with an unscriptural mourning; give not the world occasion to judge either yourselves to be living without faith, or your relations to have died without hope; but let your christian moderation be known to all men, that it may be a visible testimony to all the world, of God's grace in them, and of your hopes of their glory with God. Therefore comfort one another with this word also.

III. Another word of comfort is, that our gracious relations are not alone in their death. The captain of their salvation marched before them through those black regions of death and the grave, Jesus died; this is implied in the following words, "If we believe that Jesus died." This is an argument that carrieth in it strong consolation. Our christian relations in dying run no greater hazard than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did; no greater hazard than all the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles did, for they all in their generations died. Yea, what shall I say? they run no other hazard than the Lord of all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles did, for Jesus died; this is wonderful indeed; the Lord of life yielded up the ghost; the eternal Son of God was laid in the grave!

We indeed die justly: death is but our wages; wages as truly earned as ever was a penny by the poor hireling for his day's labour. We have forfeited our lives over and over again, by continual reiterated treasons against the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth; yea, the best blood which runs in our veins is traitor's blood by succession from our first rebellious parents.

But he! what evil had he done? He was "holy, harmless, undefined, separate from sinners," Heb 7:26. He did no sin, neither was there guile found in his mouth; he fulfilled all righteousness; and yet Jesus died! And why so? Surely "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed," Isa. 53:5. Behold! God the Father so loved us, that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, Rom. 8:32; and shall we think much to give up the dearest treasures of our blood, in death to him?

Behold! God the Son so loved us, that he died for love of us; he died the first death, that we might not die the second death; he died for us, that we might live with him; and shall we count our lives, or the lives of our dearest relations too dear for him? especially when neither we nor ours are in any capacity to reap the fruit and advantage of his death until we die also! and the sooner we die the

sooner shall we reap those fruits. Behold! God's first-born was laid in the sepulchre; and shall we think God deals hardly with us, if we follow our first-born to the grave, and leave them there, till our Lord himself come to awaken them? Jesus died, and was buried, that he might sanctify death to us by his death, and by his being buried might perfume the grave, and make it a sweet dormitory, or bed of spices for his members to rest in, until the morning of the resurrection. O christians, let us comfort ourselves, and one another, with these words also, Jesus died.

IV. The fourth word is yet more full of consolation, and that is, although Jesus died, yet he "rose again." He died indeed, but he rose again from the dead. God suffered his dear Son to be laid in the sepulchre, but he did not leave him there nor suffer any taint of corruption to seize upon his precious body. And to that end Christ made haste to rise again out of the grave; he rose the third day, and that very early in the morning, as soon as ever it could be called day. The alarm no sooner went off, as it were, but the Lord Jesus did lift up his royal head, and put on his glorious apparel, and came forth out of his grave, as a bridegroom out of his chamber, in state and triumph.

And this was the cordial which our Lord himself took before his passion. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption: therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth," &c. Ps. 16:9, 10. This was his triumphant song: and it may be ours, as well as his, whether in reference to ourselves or to our gracious relations. For wherefore was not Christ left in hell, that is, in hades, or in the state of the dead? It was that he might lift up us also out of the pit. And wherefore did his body see no corruption, no, not for the least particle of time? It was that our mortal bodies might not inherit rottenness and oblivion in the dust for ever. Indeed, in this phrase, "Jesus arose again," there are three things implied, which interest every believer in this triumph of Christ's resurrection, —power, —right, —office.

1. Jesus rose again, it implieth Christ's power, namely, that Jesus Christ rose by his own power. It is not merely said, Jesus was raised, which might have spoken him passive only in his resurrection; but Jesus rose, which speaketh him active in the matter. Yes, he rose as a conqueror by his own strength; as he himself professeth, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again," John 10:18. It is true, it is elsewhere said that "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," Rom. 6:4; and likewise, that he was quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. 3:18, to show that neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost were excluded from a joint share and concurrence in his resurrection; but here, as elsewhere, it is said also, that Christ rose, to show that he was not merely passive in his resurrection, as the children of the resurrection are, but that he rose also by the mighty power that was seated in his own royal person.

Death and the grave had swallowed a morsel which they could not keep: but as the whale, when it had swallowed Jonah, in this the type of Christ, was forced to cast him up again, it being impossible Christ should be holden by death. The power of the Word incarnate loosed or dissolved the bonds of death, as a thread of tow is broken when it is touched with the fire. Yea, Samson like, Jesus Christ did break in sunder the bars of the grave, and carried away the gates of death upon his shoulders, making a show of them openly.

Thus Jesus rose again as a conqueror by his own power, and this is our triumph and rejoicing: for surly he that thus raised up himself, can raise up us also, and will indeed raise us up by the same power, whereby he is able to subdue even all things unto himself, Phil. 3:21.

2. Jesus rose again; it implieth his office; he rose as a Jesus, a Saviour, the Mediator of our peace; who having finished the work he came about, namely, to satisfy Divine justice, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, so making peace by the blood of his cross, —God the Father sent a public officer from heaven, to open the prison doors; an angel to roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, Matt. 28:2; thereby proclaiming to all the world that the

debt was paid, and that God had received full satisfaction for the sins of the elect, saying, as it were, Deliver him, for I have received a ransom.

This is another ground of our triumph, that Jesus rose; that is, he rose as our Jesus, our Saviour, and so by dying, hath delivered us from death, and from him "that had the power of death, which is the devil," Heb. 2:14. "Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1:10.

3. Jesus rose again; it implieth his right to us, and interest in us. He rose as our Jesus, that is, as a public head, in whom all believers are considered. Jesus Christ as he died not in a private capacity, for he had no sin of his own, for which death might have any dominion over him, so neither did he rise again in a private capacity, but in a public capacity. He rose as he was our Goel, that is, our next of kin, unto whom the right of redemption did belong: he rose as our Surety; he rose as the heavenly Bridegroom, having espoused the church himself on the cross; he rose as the Captain of our salvation, as the public head and representative of all the elect of God.

And this consideration layeth another foundation for our triumph in Christ's resurrection; namely, that there is an inseparable connexion between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the saints, and it is fourfold; a connexion of—1. Merit; 2. Influence; 3. Design; 4. Union.

(1.) A connexion of merit. "To this end Christ both died, and rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living," Rom. 14:9. Intimating that by his death he merited of the Father, that both in death and in life, both dying and rising again, he might dispose of the saints to his own advantage. Why, now the Lord Jesus having bought his saints at so dear a rate, if they should not rise again, he should lose his purchase; there were no more merit in the death of Christ than in the death of any of the sons of Adam; and even in this respect Christ had died in vain, and risen in vain.

(2.) A connexion of influence. There is power in the resurrection of Christ, for the quickening of the dead. Hence it is that our Lord calls himself the resurrection and the life; namely, to intimate to us, that by the same spirit of holiness whereby he raised himself from the dead, he will also quicken our mortal bodies. This inseparably links the resurrection of the saints with the resurrection of Christ: for surely were it not so, the resurrection of Jesus Christ would signify no more than the resurrection of Lazarus, or any other of the saints mentioned. Matt 27:52, 53. Yea, the resurrection of Christ would not be of so great virtue and influence as the dry bones of the prophet, the very touch whereof raised the dead man which was cast into his grave, 2 Kings 13:21.

(3.) A connexion of design. The Lord Jesus had a design upon the saints in his rising again from the dead: and what that was he tells us in the last affectionate prayer before his passion, John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Therefore Christ arose and ascended, that he might come again and awake them out of their graves, and take them home to himself into mansions of glory: so he comforted his disciples before his departure, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:3.

This is then a third inseparable connexion between Jesus rising again from the dead and the saints rising again; because without this, Christ should lose the very plan and object of his own resurrection. This must not be, it cannot be.

(4.) A connexion of union. Christ is the head, and the saints are the members of his mystical body; and if the head be risen, the members cannot be long behind; for, can the head live, and the members remain dead? yea, can the life of the saints live, and they themselves continue in a state of death? This is a happy contradiction, a blessed impossibility! Oh write this comfortable word upon your hearts, christians, Christ is our life. Christ is your life, and the life of your

christian relations; and as surely as Christ is risen, they shall rise; and because he lives, those members of his, for whom you weep and bleed, as dead, shall live also with him. Surely if the devil and all the powers of darkness were not able to keep Christ in the grave, neither shall they be able to hold one of his members there for ever! Hence you shall find the holy apostle arguing from the resurrection of Christ to the resurrection of christians; "If Christ rose from the dead, how say some that there is no resurrection of the dead?" 1 Cor. 15:12; and back again from the resurrection of christians to the resurrection of Christ, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen," ver. 13. Indeed the form of words is negative, but the sense is affirmative; and for the greater assurance it is repeated over and over in the following verses; backward and forward as convertibles; grant one, and ye grant the other; deny one, and ye deny the other. And the result is this, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept," ver. 20; Christ is risen, and risen as our first-fruits, as a pledge and part of the whole harvest; for if the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy: if the first-fruits be laid up safe in God's barns, the whole harvest shall, in due time, be safely brought in thither also, only it must stay its time appointed by the great Husbandman, whose method is this, first, "Christ the first-fruits, afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming," ver. 23.

Be of good cheer, christians, weep not, it is the Father's good pleasure, that not a sheaf, not an ear, not one grain be lost; so witnesseth the truth and the life; the truth to testify it, and the life to make it good; "This is the Father's will which 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," John 6:39. Nothing of all that, &c.; that is, not the least person, nor the least member of the least person, how mean and contemptible soever.

Will this content thee, christian? Thy sweet relation is not lost but sown, and that which is sown is not quickened unless it die. At the harvest time thou shalt have thy seed again; when that which thou



callest perishing shall be thy improvement; thy treasure is not cast away, but put to use; and thy loss shalt be thy gain.

Thus we see that the resurrection of the saints stands upon a surer foundation than our faith; it stands upon a four-fold foundation, as you have heard—the Merit—Influence—Design—Union—which is between Christ and his saints; a foundation which stands surer than heaven and earth. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one of these foundations shall ever pass away, or fail; "the foundation of the Lord standeth sure," 2 Tim. 2:19. So then, not their resurrection, but our comfort in their resurrection, is that which depends upon our faith. Sense stands weeping and crying out, My parent is dead, my yoke-fellow is lost, my dear child is perished: No, saith faith, they are alive, they are safe, they are happy. And all this, faith inferreth upon Christ's resurrection: so that whosoever hath faith enough to put Christ's resurrection into the premises, may, by the same act of faith, put the saints' resurrection into the conclusion. He that by an eye of faith, can look upon Christ's resurrection as past, may, by the same eye of faith, see the resurrection of the saints as to come: he that by faith can say, Christ is risen; may, with the same breath of faith, say also, The saints shall rise: "Because I live, you shall live also:" as a pledge and instance whereof, when Christ arose, many of the saints which slept, were enlarged out of the prison of the grave, the heart strings whereof were now broken, to attend the solemnity of their Lord's resurrection, Matt. 27:52, 53; and were as another kind of first-fruits of the last resurrection of all believers.

By all these evidences and demonstrations, Jesus Christ, now in heaven, speaks to his mourners, as once he did, in the days of his flesh, to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again;" so he speaks to us, Man, woman, thy yoke-fellow shall rise again; thine Isaac, whom thou lovedst, shall rise again. And oh, that we had but faith enough to answer with Martha! "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" This would be a sovereign cordial to keep our hearts from fainting under our sorrows. If indeed we have not faith to realize this comfortable truth, our dear relations, if they

could speak, would cry to us out of their graves in some such language as that in which our Saviour rebuked the women which followed him to his cross, "Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me," &c. So ours; Son, daughter, husband, wife, father, mother, (and whatever other dear relations,) weep not for us, but weep for yourselves, and for the unbelief of your own hearts.

Christians, there is the spring-head of all our misery, our unbelief; it is unbelief which robs us first of our sweet relations, and afterwards of our comforts in their gains: and, if we look not to it the better, it will keep us and them asunder to all eternity: we cannot enter in to their rest, if we continue in our unbelief: cry we then with the father of the child, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief," Mark 9:24. If we believe that Jesus rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

V. The next word of comfort is, that saints sleep in Jesus. The first word of comfort in this model was, that our christian relations departed this life, are not dead, but fallen asleep. Here followeth a word of comfort, of a richer import, which tells us, that as they do but sleep, so they sleep in Jesus.

This expression noteth to us, that blessed and admirable union, 1 Cor. 15:18, which is between Jesus Christ, and his saints, a union frequently set out to us in scripture under a twofold notion:—1. Christ in the believer; 2. The believer in Christ.

1. Christ in the believer; "If Christ be in you, the body is dead," &c. Rom. 8:10. "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. 1:27; and here in the text, they are said to be in Jesus.

2. The believer in Christ; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus; who of God is made," &c. 1 Cor. 1:30. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:17. "The saints in Christ," Col. 1:2. See both together, "You in me, and I in you," John 14:20. "Abide in me, and I in you." 15:4, "He that abideth in me, and I in him," ver. 5.

These expressions are the same for substance, both setting forth to us the union itself; a mutual, intimate in-dwelling, or in-being, between Christ and his saints; He in them, and they in him, so making one.

They differ somewhat in the notion and import of the phrase, hinting to us a different mode and fruit of this mutual in-being, namely, Christ is in the believer, by his Spirit, 1 John 4:13, and 1 Cor. 12:13. The believer in Christ, by faith, John 1:12. Christ in the believer, by inhabitation, Eph. 3:17. The believer in Christ, by implantation, John 15:2; Rom. 6:3, 5. Christ in the believer, as the head in the body, Col. 1:18; as the root in the branches, John 15:5. Believers are in Christ, as the members are in the head, Eph. 1:23; as the branches in the root, John 15:1, 7. Christ in the believer, implieth life and influence from Christ, Col. 3, 4; 1 Pet. 2:5. The believer in Christ, implieth communion and fellowship with Christ. When Christ is said to be in the believer, we are to understand it in reference to sanctification. When the believer is said to be in Christ, it is in order to justification, 1 Cor. 1:30. It is Christ without us, that justifieth; it is Christ within us, that sanctifieth. Grace in the apostle's phrase, is Christ formed in the heart, Gal. 4:19.

These and the like expressions, hold forth that transcendent and mysterious union which is between Christ and the believing soul, whereby they are not only joined together; but in a sober gospel-sense united, made one as it were; Christ becomes one with them, and they one with Christ.

This union with Christ, for the clearer and safer understanding of so great and precious a mystery, I shall endeavour more fully to open in these six distinguishing properties: it is a union, 1. Spiritual—2. Real—3. Operative—4. Enriching—5. Intimate—6 Indissoluble.

(1.) It is a spiritual union. When we speak of this union, we must abstract it from all that is gross and fleshy; there is nothing in it obvious to sense, perceptible by the eye, or by the ear, or by the

touch, or taste; it is not effected by any corporeal contact; Christ and the believer are not tied together by any material bonds, and fleshy sinews, but their union is a pure, immaterial, sublime union, altogether spiritual.

It is so partly, inasmuch as by this union Christ and the believer are made one spirit; "He that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit," 1 Cor. 6:17; not only one spiritually, but one spirit: not as exclusive to the body itself, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. 5:30; but expressing to us the top and perfection of this union. He that is joined to an harlot is one flesh, in an impure and carnal sense. Man and wife, though their conjunction be more honourable, yet are but one flesh also in a conjugal sense: "For two, saith he, shall be one flesh; and he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit," 1 Cor. 6:16, 17; a union infinitely more honourable than that of marriage. The believer is joined to Christ, into one and the same spirit; he is animated, and acted by one and the same spirit with Christ, though in a different degree and measure, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him," John 3:34. Christ as mediator, for in that capacity believers are united unto him, received the Spirit without measure.

Believers have but their stinted measure and proportion, and yet, notwithstanding, the Spirit of God dwelling as truly in them, as it did in Christ himself, though not essentially, they thereby become one spirit with Christ.

Also, it is a spiritual union, partly, because the bonds and ligaments of this union are not carnal, but spiritual; the bond of this union, on the part of Christ, is the Spirit, whereby he unites himself to the believer. The presence of the Spirit maketh this union, by virtue of which God communicates with us, as with his sons, and we communicate with God, as with our heavenly Father. And the bond of this union, on the part of the believer, is faith, whereby the believer is united to Christ. As the scion is engrafted into the stock, and thereby grows up to be one with the stock, so is the believer

implanted into Christ by faith, Eph. 3:17; grows up in him, receiveth life and nourishment from him, and is preserved in him to life eternal; "Kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation," 1 Pet. 1:5.

(2.) It is a real union, and that in a tenfold distinction

[1.] In opposition to an imaginary union; it is no metaphysical notion, or like those things which logicians call intellectual beings; or your mathematical lines, which have their existence only in the understanding and fancy.

[2.] Nor is it a relative union only; as father and child, master and servant are united: such a union there is between Christ and believers; but that is not all.

[3.] Neither is it a legal union only. Christ and the believer are not one only, as the debtor and the surety are one in law, in a forensical sense; that is, in the interpretation and judgment of the court. In this sense they are one indeed, namely, in the judgment of God, as a judge, but not only so.

[4.] Nor is it a union only of assent in point of doctrine and judgment, though so much it is, for saith the apostle, in the name of all believers, "We have the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. 2:16. The believer, so far as he is a believer, is of the same mind, judgment, and opinion with Jesus Christ in all things. And this truly gives them a kind of oneness; hence a firm and stedfast continuance in the faith, that is in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, is called an in-being in Christ, John 15:4, 6; and an abiding in Christ, 1 John 2:24, 28; as a professional or doctrinal union with Christ. This the saints of God have, but neither is this all.

[5.] Nor yet is it merely a union of consent; the believer is not one with Christ, only by consent of wills. The Arians, whilst they blasphemously deny the deity of the Son, betray a double ignorance; and if but ignorance, their sin is the less; the one in the doctrine, or

assertion itself; the other in the ground which they allege for it, which is Christ's own words, praying to his Father for believers; "That they may be one, even as we are one," John 17:22; whence they, supposing believers to be one with the Father and the Son only by consent of wills, do infer, neither are the Father and the Son one in any other sense. But say we, they err in the very foundation: we acknowledge indeed believers to be so far one with Christ, and that is a very sweet and precious union: to will and nill the same things, is a high degree of love and oneness; but to say no more of the union betwixt Christ and his saints, is to say too little.

[6.] Neither is this union barely a sacramental union; whereby christians, in either of the sacraments, or any other evangelical institution, are in an elemental, professional way joined to Christ, and Christ to them. Thus all, good and bad, elect and reprobate, Simon Magus as well as any of the believing Samaritans, Acts 8:12, 13, Judas as well as Peter: all, I say, are made one with Christ in an external professional use of those gospel-institutions; while in the mean time a real believer, in a true, living, spiritual, saving way, is made partaker of Christ, and of all his benefits in all gospel ordinances.

[7.] In contradistinction to the union which we have with Christ, by virtue of his assuming our human nature. Christ was incarnate in the womb of the virgin, and thereby was personally united to our flesh; which is the highest advancement of the human nature that can be conceived, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," Heb. 2:16. Christ assumed man's nature, being God from all eternity; he took on him the one, to the other; and so made of those two natures one person: by this we have a kind of union with Jesus Christ. This is a near and an honourable conjunction; for by this means Jesus Christ is become our Immanuel, God with us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; but this is not all that is meant by this union.

[8.] It is real, in contradistinction to that contemplative union which the saints have with Christ in their holy meditations. Meditation doth bring the object and the faculty together, and makes them one: and thus the saints are often united to Jesus Christ in holy contemplation, whereby they let in Christ into their souls, and their souls into Christ, and become, as it were, one spirit, or one in spirit, with him: but neither is this all.

[9.] It is a real union, in contradistinction to reconciliatory union. Falling out separates between person and person; reconciliation makes them one again; reconciliation is the atonement of enemies: and thus indeed, God and sinners are reconciled by Christ; by him we have received the atonement; those whom sin made two, Christ makes one, Rom. 5:11. This is a choice fruit of Christ's death, a concomitant of our union with Christ, yet not the very union itself, or not the whole of this union.

[10.] This union is real, in contradistinction to affectionate union. Love is as a uniting affection, it makes the lover and the beloved one; as if two persons had but one soul between them: thus Christ loves the saints, Rev. 1:5; and the saints love Christ again, 1 Pet. 1:8. Christ's love to them is the cause; their love to Christ, is the effect, 1 John 4:19. Yet this union is rather a fruit of that union we are now speaking of, than the union itself; as in marriage, the conjugal bond and conjugal love are distinct things.

None of all these reach the nature of this union. The scripture describes it to be a real and a solid union; as real as that between head and members, root and branches; for, although it be a spiritual union, yet doth it not therefore cease to be real; things are not therefore less real, because spiritual, yea therefore more real. God, who is the most absolute and real being, a being who gives being to every thing which hath a being, is most spiritual; "God is a spirit," John 4:24 and the nearer any being or excellency approximates unto God, the more real it is, the more itself; as we see in angels, and the souls of men.

Thus is it with this union, it is spiritual, but yet so true and real, that in comparison with it, all unions and conjunctions in nature are nothing else but so many figures and shadows. It is as real as the believer himself, as real as Christ himself; Christ and the believer are not more really one in themselves, than they are in, and with one another spiritually, 1 Cor. 6:16. Yea our Lord carrieth us one step higher; it is a union as real as that essential union between the Father and the Son. "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," John 17:21; that is, as truly, as verily, though not substantially; it denotes, I say, the reality of the union, though not the kind and manner of it.

(3.) This union is an operative union. Christ is in the believer, as the soul is in the body, a principle of life and operation. "I live," saith the apostle; but as if he had said too much, he recalls what he had said, "yet not I; but, Christ liveth in me," Gal. 2:20, Col. 3:4. It is not so much I that live, as Christ in me. Christ is my life, it is he that animates me. It is he that doth all his work in me and my works for me. Though the act be mine, the strength is his; "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me," Phil. 4:13. I am but the instrument only, which his hand manageth; it is his finger that toucheth me, his skill that makes the music. It is such a union as from whence the believer, by faith, draws life and virtue from Jesus Christ to all spiritual and saving intents and purposes; yea, whereby all the offices of the holy life become sweet, easy, and delightful; those duties and employments, which unto the unregenerate man are hard and grievous, and even so many impossibles, by faith, improving its union with Christ, are made light and easy, even as the operations of another nature, 1 John 5:4. All this the apostle would have us to understand, when he saith, "His commandments are not grievous," ver. 3.

(4.) This union is a soul-enriching union. By virtue of this blessed union the saints are invested into all the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ; as by virtue of the marriage-knot the wife is instated into all the revenues and privileges of her husband, "Of him are ye in Christ



Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1:30. Observe christians! in Christ Jesus: there is the union, and thence flows communion and fellowship with him in all his privileges, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Here you have the very epitome and sum total of the gospel: the whole Christ in four words; the benefit and fruit of all his offices, suitable and sufficient to supply all the defects and indigences of the creature. For behold! here is wisdom for our folly; righteousness for our guilt; sanctification for our impure natures, and redemption for our every way lost and undone condition. Wisdom to make us wise to salvation, there is the fruit of his prophetic office. Righteousness for our justification; "Christ is the end," or complement, "of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. 10:4, there is the fruit of his priestly office. Sanctification, to begin holiness where it is wanting, and to increase it where it is begun; Christ is a fountain of holiness, as well as a fountain of happiness, there is the fruit of his kingly office. Redemption, fully and finally to deliver us from the power of darkness, from wrath to come, from all the remainders of sin and misery, and to translate us into the kingdom of grace and glory; there is the joint-fruit of all his offices.

Behold christians! This is the rich and precious fruit which grows upon the offices of Jesus Christ, and all made ours by means of this glorious union. First, in Christ, then follows wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Yea, one step higher yet: by virtue of this union with Christ, believers are not only made partakers of the fruits of Christ's offices, but are in a subordinate sense invested into the very offices themselves. Was he anointed to be a King? so are they: "He hath made us kings," &c. Rev. 1:6. Was Christ anointed to be a Prophet? Believers also partake of the same unction; "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," 1 John 2:20. Was Christ anointed to be a Priest? so are they; "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," 1 Pet. 2:9. Here are two offices twisted together—royal, there is their kingly

office; priesthood, there is their sacerdotal; a kingdom of priests, Exod. 19:6, as Moses phraseth it; priests, as they stand in relation to God, "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. 2:5; and kings in respect of men, to rule over others, and themselves too. This is much, and yet this is not all; by virtue of this union, believers share with Christ in all his communicable titles and dignities. Is he a Son? so are they; Christ, the Son of God by nature; they the sons of God by adoption, Gal. 4:5. Was Christ the Heir of all things? Heb. 1:2. Believers are heirs also in him, and with him: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ," Rom. 8:17. Though they are not joint-purchasers by their good works, as the papist would make them; yet they are joint-heirs by grace, as God hath made them, by virtue of their union with Jesus Christ.

Doth Christ call God his Father and his God? behold! he, being not ashamed to call them brethren, lets them know that he is their God and Father, Heb. 2:11. "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God," John 20:17.

Once more: hath the Father appointed him a kingdom? so doth he appoint unto them a kingdom, Luke 22:29. Hath the Father assigned him a throne? so doth Christ assign unto his saints a throne also. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. 3:21.

My brethren! what a soul-enriching, beatifical union is this! There are unions in nature which convey nothing, communicate nothing, but empty and insignificant titles; which make the person admitted into them not a whit the richer, the better, not a jot the more noble or happy; but this union introduces the believer into the full enjoyment of Christ, with all his riches, and all his glory; insomuch, as the spouse gives in the whole account in this vast and invaluable sum, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Cant 2:16. He is mine; the whole

Christ is mine in his natures, offices, excellences, prerogatives, and inheritance; in all he is, and in all he hath, it is all mine, for my good, and for my glory. This is the voice of her faith, and then this is the voice of her love, "I am his;" in all I am, in all I have, in all I can make by my interest in the world; and if it were a thousand times more, he should have it all, and all too little for Him who hath loved me, and washed me in his own blood, and hath taken me into so rich and glorious an union with his own self. To him be glory for ever, Amen.

(5.) It is a near, inward, intimate union. To hint the intimateness of this union, the Holy Ghost in scripture, carries us through the climax of all unions under heaven, and shows how they all fall short of this blessed union in respect of closeness and intimacy. It tells you to look how the house and foundation are one, so are Christ and believers, 1 Pet. 2:4–6; yea higher.

It tells you to look how husband and wife are one, so is Christ and his saints, Hos. 2:19; Eph. 5:30; only with this incomparable difference, husband and wife make but one flesh, but Christ and the believer make one spirit, 1 Cor. 6:16, 17.

It tells us, yet higher, to look how the head and members are one, so is Christ and his church, 1 Cor. 12:12; how root and branches are one, John 15:1, 6, so Christ and believers; and closer yet, the scripture tells us to look how food and the body are one, so also is Christ and the believer one; hence we hear of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, John 6:51, 53–56; and nearer yet, if nearer can be. It tells us, that look how the soul and body are one, how life and the subject wherein it resides are one, so is Christ and the believer; "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear," &c. Col. 3:4.

Behold here, christians, is a union which amounts well nigh to an identity; say only, with Cyprian, it is not such a union as is between the two natures in Christ, which makes them but one person; not such a union as is between the three glorious persons in the blessed Trinity, who, notwithstanding the distinction of their personality, are

but one nature and essence; and you cannot say or think too highly of this union; yea whatsoever you can say or think, will be short of the intimacy and excellency of this union.

I must add this to what I have said, that because no union under heaven was close enough to express the oneness which is betwixt Christ and the believer; therefore our Lord Jesus himself carries us up to heaven, there to contemplate the essential union which is between the Father and the Son, and puts them into the same parallel, "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," John 17:21. Yet still we must be careful to understand the words of Christ in a sober sense, lest, whilst our Lord doth honour our union with himself, by comparing it to Divine union in the Trinity, we do in the least dishonour that union by levelling it with ours; we must duly remember, that this comparative particle as, doth not here intend equality, but likeness only; the truth of the intimacy, and not the nature or the degree of it; to lift up this mystical union above all other unions in nature; but we must still keep the Divine union in its own place.

(6.) This union is an indissoluble union. This union between Christ and the believer, is not capable of any separation. They are so one, that all the violence of the world, or all the powers of darkness, can never be able to make them two again.

Hence the apostle's triumphant challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Rom. 8:35. If the question did not imply a strong negation, the apostle himself doth give us a negation in words at length, "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us," &c. ver. 38, 39.

A long catalogue, consisting of a large induction of various particulars; but in all these it is observable; he only instanceth in the creature, nor any other creature—he leaveth out God, and why?

because God himself is the author of this union; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. 1:30.

Here is the foundation then upon which the apostle erecteth this triumph: God, who only can dissolve this union, will not; the creature, which only would dissolve this union, cannot; so it stands on a surer foundation than heaven and earth, our life is hid with Christ in God. The believer is in Christ, as Christ is in God, hence the inseparableness of this union: there is no more possibility of pulling the believer out of the bosom of Christ, than there is of removing Christ out of the bosom of his Father, John 10:28, 29.

This is the transcendent excellency of this union above all others, it is eternal. Indeed it had a beginning, but it shall never have an end. All other unions may suffer a dissolution; a whirlwind may throw the house from off its foundation, as we see in the case of Job's children, Job 1:18, 19. A bill of divorce may dissolve the union betwixt man and wife, Matt. 5:31, 32. An axe may dissolve the union between the head and members. Death dissolves the union between the soul and body, &c. But nothing can dissolve the union between Christ and the believers; "Nothing shall be able to separate us," &c.

My text gives us a further instance of this; the saints sleep in Jesus; the union ceaseth not, no not in the grave. Observe the progress of it, it began in their regeneration; then they received their first implantation into Christ, Rom. 6:3–5; hence the apostle makes regeneration and being in Christ synonymous, ver. 3, 4. Next, they are said to live in Christ, and Christ in them, Gal. 2:20. Then to show there is no in and out in this union, as some fondly dream, we read of their abiding in Christ, not only by way of precept as John 15:4, 5, but by way of promise also, as 1 John 2:27. "Ye shall abide in him;" which certainly doth express assurance and establishment for ever, Rom. 4:16. Therefore they are said in the next place, to die in Christ; "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord:" so verse 16, after the text, makes mention of the dead in Christ; so that, what dissolves all other unions dissolves not this.

Yea, see one strain higher yet; not only in death, but even after death this union holds; the saints are said to sleep in Jesus, ver. 14; that part of the saints which is capable of sleep, is not capable of separation from Christ; while their more noble part is united to Christ in heaven, amongst the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. 12:23, Christ is united to their more ignoble part in the grave, their very dust; they sleep in Jesus.

Thus I have opened unto you the blessed and admirable union which is between Christ and his saints, and its most excellent and transcendent properties.

Opened, did I say? Alas it is impossible! This union is a mystery, a great mystery, Eph. 5:32; next to that union between the three glorious persons in the Trinity, and that other, like unto it, between the two natures in Christ, profound and ineffable! The heart of man is not able to conceive it, nor the tongue of an angel to express it: the natural man knows it not at all, no more of it than a brute knows what the union is between the soul and body in man; it is above his principle, 1 Cor. 2:14. The spiritual man understandeth it very imperfectly; all we know is rather, that so it is, than what it is; the full and perfect knowledge of it is reserved for the future state; so our Lord hath told us: "At that day ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," John 14:20; then, and not till then: we shall never perfectly understand this union until we come fully to enjoy it. In the mean time, if a short improvement of such a rich point might not be judged improper in such a contemplative discourse as this is, a few things might be hinted from hence, by way of use.

Use 1. Here we may discover the main foundation and reason of the saints' perseverance. Surely it consists not in the nature of grace infused in their regeneration; this differs not specifically from the grace which Adam received in his first creation; that was the image of God, Gen. 1:26, 27; and so is this, Col. 3:10, and therefore of itself cannot produce any higher or more noble effects under the one

covenant, than it did under the other. Nor doth it consist in the liberty and rectitude of their own wills, though regenerate. But here is the ground and foundation of the saints' perseverance; they are not only fixed stars in Christ's right hand, Rev. 3:1; if no more, it would be hard pulling them thence, but their lives are bound up in the same bundle with Christ's own life; "Our life is hid with Christ in God," Col. 3:3. Christ and his saints have, as it were, but one life between them, and that life is Christ's; whence Christ himself makes the inference, "Because I live, you shall live also," John 14:19. Until I hear that Christ is dead the second time, which I am sure I shall never do, for "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him," &c. Rom. 6:9, I dare not believe the possibility of the saints' total and final apostasy.

Only, because Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, my earnest advice to all such as do pretend to this blessed union, as to mine own soul, is, to give all diligence, upon solid scripture evidence; that is to say, by the precious and powerful influences of this union upon their souls, and by the gracious reciprocations of faith and love, and sweet holy communion with the Father and the Son, &c.; by these, I say, and the like, to secure the assumption, I am thus united to Christ; and the conclusion, need not fear the gates of Rome, or hell; but the believer may boldly send forth St. Paul's challenge, "Who shall condemn? What shall separate? Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. 8:34, 35; 1 Cor. 15:57.

Use 2. Hence we may take notice of the honour and dignity of the saints, how meanly and basely soever reputed, in and by a reprobate world, even as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, 1 Cor. 4:13. I say, though the saints of God are thus base and contemptible in the opinion of the ignorant world, yet they have another rate and value set upon them in heaven. God is not ashamed to be called their God, nor Christ ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. 11:16; 2:11. Yea, he dignifies them with the style of his spouse,

the bride, the Lamb's wife, Cant. 4:8, 11; Rev. 21:9; and all this upon the account of that admirable and inconceivable union which is between Christ and them, by virtue whereof they are in Christ, and Christ in them, as to their more divine part, their souls, 1 Cor. 6:17; and even as to their earthly and corruptible part, their bodies, members of Christ, and temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; yea, saith my text, their very dust is united to Christ: they "sleep in Jesus." Such honour have all his saints.

Use 3. How should the sense of it engage them to honour Christ, who hath put such great honour upon them! yea, to honour themselves whom Christ hath so highly honoured! to stand upon their advancement, and not to profane themselves by any thing that is common or unclean, or upon the least account unsuitable to their glorious union with Jesus Christ; but to possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, 1 Thess. 4:4, as under an holy awe of that tremendous sentence, "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy," 1 Cor. 3:17. Surely the thought of so near and intimate a union with the Son of God, should make sin become an impossibility; and upon all the adulterous solicitations of the flesh, world, or Satan, to make holy Joseph's quick reply, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my union with Jesus Christ!

Use 4. And oh that such as have for many years together sat under the ministry of the gospel of Christ, and to this day are altogether strangers to this blessed union with Christ, would now, with all seriousness, apply themselves to know it, and to know it experimentally; oh that they would, with holy Paul, "account all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ," Phil. 3:8, even this, that they may "be found in him," ver. 9, to know him with interest, to know him in this mysterious and beatifical union, Christ in them, and they in Christ. Alas! this is the undoing mistake of thousands who are called christians; they know somewhat of the history of Christ; they have some notions of a Christ in their heads, but this is the precipice upon which they ruin themselves, they think to be saved by a Christ without them; they



hang upon the outside of the ark, they live upon bare notions: the Son of God took our nature upon him, died for sins, rose again, and is gone up into heaven, and sits at God's right hand: and therefore conclude they shall be saved. Oh but what a fallacy do they put upon their own souls, James 1:22.

Christ is the hope of salvation, it is true, but it is not simply Christ in our nature, not simply Christ on the cross, not Christ in the grave, no, not alone Christ on the throne, but, saith the apostle, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," Col. 1:27. It were an easy thing to be saved, if a Christ without us were all; and I know no reason why reprobate men and devils might not get to heaven on such terms.

Christ must be in us by his Spirit, and we must be in Christ by faith, or else our persons and our hope are both reprobate, 2 Cor. 13:5. Appear before God's tribunal in the great day without this union, and plead what you will, your answer will be, "I never knew you; depart from me," &c. Matt. 7:21–23; Luke 13:26, 27.

Believe this, oh all you carnal, Christless christians, and tremble; and swim no longer down the stream of security, lest it empty you forth into the lake of perdition; but work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and give all diligence to make this conjunction with Christ sure to your own souls; that when he shall appear you may also appear with him in glory, Phil. 2:12; Col. 3:4.

Remember, all your true and solid comfort and rejoicing in life, in death, and at the day of judgment, is all bound up in your union with Jesus Christ; Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Use 5. The doctrine of this glorious union with Christ, is not more for the honour of the living, than for the comfort of the dying saints, and of their surviving mourners.

Why do ye tremble at the thoughts of death, O ye saints of God? and why do you indeed, what the Jews supposed Mary did, go so often to the sepulchre to weep there? John 11:31. Behold, your beloved

Lazarus is not dead, but sleepeth; yea, that which is of an infinitely higher consideration, he sleeps in Jesus. Did he live in Christ? behold he died in Christ also; did he die in Christ? behold he sleeps in Christ; Christ is nearly related to the saints' dust; their ashes are not laid up in the grave so much as in Christ; yea, though they should pass through ever so many changes and revolutions, and should be scattered at length into all quarters and corners of the world, he that calls the stars by their own names, knows every dust of their precious bodies, keeps them in his hand, and is as really united to them as to his own human nature in heaven.

This may be as Jonathan's honey upon the top of the rod; taste of it, O ye mourners of hope, and your eyes will be enlightened: look not on your precious relations, so much as they lie rotting in the grave, or resolved into dust, as upon their dust as it is laid up in a sacred urn, in the hand and bosom, as it were, of Jesus Christ; for which he himself will be responsible, and bring it forth safely and entirely in the morning of the resurrection; for so it followeth, "them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

VI. The next word of comfort is, God will bring his sleeping saints with him, that is, with his Son Jesus Christ the Lord. For so it follows, "The Lord himself shall descend," &c.; and when he cometh, he will bring them with him that sleep in him. The propriety of the work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, God-man, the Mediator between God and man; he shall bring them with him when he descendeth from heaven.

1. When the Lord shall descend, he will bring the spirits of just men made perfect with him from heaven. The souls of all his glorified saints, whose bodies to this moment have slept in the grave, shall follow Christ out of the gates of the New Jerusalem to attend that glorious solemnity: so it is prophesied, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," Jude ver. 14. When Christ cometh to judge the world, there shall not be a saint left in heaven, saith Chrysostom. Heaven shall, as it were, be left empty, to attend the

King of glory going forth out of his royal palace, to finish the work of the great and last judgment of the world; he shall come attended with all his saints, they shall fill up his train.

2. As Christ will bring their souls with him from heaven, so he will bring their bodies from the grave. Christ at his coming to judgment, will first go to the graves of the saints, and cry to them aloud in some such language as once he did to their souls in the days of their unregeneracy, when dead in sins and trespasses, in the gospel call, "Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead, and I will give thee life." Or, as in the days of his flesh he did to Lazarus, when he had lain four days rotting in the grave, (a lively emblem and type of the general resurrection,) "Lazarus come forth," John 11:43; and they that are dead shall come forth. It was the tenour of his own prediction, while yet in the world, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth," &c.

When that hour has come, Christ by his mighty power shall command the bodies of his saints to come forth, shall unite dust to dust, every dust in its own proper place, and form it into the same body it was when it was dissolved and laid down in the grave: and thus made up into a beautiful structure, more beautiful than ever it was in its first creation: Christ will put each soul into its own body again, and unite them together into the same sweet conjugal society and fellowship they possessed before their separation: this friendly espoused pair shall now be solemnly married together, before God, and men, and angels, never to suffer divorce any more, and they shall become one entire person, as they were in the days of their first contract.

O christians! think with yourselves what a joyful meeting that will be; when two such ancient friends, that have been parted so long, shall meet, and embrace, and kiss one another, never to suffer any more divorce, or fear of divorce, to eternity! How will the soul bless God, when it shall receive its own body again, its true yoke-fellow and

fellow-labourer, which laboured with it much in the Lord, and which was wont to be its oratory and temple, wherein the soul performed all its sacra, its holy devotions, in season and out of season?

And how will the body rejoice to see the soul again, to whom it was espoused, which was the guide of its youth, that, in its capacity, which Christ is to the soul, its king, priest, and prophet, and by virtue of whose conjunction with it, the very body, as poor and mean as it was in its original extraction, was preferred and admitted into fellowship and communion with the Son of God; and, upon that account, not forgotten all the while it slept in the land of forgetfulness, and thought not of itself: I say, solace yourselves with the anticipation of that triumph and exultation that will fill this blessed new-married couple! especially when they shall receive one another so much more excellent than themselves at their last parting; that the body shall seem to be transformed into a soul, and the soul transformed into an angel of light; rejoice, O christian soul, to think how these two morning stars will sing for joy, in this their new and for ever blessed conjunction.

3. He will bring soul and body thus united. Christ shall bring with him unto the place where the great assize of the quick and dead shall be solemnly kept, which the 17th verse tells us will be in the air; thither Christ will bring with him all his elect, when he hath awakened them; and that upon a twofold account.

(1.) For the greater solemnity of that last and tremendous judgment. The saints shall be brought out of their graves to attend the judge, for his greater state and grandeur, and to strike the greater terror into the hearts of reprobate men and dangels; who then shall be brought forth in chains to the tribunal of Christ, to see and suffer the severity and impartiality of that last trial. The glory of a king consists in the multitude of his nobles and royal attendants; the judge of assize is brought in with the posse comitatus, the power and gallantry of the country, for the striking of the greater terror and awe into the hearts of offenders. Angels and saints shall be Christ's life-guard, as it were;

or as his troops and legions, which shall conduct him in state and triumph to the judgment seat.

(2.) That they may accompany him, and be with him throughout the whole carriage and conduct of the last judicial process, to hear and applaud his righteous proceedings. This is that which the apostle calls, the saints judging the world, and judging angels, 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; yea, it seems that is not all; our Saviour tells his apostles, that in that day, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes, &c. Matt. 19:28. Judging or condemning, how? certainly not as bare spectators only, but as assessors, to sit with him on the bench, to justify and consent to the judgment of Christ, the great and supreme Judge; giving in their full and free suffrages to the final sentence which he shall pass upon the reprobate world, of Jews and gentiles, of men and devils; probably in some such language as we hear from the saints upon the downfall of antichrist; "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints: for thy judgments are made manifest," Rev. 15:3, 4.

Here the apostles and ministers of the gospel judged the wicked of the world by their doctrine; and both ministers and others of God's faithful servants judged them by their holy lives, and patient bearing of the cross.

But now the preachers of the gospel, with the rest of the saints, shall judge the world judicially; and, probably, by an audible vote too, and with the judgment of Jesus Christ; "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus," Rev. 16:5; this honour shall all the saints have at that day: thus Christ shall bring the raised saints with him to the place of judgment.

4. God shall bring them with him; that is, that last and solemn judgment being finished, Christ shall carry all his saints back with him, from the place of judgment, the nether heavens, into the upper, the supreme heavens, where the throne of God is, and the seat of glorified angels and saints. All the saints of God shall follow the

Judge in a triumphant manner into the streets of the New Jerusalem, the gates whereof shall be set wide open to receive them; an abundant entrance shall be administered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, where they shall be welcomed home with loud acclamations of joy; heaven will ring again with triumphant shoutings. Thus also God shall bring them with him that sleep in Jesus; he will bring them into the glory of his Father.

This is another word of comfort, and there is great need of it, upon a twofold account:

(1.) In reference to the saints of God yet living. You are now scorned and persecuted; the ungodly world doth now judge you, and condemn you: the Psalmist observed it in his time; "They gather themselves together against the souls of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood," Psa. 94:21. Innocence is no security against cruelty and oppression; yea, it seems no wine so sweet to wicked men as innocent blood: "Ye have condemned and killed the just," James 5:6: and yet, that open violence may not want a pretence of justice, they act in the form of a legal process; before they kill, they condemn: but, alas! those fig-leaves will not cover their nakedness. It is the just, whom they unjustly condemn and murder; so it was in David's time, and so it was in St. James's time, and so it is now: the reprobate world holds on its course to this day; and so it will be to the end of the world. God's righteous Abels must expect no better justice at the tribunals of these unrighteous Cains.

But "be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord; and stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," James 5:7, 8; and then the scene shall be altered; you shall have the law, as it were, in your own hands; your turn shall be to sit upon the bench, and your enemies shall stand at the bar. They judge and condemn you now, but there is a day coming when you shall judge and condemn them; and they indeed unrighteously, but you shall condemn them righteously, because your judgment shall be according to the

judgment of that righteous Judge of heaven and earth, the Searcher of the hearts; who will judge men by those two impartial books, the book of his own remembrance, and the book of their consciences.

(2.) It is a word of comfort in reference to the saints departed, our gracious relations; the sense of whose loss and absence we are not able to bear, while we think of them as smothered and extinguished in their own ashes, silent in the land of forgetfulness; in whose sweet converse we were wont to solace ourselves with much delight, their souls having left the habitation of their bodies, and their bodies resolved into dust, and that dust, possibly, mixed with the dust of wicked men, or of the brute creatures; it may be, dispersed into the remotest parts of the world. Ah, these be some of the heart-dividing thoughts wherewith we do afflict our souls! But give check to your passions, O ye mourners of hope, and make use of the cordials which your heavenly Physician hath prescribed to keep you from fainting.

Think not so much on your gracious relations, as lying in the grave, their beauty turned into rottenness and deformity; think not of them as, possibly, by a premature death, as you may think, snatched from an earthly inheritance before their time: but think on them as co-heirs with Jesus Christ, riding now in triumph with him, and with the whole general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, to take possession of their inheritance with the saints in light. Thus behold them, not as they are in the night of the shadow of death, but as they shall be in the morning of the resurrection, when God will bring them with him, and, I had almost said, mourn if you can.

VII. The next word of comfort in this model is, the obviating or removing an objection or discouragement which, probably, might possess the spirits of God's dying saints; and that is, lest the saints which shall be found alive at the last day, might possibly be happier, or, at least, sooner happy, than the saints which are fallen asleep before that day.

Now for the rolling of this stumbling block and stone of offence out of the way.

The apostle acquaints believers with the order and method of that great and solemn transaction at Christ's coming; and this he doth two ways,—1. Negatively.—2. Affirmatively.

1. Negatively. He peremptorily denieth that the living saints, at Christ's coming in glory, shall have any the least advantage, above the sleeping saints, by their being found alive at that day: "We which are alive and remain, shall not prevent them which are asleep," ver. 15; that is, the living saints shall not prevent the dead saints in any privilege of the resurrection, or of the appearance of the Lord Jesus. It might probably be a temptation upon the Thessalonians, or other christians; either that the saints only which should be found alive at the last day, should have the happiness of seeing the Lord Jesus coming in his glory, with all his mighty angels, to judge the world, and they only should enjoy the privilege of his glorious appearance; that all the saints that died before that day, even from the beginning of the world, were a lost generation, that should never come forth again to the light, or to behold the glory of that day, or to enjoy the blessed fruits and consequences of it.

Or, at least, that they should be the first in that happiness to see his glory, and have the first share in the felicities and triumph of that day, or ever the sleeping saints should be awakened or got out of their beds of dust.

The apostle doth therefore, I say, peremptorily and positively remove this scruple and fear out of the minds of christians; he assures us that it is an utter mistake, it is neither so, nor so; he tells us that all believers who had died from the first Adam downward, until the coming of the second Adam, shall have as good a share in the privileges and glory of that day, as they who stand upon their feet, and are found among the living at Christ's coming.



Secondly, and as soon; the living shall not prevent, or go before, or get the start of the dead, in any one of the beatitudes and honours of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They shall neither go forth to meet this glorious Bridegroom one moment sooner than their brethren that are in their graves, nor shall they see him coming in his glory, one moment sooner; nor, consequently, be owned by Christ, or received by him, or taken up to him, or be placed upon thrones with him, or receive their absolution and justification from him, or their glorification with him, one moment before their fellow-saints that are yet in their dormitories.

But then how much stronger consolation doth the affirmative part afford! which, although it lie in the close of the next verse, yet it being the main branch of the apostle's account, whereby he satisfieth the doubt of the dying servants of God, we must of necessity speak of it here.

2. Affirmatively. The dead in Christ shall rise first. He doth exactly state the method of Christ's procedure at the last judgment, namely, that the first business which shall be then transacted, shall be the awakening and raising all the saints of God out of their graves, which from Adam, until that moment, have slept in the dust: "the dead in Christ shall rise first;" nothing shall be done till that be done. The very first work Christ will do at his coming, will be to send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, first to awaken the elect out of their sleep; Awake you that sleep in the dust; and then to gather them from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other, Matt. 24:31; and when they shall have put on their wedding garments, to conduct them in state and triumph to meet with their royal Bridegroom, now come forth more than half way to meet them, and to consummate the marriage which was long since contracted in the day of their espousals.

It were easy to enlarge here, but, in a word, the sum of this affirmative account is this, that the saints who sleep in the grave at Christ's coming, shall be so far from being made less happy, or later

happy in the coming of Christ than the saints who then shall be found alive, that they shall be first remembered; the first care Christ will take when he comes in the clouds, shall be not about the living, but the dead saints; the dead in Christ shall rise first. They shall be the first fruits of the resurrection. They that have slept so long in their beds of dust shall be first awakened, before any thing be done about them that never slept; they that were unclothed, and saw corruption in the grave, must first have their bodies clothed upon with incorruption; and then the surviving saints, at Christ's coming, shall be joined to them that have for so many years and ages slept in Jesus. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and both be presented together before the Judge.

It were too little to say, This may much alleviate the bitterness of death, our own, or our godly relations'; surely it may greatly augment our joy. They and we shall be so far from being losers, by laying down our earthly tabernacles in the dust, before we see Christ coming in his glory, that it shall be our advantage. If there be any privilege, any joy, any glory, any triumph at that day, it shall be theirs who sleep in Jesus; and theirs as soon as their surviving brethren's. The first dawns of the Sun of righteousness, coming in his majesty, shall shine upon their faces; the first fruits of that jubilee shall be reserved for a recompense of their long sleep in the grave, they shall begin the health in this cup of salvation; the primacy of all that blessed solemnity belongs to the departed saints. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." O christians, comfort one another with this word. And the rather, because this is not an uncertain conjecture which the apostle lays down here, but an assertion of infallible certainty, which he had from the Divine oracle, the word of the Lord; which brings me to the authority which the apostle brings for this doctrine; "This I say unto you by the word of the Lord," ver. 15. He quotes Divine authority for what he delivereth. It being a doctrine of so much encouragement and satisfaction unto dying saints; a doctrine above human capacity, and it seemeth not commonly understood by the churches and saints of God at that time; he doth not pass it in his own name, or upon his own authority, but tells us from whence he had it. What I deliver now

unto you, I speak not of myself, but from the mouth of him that is the Truth itself, the mouth of Jesus Christ; this we say unto you in the word of the Lord.

VIII. The next word of comfort is, "The Lord himself shall descend." Here the apostle describes unto us the last coming of Christ to judgment. In which description we have three considerable particulars.

1. The person that shall come; "The Lord himself."
2. The certainty of his coming; "He shall come."
3. The manner of his coming; "With a shout."

1. The person that shall come:

"The Lord himself;" that is, Jesus Christ; God-man, the Mediator between God and man; he that came at first to purchase and redeem the elect of God; the same person will now come to raise them out of their graves, to gather them together, and to bring them with him unto glory. He will not send a deputy angel about the solemn work of that day; but will descend himself in person to finish that last and grand trust of his mediatorial office.

The Lord himself will descend in his own person, because the judgment must be visible; and therefore, the judge must be so too. There is a dispute whether Christ shall sit on a visible throne; and it is very probable he will: sure we are from the scripture, that he shall appear in the clouds of heaven, that he may be heard and seen of all. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. 1:7. Clouds are visible things; and these clouds shall not obscure him, but rather render him more conspicuous; "every eye shall see him." He shall so come with clouds, that they shall be a throne to exalt and lift him up to the view of all the world; therefore is the posture noted as well as the throne: "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," Matt. 26:64.

Clouds shall be his throne, and sitting will be the posture; the posture of a judge.

The Lord himself shall appear for a recompense to his abasement. It is requisite that he who was judged by the world, should now come to judge the world. He came at first humble, lowly, despised, sitting upon an ass, spit upon, crucified: but he shall come again in power and great glory.

It is good sometimes to compare the two comings of Christ together. At first he came into the flesh; he showed himself in the nature of man, to be judged. But at his second coming, he shall come in the flesh. He shall come from heaven, in the same human nature which he carried up with him into heaven: there to be the Judge both of the quick and the dead.

His forerunner then was John the Baptist; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: at his second coming his forerunner shall be an archangel. "With the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" as in the text. Then his companions were poor fishermen; now his attendants shall be the mighty angels of heaven, 2 Thess. 1:7. Then he came riding on an ass, a colt, the foal of an ass; now, he shall come riding on the clouds, sitting on a throne. At his first coming, he appeared in the form of a Servant; now, he shall come as a Lord, in the glory of his Father. Then he drank of the brook in the way; but now shall he lift up his head. This, for the recompense of his humiliation.

Also, our Lord Jesus Christ must come himself at the last day to perfect and finish his mediatorial office.

At his first coming, his mediatorial work was to pay a price to Divine justice, and so to purchase us of his Father. At his second coming, his mediatorial work will be, to gather all his redeemed ones together, and to present them a glorious church to his Father, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but holy and without blemish: in some

such language as was long before prophesied: "Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me," Isa. 8:18.

At his first coming, his mediatorial work was to fight with the devil, and all the powers of darkness, and to rescue what he had bought of the Father, out of the power of Satan, that strong man armed, who kept his goods in peace. At his second coming, his mediatorial work will be to vanquish all those enemies, out of whose dominion he hath freed his elect; to bind them with chains, to cast them into everlasting darkness, and to seal the bottomless pit upon them for ever.

And when he hath done this, the Lord Jesus shall deliver up the kingdom to his Father: his office is not completed till this be done. God's oath is passed upon it, and cannot be reversed, Isa. 45:23, &c. The text is applied to Christ, presently upon his exaltation, to this very purpose, Phil. 2:10.

Use 1. This subject serves for infinite terror to the wicked. That the judgment now should be put into the hand of Him, whom, of all the world, they counted their enemy: at least, if they did not call him so, they used him so. Oh, what a dreadful sight will his appearance be! If Ahab cried out with so much discomposure of spirit, at the sudden appearance of Elijah the prophet of God, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" with what horror and affrightment will reprobate sinners cry out, when they shall be dragged from before the tribunal of the Lord Jesus, the Lord of the prophets, Hast thou found us, O our enemy! If Joseph's brethren were so astonished at the presence of Joseph, when he said unto them, "I am Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt!" how will all the world of ungodly men be confounded at the presence of the Lord, now coming in the glory of his Father, to judge them; when he shall say unto them, I am Jesus. I am Jesus, whom ye sold for less than ever Judas sold me, even for the price of a base lust. I am Jesus, whom ye crucified over and over again to yourselves; and put me to an open shame! I am Jesus, whose person you have slighted; whose government you have spurned at; crying in

the pride and rebellion of your obstinate spirits, "We will not have this man to reign over us." I am Jesus, whose counsel you have rejected; whose threatenings you have laughed to scorn; whose promises you have derided and set at nought. I am Jesus, whose blood you have trampled under your feet as an unholy thing, even doing despite to the Spirit of grace, &c.

Now will the reprobate world be confounded at the presence of their Judge! Behold, in the days of his flesh, when he appeared in the form of a Servant, and was even led away as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer, not opening his mouth, by way of murmur against his Father, or reviling against his enemies, yet how did that lamb-like word, "I am he," fill the hearts of those sturdy soldiers, who came to apprehend him, with horror, and strike them to the ground, like a blast of thunder and lightning!

Oh, how will that word, when he shall come clothed with majesty and terror, with all the glorious host of heaven attending his person, "I am he," fill reprobate souls with astonishment and distraction, and even strike them backward into hell before their time! How will it cause them to woo the mountains and rocks, now as hard and inexorable as their hearts once were in the day of God's patience, crying out to them, to the amazement of heaven and earth, "Mountains, fall on us; rocks, cover us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. 6:16, 17.

But all in vain! As the Lord Jesus once, in the day of his grace, cried unto them, and they would not answer, &c.; so they shall now cry to heaven and earth, to rocks and mountains, and they shall not answer; yea, the Judge shall "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh," Prov. 1:26. "Oh consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psalm 50:22.

Use 2. This doctrine of Christ's personal appearance, speaks great consolation to the godly; the sheep of Christ, which have heard his voice speaking to them in the gospel of peace, and have obeyed it.

Behold, he that in the days of his flesh came to be their Redeemer, now in the day of his power shall come to be their Judge. He that so often pleaded for them to his Father, and for whom they so often pleaded and contended, with a disobedient and gainsaying generation; he shall now be their Judge, and pass sentence upon them: their Friend, their Brother, their Head, their Husband. What need they fear that tribunal, where not their enemies, who were wont falsely to accuse and condemn them; no, not their prejudiced and imprudent friends, who sometimes have rashly and causelessly misjudged them; much less the accuser of the brethren, "who accused them before their God, day and night," Rev. 12:10; none of these, I say, shall sit in judgment; but their dear Redeemer, who for their sake came down from heaven: who loved them so dearly, that he died for love of them, that he might redeem them, and wash them in his own blood. He that regenerated, sanctified, justified, preserved, and perfected them: he to whom, both in life and death, they were so nearly and inseparably united; and by virtue of which conjunction, they are now awakened, and set upon their feet again, in a most beautiful and perfect state; I say, where he, and none but he, who long since became their Advocate, shall now (by the appointment of the Father) be their Judge. Oh, what matter of joy and triumph will this administer unto the saints at that day! How may they lift up their heads with joy, because their redemption and Redeemer shall then draw nigh!

Again, the doctrine of Christ's personal appearance at the last day affords no less consolation in reference to the saints departed; and to this very end, doth the Holy Ghost mention it in this place, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven."

Christ bought them at too dear a rate to leave any one of them in the grave; and therefore, to make all sure, he will come in person, and

finish his work himself. As sure as he ascended up into heaven after his own resurrection, so surely shall he descend from heaven to perfect that resurrection in his saints, which brings me to the second particular.

2. The certainty of his coming is couched in the verb here, he shall descend from heaven. He shall; that is, most certainly and infallibly.

And so all the scriptures which mention the coming of the Lord, speak of it as a most unalterable decree and statute of heaven; thus the apostle to the Athenians, "God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given us assurance," &c. Acts 17:31.

See how many words are here heaped one upon another, to assure our faith of the infallible certainty of Christ's coming.

First, he hath appointed a day: there is the Divine appointment and decree, passed upon it in God's eternal purpose and counsel. It is a statute enacted in heaven, that there shall be a future judgment; a statute more sure than ever the laws of the Medes and Persians; for heaven and earth may pass away, but God's decree shall stand, &c. And then there is a certain day appointed for it, a stated time by the same power; a day which can neither be adjourned nor accelerated. The time is fixed. He hath appointed a day, and it cannot be altered. And then the work is determined as well as the day, and that is judgment; "wherein he will judge." The judgment is not left arbitrary or contingent; but God is resolved on it. He will judge; not, peradventure, he may judge; but as sure as he is God, he will judge. The persons to be judged are also specified; not less than the whole world. He will judge the world, not a single person shall escape that judgment; "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. 5:10. As the persons to be judged, so likewise the person that is to judge, is named, and designed to it already; that Man, that special, that peculiar Man, the Man Christ Jesus. And to make all sure, he hath his commission already. That man whom he hath ordained the



judge, is elected and commissioned under the broad seal of heaven, is passed, John 6:27. And if all this be not enough, there is yet further assurance and evidence given of it already to the world, open and evident demonstration, if men will not shut their eyes—of which he hath given assurance unto all men: what that assurance is, I shall show anon. In the mean time see how the Holy Ghost useth all the words and expressions which may create a firm assent to the doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment; that there may be no room for doubting left, no hesitancy in the minds of men.

The personal coming of Christ to judgment is established on a four-fold foundation.

(1.) His purchase: would Christ buy a people at so dear a rate, and then go away and come no more at them?

(2.) Also his promise. "And if I go, I will come again," John 14:3; he will, especially considering the design of his leaving them for a time, it was but to go and prepare a place for them, and he hath done it; the place is prepared; mansions in his Father's house are made ready for them, ver. 2. Why now, Christ being gone to this very end, and all things prepared for their entertainment, if he should not come again, he should certainly fail, not his promise only, but his project too; this cannot be. He that never yet failed his own promise, nor his people's expectations, will not now do it no, I will come and receive you.

(3.) Witness the sacrament of his last supper; which is nothing else but a pledge and seal to keep alive the memorial of his second coming. "As oft as ye eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come," 1 Cor. 11:26. Now when the Lord Jesus Christ hath engaged the expectation of his people, by so solemn a covenant, if he should fail their expectation, this grand institution had been in vain. Nay surely, he never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain," Isa. 45:19: he speaketh righteousness.

(4.) His resurrection; that is, the assurance given in Acts 17:31, He will judge the world by that Man whom he hath appointed. How may we be sure of that? why he hath given the world assurance of it; what assurance? in that he hath raised Christ from the dead. He hath given assurance, he hath offered faith; the meaning is, God could not have confirmed his purpose and promise of sending Christ to judge the world at the last day, by a more firm and solemn argument, than by raising him from the dead, after he had paid the debt, made satisfaction to Divine justice upon the cross.

Now, therefore, O ye saints of God, cast not away your confidences, either in respect of yourselves, or of your sweet relations which have outrun you to the sepulchre. He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. In the mean time, let the just live by their faith: keep up your faith, and your faith will keep up your hearts from sinking; "for this cause we faint not," &c. 2 Cor. 4:16.

### 3. The manner of Christ's coming.

In the description whereof we find a three-fold summons or citation to all the world, to make their appearance at this great assize.

(1.) The first solemn summons is a shout: the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. The word in the Greek signifies such a shout as is to be heard amongst mariners and seamen, when, after a long and dangerous voyage, they begin to descry the haven, crying with loud and united voices, a shore, a shore! as the poet describes the Italians, when they saw their native country; lifting up their voices, and making the heavens ring again with Italy, Italy! Or, as armies when they join battle, rend the air with their loud acclamations. In like manner shall the mighty angels of God, with united clamour, proclaim the advent of their Lord, crying aloud with a voice that shall be heard from one end of the heavens to another; the earth and sea, and hell itself, shall hear and tremble. "Behold, the Lord cometh," Jude, ver. 14. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," Matt. 25:6.

(2.) The second summons is the voice of the archangel. This clause some take to be exegetical to the former, expounding that hortatory clamour or shout mentioned before; with a shout, that is, with the voice of the archangel. Others conceive it to be added by way of eminency; all the angels shall shout for joy, but the voice of the archangel shall be heard above all the rest: louder and shriller than all the other angels, as captain-general to them all.

(3.) The third summons is the trump of God; it may signify a mighty trump; after the manner of the Hebrew phrase, which useth to call works and wonders of unusual proportion, works of God, and wonders of God; so the trump of God, that is, a mighty trump; a voice of more dreadful horror than all that went before. But, whether it be to be understood metaphorically or properly, is questioned amongst expositors. Some understand it only metaphorically, and in an analogical sense, signifying no more than the virtue and power of Christ's voice and proclamation, summoning both the living and the dead to appear at his tribunal.

But why we may not take it literally and in propriety of speech, for the voice of an audible trump, which shall be louder than all the former, I see no reason. And it may well be the same with that which the apostle calls "the last trump," 1 Cor. 15:52; this sounding last of all, or continuing longer than the former; our Lord calls it, "the great sound of a trumpet," Matt. 24:31.

Thus are these three summonses distinct, and each of them louder and shriller than the former. And it may allude to the manner of the calling together of the Jews to their public worship, and that (possibly) typical to this; signifying thus much to the world, that like as their assemblies were summoned by the sound of trumpets, so the last and solemn day of judgment, that great general assembly of the living and the dead, shall be summoned together by the sound of trumpets from heaven; the vastest and most universal assembly that ever was beheld by the eye of creature.

But a clearer type and prophecy hereof seems to be that at the giving of the law, when God came down on mount Sinai, to give the law, it was in a very glorious manner, "with thunder and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud," &c. Exod. 19:16.

This did typify unto us, Christ's second coming at the end of the world to require the law; which surely ought to excel in glory.

When Christ came into the flesh, his herald was John the Baptist, a man of a mean and contemptible presence, a preacher of repentance, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 3:2. Now his forerunners and heralds shall be, the mighty angels of God.

Then he came in a still, soft voice; "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," Matt. 3:3. Now, he shall come with a loud and terrible voice. Voice upon voice, trump upon trump, alarm upon alarm; each louder and more dreadful than other, in comparison whereof, the loudest thunder which was ever heard from the clouds of God, shall be but as the blowing of a ram's horn; a dreadful shout, which shall even shake the heavens and the earth, and hell itself, Heb. 12:26.

Oh to the wicked, surely this will be a tremendous blast, which shall not so much raise as affright them out of their graves, with horror and amazement. Behold the judge cometh, arise ye dead, and come to judgment. This will be the dreadful meaning of that ministerial excitation, in the consciences of the reprobate world: Appear in court, there to answer for all the contempt to the calls and counsels of Jesus Christ in his blessed gospel!

The three-fold alarm—shout, and voice, and trump, shall be no more terror or amazement to the saints of Christ, than the roaring of cannons, when armies of friends approach a besieged city for the relief of them that are within. These sounds and rattlings, how terrible a sense soever they may impress upon the hearts and

consciences of the wicked, will be to them that sleep in Jesus as the sweetest melody that ever sounded in their ears, as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, to awaken them out of their sweet sleep, with the sweetest music and harmony that ever sounded in their ears; and these shall be their heavenly ditties. "Awake and sing, O ye that dwell in the dust," &c. Or, (as in the gospel-call, a little varied,) "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; for, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth;" even (everlasting) darkness, all the wicked of the world; but the Lord shall "rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" to all eternity, Isa. 60:1, 2.

O ye saints and servants of God, "Lift up your heads with joy, for your redemption draweth nigh," Luke 21:28, and comfort one another with this word also, concerning your gracious relations which are gone to rest.

The Lord Jesus himself shall come to awaken them; and those triumphant summons and alarms which shall usher in his coming, as they shall add to the glory and majesty of their Lord, in whose bosom they have slept all this while, so they shall, on the one side, bid war and battle to the reprobate world, and on the other side, call together the assemblies of the saints, who have made a "covenant with him by sacrifice," Psa. 50:5, and it shall be for their honour and exaltation in that day of his triumph.

The sum is this: your dear ones, whose immature departure you so much lament, that are asleep in the dust, shall arise; Christ himself shall come for them, and that in a most triumphant manner, for their glory and their enemies' shame, Isa. 66:5.

IX. I now come to consider the blessed consequences of Christ's coming, which are three:

1. The resurrection of the saints which are fallen asleep. "The dead in Christ shall rise first."

2. The triumphant ascent of both (the living and sleeping saints together) into the clouds; "we which are alive, shall be caught up together with them into the clouds."

3. The blessed meeting of all the saints together with Jesus Christ, their Lord and Bridegroom; who comes from the seat of the blessed, the third heaven, to meet them above half way, even to the lowest region of the air. "To meet the Lord in the air."

The first consequence is, the resurrection of the saints. "The dead in Christ shall rise first."

The apostle supposeth the query, "some man will say, How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come?" 1 Cor. 15:35. A query neither frivolous nor impertinent; and therefore himself (by the Spirit) thinks it worth the solving.

He gives us to understand, that the saints shall rise with the very same bodies they lay down with in the graves; it is expressed under the metaphor of seed; God giveth it a body, &c. and to every seed his own body: his own body, not specifically only, but numerically its own proper body, no ways alienated or transformed into another. And holy Job, even in the depths of distress, believed and preached the very same doctrine long before. "Though after my skin, worms destroy this body," that is, after worms have digged through my skin to consume my flesh; "yet in my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another," &c. Job 19:26, 27.

To this if it be objected, that in the 37th verse of 1 Cor. 15 under the metaphor of seed, he tells the incredulous fool that cannot believe this article of faith, the resurrection, "Thou sowest not that body which shall be." Not that body which shall be. It seems then the body shall be another thing, from that which is now sown.

Yea, and indeed so it shall be, in respect of quality, though not of kind. There is diversity in one and the self-same body; as it is in the

metaphorical, so it shall be with the natural; the grain is sown mean and bare, but it springeth up after another manner, beautiful and green; yet the same grain: the body likewise is the same, when it riseth as it was sown, for substance, parts, members, and organs, but not the same for beauty and excellent properties.

The infant shall rise a man of perfect age, the lame shall rise sound, the blind shall rise seeing, the deaf shall hear, the dumb shall be able to speak, the resurrection shall take away all defects and excesses of nature, the deformities of the saints shall not be raised together with their bodies; yea, deformities shall be turned into comelinesses and beauties; and yet all these alterations do no more change or destroy the individuality of person, than youth doth make the person numerically different from what it was in infancy, or old age from what it was in youth; or as it was in the persons of all sorts, which Christ healed in the day of his flesh; they were the same individuals after cure, as they were before; cure makes not another individual man of a cripple nor health of the sick; so shall it be in the resurrection, the bodies of the saints, (for of them only I speak, not at all of the wicked,) shall be the same for substance and matter; but wonderfully changed for form and supernatural endowments and qualities: which brings me to the particular description of the resurrection in respect of admirable and transcendent properties; of which our apostle hath instanced four.

First, it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in corruption. Behold, the body is corruptible, while it liveth; a nursery of such seeds and principles, as will inevitably destroy itself; an hospital of all manner of diseases: but when it is dead, it is corruption itself; the fondest relation who laid it in the bosom, cannot now endure it in the sight. "Give me a burying place," said Abraham of his beloved Sarah, "that I may bury my dead out of my sight," Gen. 23:4. It is now the picture of all ghastly loathsomeness. But oh, how unlike itself shall it be in the resurrection! It is raised in incorruption; when Christ hath fetched the body out of the grave, and set it upon its feet again, there shall not be the least savour of

mortality upon it; as there was no smell of the fire upon the raiment of the three children, when they came out of the fiery furnace, Dan. 3:27. All the principles of corruption and mortality shall be put off, and left, together with the grave-clothes, in the sepulchre. It shall be an angelified body, flesh immortalized; subject to no more corruption than the soul itself. There shall be no more death nor fear of death, nor possibility of death for ever.

"It is sown in dishonour." As soon as the soul is enlarged from its imprisonment, the body is presently stripped naked of all its robes and honourable attire, and wrapped up in a poor shroud of no other use than to hide deformity; and, as a mean contemptible thing, it is buried under ground. But, be the burial never so ignoble, the resurrection of it shall be glorious, Psa. 79:2.

"It is raised in glory." We may truly say, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these children of the resurrection; there shall be a glory put upon the body which shall outshine the sun in its brightest refulgency.

The soul, which is the candle of the Lord, is here for a time put into a dark lantern of the body; but then the glorified soul being returned into its ancient habitation, and become a vessel replenished with immortal and unmixed light, will transmit such beams of glory into the refined body that it shall shine like an angel of light; the body of the poorest Lazarus that ever lay on the dunghill, shall be clothed with such rays of beauty, as will transcend the most absolute beauty that ever mortal eye beheld.

The soul shall possess an external irradiation:—as Jesus Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory, so shall the saints at his coming (in their proportion) be, the brightness of Christ's glory; the beams of that glory, which shall shine forth from the glorified person of their Redeemer, shall reflect such a glittering splendour upon the saints in the resurrection, that they shall be glorious even to admiration; they shall be admired by the very angels, by one another, and even by



themselves also; they shall wonder to behold this strange change wrought upon themselves.

"It is sown in weakness;" weakness indeed! What more impotent than man while yet alive, vanity itself, Psa. 39:5. Yea, hear that text out, and you will say he is vanity indeed; for first it is every man, kings as well as beggars; every man, take where ye will; and as it is every man, so it is every vanity, or, altogether vanity; every man is the centre of every vanity, he is not only mixed vanity, partly something and partly nothing, some solidity and some froth, but vanity throughout; vanity and nothing else! And then again it is every man in his best estate; or, according to the Hebrew, standing. Ye need not stay till he is down, when he is languishing, suppose, in his sick bed; but, take him standing in his most erect posture, when he is most himself in his bravery; or, as it is Isa. 40:6, take him in his goodness, gallantry, in his freshest colours and excellences; and yet then, even then, he is vanity; every man is every vanity; and that you may not doubt of it, the Holy Ghost hath set a double seal to it, one in the front, Verily, and another at the end of the text, Selah; "Verily, every man in his best estate is altogether vanity, Selah;" such a piece of vanity, that he is not able at his best to free himself of, or fence himself against the injuries of the most contemptible creature that ever God made.

Thus weak he is in his strength, what is he in his weakness? So feeble he is when he stands, how feeble when he is fallen, in sickness, in his old decrepit age, his second infancy, in death.

But now behold this feeble thing shall be raised in power; the body even of the weakest infant, shall be invested with an angelical power; a monument whereof, the formidable host of Sennacherib king of Assyria hath erected for all posterity; wherein one angel went out and smote one hundred four score and five thousand, 2 Kings 19:35, who over night, like so many Goliaths, defied the armies of the living God; but in the morning lay upon the ground so many blasted, lifeless corpses, and all by the ministry of one angel. Such vessels of

strength and activity shall the bodies of the saints be in the resurrection; they shall be clothed with mighty power; Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, David, and all his famous worthies are but as babes to the children of the resurrection: he that is weak among them shall be as David, and he that is as David shall be as the angel of God. Again,

"It is sown a natural body;" such a body as is animated, sustained, by the soul; yet in so low a way, that it is subject to corruption, and is no sooner deserted by the soul, but it resolves into dust or natural; such a body as stands in need of natural helps, of meat, drink, rest, sleep, to shore up the feeble tabernacle of dust for a while: and all will not do; but down it will come—roof, and walls, and props, and all. Or again, natural, that is, such as hath natural motions, operations, and affections, such as are proper only to the fallen nature of man; feeble, slow, limited, and temporary.

But now behold, in opposition to all these acceptations, "it is raised a spiritual body;" not in regard of the substance of it, as if it were turned into a spirit; but, because animated and acted by the soul now in its glorified capacity, made perfect with all heavenly qualifications, and so spiritualized in all its faculties and operations, that it is called no more by the name of a soul, but of a spirit, Heb. 12:23. To the conduct and motions whereof, the body now shall yield absolute and immutable obedience and conformity. Here the soul depends, as it were, upon the body: because, though the body be acted by the soul, yet the soul acts according to the temperament of the body, and the disposition of the organs.

But in the resurrection, it shall not be so; the body then shall depend wholly upon the soul, and be actuated properly and undisturbedly by the soul. Here the soul seems to be flesh itself, because actuated by the flesh, and is oft subservient to the flesh; but then the very body shall seem to be a spirit, because actuated by the spirit, and shall be universally and uniformly serviceable to the spirit; the soul shall

immediately be actuated by God, and the body shall immediately be actuated by the soul; thus it shall be a spiritual body.

It is raised a spiritual body, because it shall subsist as a spirit; it shall stand in no need of those gross material aliments of meat, and drink, and sleep, by which it is now underpropt; but it shall be sustained merely by virtue of its union with the soul, as the soul by virtue of its union with Jesus Christ; this is to be a spiritual body, when the body shall subsist as a spirit, or as an angel doth subsist.

Likewise the operations of the body shall then be all spiritual operations; it shall then be abased no more to any of the servile drudgeries of this present state; it shall work no more, toil no more, sin no more; the offices of the body shall be as far above its present functions, as the work of a king transcends the employment of a swineherd; they shall for ever be freed from all those uses which do imply a state of infirmity, and shall be taken up wholly in heavenly and angelical services, as to stand before the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and to praise him for ever and ever.

And lastly, the body shall then be spiritual, because it shall be endued with spiritual affections; it shall not be liable to weariness, sickness, pain, or external injuries, any more than a spirit is. In the resurrection, the bodies of the saints shall not cease to be flesh and blood, but they shall be divested of all the defects and infirmities of flesh and blood, ver. 50, 51. This is the mystery of it, "We shall be changed." The fire of the last judgment, that only purgatory of the saints that we dull protestants know, shall not consume the bodies of the saints, but their corruption only; it shall not destroy the substances, but refine their qualities; as the goldsmith maketh a new vessel of old plate, not by altering the metal, but by changing the form and fashion. The furnace of the resurrection shall purge out all the slime, and dross, and filth, and imperfection out of the bodies of the saints, and refine them into a body that shall exceed the celestial bodies of the sun, moon, and stars, in splendour and purity.

Behold, these are now the beatifical properties wherewith the very bodies of the saints shall be arrayed and beautified in the resurrection! A change which we are not in a capacity to understand till we shall possess it. And all these admirable properties the blessed apostle hath cast up into one word, a word of a most incomprehensible signification, the vast comprehensive estimate of all the rest; 'Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like to Christ's glorious body,' Phil. 3:21.

Oh who can tell how glorious the glorified body of Christ is! Behold if such was the brightness of Moses' face, at the giving of the law, that the Israelites were notable to bear it; "They were afraid," saith the text, "to come nigh him," Exod. 34:30; if St. Stephen's countenance did shine as the face of an angel, when he stood holding up his hand at the bar of his unrighteous judges, in the posture of a malefactor, Acts 6:15; what think we is the lustre and brightness which shines forth from the glorified body of the Lord Jesus, who is 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 unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see, 1 Tim. 6:15, 16. Behold in his transfiguration, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow, Matt. 17:2. What glorious beams of light and glory do Moses, and Elias, and Peter, now see sparkling from his glorified person exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, that is, on the highest throne of the highest Majesty in the court of heaven, Heb. 1:3; surely the glorified body of Christ doth as far surpass the sun in brightness, as the sun surpasseth a clod of earth; and yet to this exemplar of glory, must the bodies of the saints be conformed in the resurrection! Surely, glorious things are spoken of the resurrection; so great, so glorious, that, had not the Spirit of God spoken them before, it had been daring presumption, to have reported or believed it.

This doctrine of the glorious resurrection of the body may serve by way of counsel. You that would secure unto yourselves an interest in the glory which shall be put upon the saints' bodies in the

resurrection, labour to experience this beatifical transfiguration, first in your souls, on this side of the grave. Oh labour to get your vile spirits to be made like to Christ's glorious spirit. Oh labour to get his image and similitude to be deeply engraven upon your hearts; and to scatter the beams of it in your conversations, for the enlightening of a dark world, Phil. 2:15

Behold this shall be the evidence and first-fruits of your future conformity to Him in the resurrection of the just. The ground and reason is, because that blessed transfiguration which shall conform the saints to Christ, their Head and Husband in the resurrection, and from thenceforth to all eternity, hath its beginning here in regeneration, or the new birth, wherein they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, Eph. 4:23, 24. And upon this very account, is the resurrection styled also the regeneration, Matt. 19:28. It is called the regeneration, because the resurrection shall perfect in the saints what the regeneration began; conformity to Christ their Head and Husband in holiness. Yea, at the resurrection, the image of Jesus Christ shall be completed; as on their souls, so on their bodies also: because, that image was began upon their souls on this side the grave in their new birth; accordingly as they were predestinated to both in the purpose of God from all eternity. The resurrection to grace here, and to glory hereafter, is but one and the same regeneration, Rom. 8:29. Whosoever, therefore, is a stranger to this transformation of spirit, in the resurrection to grace, shall never partake of that transfiguration of body in the resurrection to glory.

This doctrine also may serve by way of comfort; and for that end it is written by the Comforter himself in this model: for comfort, I say, in reference to our sweet relations that sleep in Jesus; over whom, not seldom, we spend our fruitless tears, take we heed lest sinful also, while we compare their once lively, sweet, amiable countenances, which sparkled with so much beauty and delight in our eyes, with their pale, ghastly visages in the grave; where they say to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister, Job 17:14. We look upon them, I say, not without a kind of

trembling and horror; as if their spirits appeared to us out of their graves; or that we ourselves were buried with them alive in the same coffin.

Ah, sirs, why stand ye not, with the men of Galilee, gazing up into heaven? Acts 1:11; but, with Peter, stooping down, and looking into the sepulchre. Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy; the day is coming, when that corruptible shall put on incorruption, and that mortal shall put on immortality; when that poor dust, over which thou now mournest, that vile body, shall put on its angelical robes, and shall more surpass itself in its freshest and liveliest colours, while yet in the land of the living, than that beautiful pile of flesh and blood did exceed itself, when it was resolved into rottenness and dust.

Look not, then, O ye children of God, upon yourselves or your relations, as they lie in the grave; but, contemplate them, as they shall be in the morning of the resurrection; oh what a glorious change shalt thou behold! How unlike itself, shall this poor vile body appear in the resurrection.

Be of good comfort, O ye mourners of hope; here is a perfumed handkerchief to wipe off all tears from your eyes; you that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; you that carry forth precious seed weeping, shall come again rejoicing, and bring your sheaves with you. The resurrection shall make amends for all!

2. I come now to the second consequence of Christ's rising—the saints' triumphant ascension. "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds," &c ver. 17.

Here, we have a further instance of the saints' conformity unto Christ in the resurrection. Christ himself, when he was risen, did ascend; he was carried up into heaven: so shall it be with the saints, when they are raised up out of their beds of dust, they shall be caught up into the clouds; they shall ascend to meet their Lord.

And this ascension, according to the analogy of scripture, we may conceive, shall be effected by a threefold medium.

(1.) The ascension of the saints in the clouds shall be effected by the power of Christ.

By the same power whereby he raised them out of their graves, will he lift them up unto himself. This will be the continuation and perfection of the resurrection; the proper work of him who is the Resurrection and the Life; it is the second part of the resurrection, without which the first would differ little from the state of the dead. In vain should the saints be raised out of the dust, if, being raised, Christ should leave them at a distance from him: and the resurrection of the saints themselves would look too like the resurrection of the wicked, a punishment rather than a bliss; separation from Christ being half, yea, the worst half of hell: though even there the damned have a kind of life. Surely the children of the resurrection might have too real occasion to weep Absalom's dissembling complaint to his abused Father; "Why am I come from Geshur, if I may not see the king's face?" Why are we brought up out of the grave, if we may not enjoy the Lamb's presence?

But the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, cannot be worse than his word; he spake it at his departure to his disciples, and he will make it good at his return; "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:3.

In order, therefore, to the accomplishment of this promise, the first work the Lord Jesus will do, at his coming in his kingdom, after he hath awakened his spouse out of her sleep, will be to lift her up unto himself, now sitting upon his triumphant throne to judge both the quick and dead.

This is the first receiving of them unto himself, his drawing of them up unto him, according to his own phrase in the days of his flesh; "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me:" all

men, that is, all my redeemed ones; which promise, although the Spirit expounds it of his being lifted up upon the cross, yet we may, not without warrant, extend it also to his glorious exaltation in the great day of his judging the world: this being both the design and reward of his passion; to the intent that whom he drew to himself by the merit of his cross, he might also actually draw unto himself by the power of his resurrection and ascension. "I will draw all men unto me;" or, I will attract unto me; as the loadstone draweth the metal unto itself by its magnetic virtue, or as the sun draweth up the vapours of the earth by its attractive beams, so will the Lord Jesus Christ that sun of righteousness, when his glory shall arise upon the world with healing under his wings, draw all his saints unto himself, by the sovereign attractive influence of that mysterious union between himself and his members.

(2.) A second medium is the ministry of the angels; for which, though we have not certainty of demonstration to compel belief, yet we want not more than bare probability of argument to invite assent.

For if it be in the commission of the angels to be ministering spirits "for them who shall be heirs of salvation," Heb. 1:14, we have no reason to imagine their commission should expire until the time when the saints shall be actually and safely invested into their long-expected inheritance. And, therefore, if they were the saints' life-guard in the state of their defilement and infirmity, to bear them up in their hands, lest at any time they should dash their foot against a stone; how much more ready and active now, in the saints' virgin state of purity and perfection, will the angels be, to be their convoy to conduct them in their ascension, going now to meet the Lamb! Sure we are, the Lord Jesus, though he be the Resurrection and the Life, yet is pleased to make much use of the ministry of the angels about the resurrection of the godly; they shall sound the first trump, at the sounding whereof, the dead do rise.

They gather the elect together from the four corners of the earth, and sever the wicked from them; the tares and all things that offend, and



them which work iniquity, are by them bound up in bundles, and cast into the fire. All this is the angels' office. Why should we think the service of the angels should cease, until the whole scene of the resurrection be finished?

Yea, to determine our dubious thoughts, we hear the Lord of the harvest giving charge to his reapers, which are none but angels, not only to reap the wheat, but to carry in the sheaves into his barn; I will say to the reapers, gather the wheat into my barn! Behold, this is the angels' office; their work is not done till the good corn is housed.

This, in the metaphor of the marriage of the Lamb, is nothing else but the angels' attendance on the saints, the Lamb's wife, while she is making ready; that when she is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, they may then take her up in their winged arms, and conduct her in state to the place where her royal Bridegroom is staying for her. Rev. 19:7, 8.

(3.) The spirituality and power wherewith the bodies of the saints are endowed in the resurrection, may well concur also to this ascension.

By virtue of that marvellous spirituality and agility, wherewith the resurrection shall, if I may so say, invest the saints' bodies, they shall be able to mount upward, and move with admirable celerity up and down, to and fro in the air; as swallows in a sun-shine day dart themselves through the sky; or as the angels themselves, who with equal facility descend and ascend with a motion as swift as their wills.

In the resurrection, indeed, the saints were purely passive, as passive as when their bodies were first formed out of the dust, and had the breath of life breathed into them. But now in their ascension they shall be active and agile. Moved, indeed, they shall be, by an extrinsic power; why else are they said to be caught up into the air? But yet not so, but that they may move themselves by an intrinsic principle; else those supernatural affections of their re-animated bodies might

seem to be superfluous and insignificant, 1 Cor. 15:42–44. Suitably to this it is related of Elijah's ascension, a prophecy and figure of this universal translation of the saints, that although a chariot of fire parted him and Elisha, yet he went up by a whirlwind into heaven: he was carried, and yet he went up; so the saints, &c.

Thus I have showed the probability, at least, of a threefold medium in the saints' ascension.

This concurrence of mediums is no other than we meet with in the ascension of our Lord in his own person. For of the Lord Jesus himself, after his resurrection, it is said, "He was taken up," or lifted up, Acts 1:9; the phrase may import the power of the Father, as formerly, in raising him up from the dead. So, now also, in lifting him up into glory, according to that, Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand:" here is the power of the Father in the Son's ascension. And then you have the subserviency of second causes added; first a cloud is prepared, as a royal chariot, to carry up this King of glory to his princely pavilion; "A cloud received him out of their sight." And then a royal guard of mighty angels surround the chariot, if not for support, yet for the greater state and solemnity of their Lord's ascension; he was "carried up into heaven," Luke 24:51.

Yet notwithstanding all this, it is said of the Lord Jesus, he went up, while the disciples looked stedfastly towards heaven, Acts 1:10. He went onward, or he went upward; as implying that his motion was not only passive, but active: he mounted up into heaven by his own Divine power; he ascended. Behold, here we have a perfect pattern of the saints' ascension in all the mediums of it; they hold exact proportion with their Lord. The Father lifted up the Lord Jesus; the Lord Jesus, he lifts up his saints. A cloud received him; the saints also are caught up in the clouds. Angels attend upon their Lord in his ascension; nor do they refuse their attendance on the saints in their ascension. Jesus Christ, notwithstanding, ascended by the power of his own glorified person: the saints likewise ascend by virtue of those

supernatural properties wherewith their bodies are adorned in the resurrection.

The Lord Jesus, from his throne, shall call them up by a powerful voice: "Come up hither." Clouds shall be their chariots and horses to carry them. And yet they shall ascend upwards by a supernatural principle, spontaneously, and of their own proper motion.

While, in the mean time, the whole world of reprobate men and angels shall be left below upon the earth, looking upward and gnashing their teeth, to see such a sudden and tremendous turn of things: the saints, whom they despised and persecuted, snatched out of their reach, and ascending in so much pomp and royalty to meet their glorious Redeemer; they themselves being left behind with a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Then shall begin their weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which shall never have an end.

Use 1. In the first place, this subject may serve as a cordial to the saints of God; whether in reference to their own dissolution, or the dissolution of their gracious relations already fallen asleep.

Behold! the descent of the saints of God into the grave, is not with so much weakness, ignominy, and abasement, as their ascent after the resurrection, to meet their Lord in the air, shall be with power, triumph, and glory. Christ shall draw them; clouds shall carry them; angels shall conduct them. Yea, they shall mount up to heaven, by virtue of those Christ-like impressions stamped upon their glorified bodies in the resurrection. Each one of these were sufficient. All these must needs be exceeding glorious! Yet such honour have all the saints!

Use 2. There is caution in it, as well as comfort; and that is, begin this ascension betimes. Labour to experience this heavenly motion on this side of the grave. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors." Behold the resurrection and ascension in

the future state of happiness, have their spring and rise in the present state of holiness; they are linked in, and joined one to another, in the eternal counsel and purpose of God; with the very same connexion wherewith harvest and seed-time are linked together. So that, look what impossibility there is in nature, that there should be a harvest where there was no seed-time; the same impossibility there is that such a person should share in the resurrection of glory, that is a stranger to the resurrection of grace, the new birth, or that a man or woman should ascend to meet Jesus Christ in the clouds, who in a supposed state of regeneration, labours not often to meet Christ in the mount of holy meditation. "If therefore ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at God's right hand; set your affections on things above," Col. 3:1, 2.

Christ, after he arose from the dead, did often ascend to his Father, till, at the end of forty days, he went up to heaven in the sight of his disciples, Acts 1:9, 10. Do ye also imitate your blessed Lord, in your frequent ascensions after him; and thereby evidence to yourselves, not only that you are already risen with Christ, in the resurrection of holiness, but that ye shall also arise with him, and ascend to him at his coming in his glory.

Christians, let not that man think ever to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who is content with being a stranger to Christ in the Spirit, without God in the world, and without hope, Eph. 2:12. He burieth his hope of ascending where Christ is, who burieth his heart and affections in the dunghill of worldly and sensual fruitions. Oh labour to say with the apostle, Though our abode be on earth, "our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour," Phil. 3:20. Though ye walk below, yet we live above. Though ye use the world, yet labour to enjoy God, and to be able to say with holy David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," Psa 73:25. Though ye have your converse with men, let your communion be "with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ," 1 John 1:3. Labour to say with Augustine,

Our bodies are on earth, our hearts in heaven: while the men of the world earthlize heavenly things, do you study how to heavenlize earthly things: labour, as he did, to eat and drink, and sleep, eternal life.

So may you, with a holy confidence, go along with the apostle, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus. Christians can no further look for the Lord Jesus to descend from heaven, than as they themselves, in the mean time, labour to be often ascending with him into heaven. Heavenly-mindedness is the saints' evidence, and first-fruits of their heavenly blessedness.

3. The saints' joyful meeting, and it is twofold; 1. One with another; 2. With Christ their head. The one is implied, the other expressed.

(1.) The saints' meeting one with another, is implied in this adverbial particle, together, "We shall be caught up together with him;" that is, we which shall be found alive upon the face of the earth at Christ's coming; together with them which being fallen asleep before, of elder or later time, Christ hath now raised up out of their graves; "We and they, shall all be caught up together," &c.

The scripture takes notice of the saints' meeting one with another, as distinct from their meeting with the Lord Jesus; "The elect shall be gathered together from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to another," Matt. 24:31. At what distance soever they were dispersed and scattered, they shall all meet together into one distinct body, or assembly; and then co-ascend, to meet their Lord. Some of the schoolmen apply that passage of the prophet, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles," Isa. 40:31, to this ascension of the saints after the resurrection. Whether that be so or no; we may not incongruously suppose, the elect of God to be gathered together into some one vast capacious tract or region of ground on the right hand of the judgment-seat, from thence to take their flight together to meet the Judge in the air.

Use 1. This universal gathering together of the saints in total separation from the wicked may be improved as a threefold ground of comfort. In case of undue mixtures of saints and sinners, whether in church assemblies or in civil societies. How far either of them may be lawful, is not an inquiry proper for this place, sure I am much in both is unavoidable. A total separation from impure society in either, may well be the object of our wishes, but it cannot be of our hope; while we are in the world we may separate from church to church, we may remove from country to country, rove up and down from the one end of the world unto another, but, the apostle tells us, we must go one step further, if we will avoid the society of sinners; "then, must ye needs go out of the world."

Yea, but here is the comfort, and it is the signal use our Lord makes of this very doctrine; the time is coming when a thorough separation shall be made; under that double parable of the seed and the net, Matt. 13. In the one the tares grow up with the wheat, ver. 26. In the other, all kinds of fishes are gathered, good and bad, ver. 47. Concerning the former, the servants of the householder were offended at it; it grieved them at the heart to see the weeds growing, yea, and it may be, overgrowing the good corn, and so hindering the maturing of it, ver. 27. They make their addresses to him for a present separation, and offer their faithful service for an utter eradication of the tares: "Wilt thou that we gather them up?" ver. 28. Nay, saith the lord, a total extirpation of the tares, may do more hurt than ye are aware of, ver. 29. Better, it seems it is, that some tares should remain, than that the least grain of wheat to perish: the distinguishing time is at hand; in the time of harvest I will give order to the reapers for a perfect separation.

Yes, christians, be of good cheer, the time is coming when impure mixtures will no more be a temptation to the saints of God, for ever. Saints and sinners shall no more be burdensome one to another. The seed of the serpent shall no more be an offence to the seed of the woman, but there shall be a perfect separation. The sheep shall be separated from the goats, the elect from the reprobate; there shall

not be a servant of the Lord amongst the worshippers of Baal, nor a son of Belial among the sons of God; sinners and none but sinners, saints and none but saints, shall make up these two distinct congregations. Nay, so terrible will the glory which Christ will put upon his saints be, upon the faces of the reprobates, and so great the horror of their own guilty consciences, that they shall now as much dread their society, as once they hated it, and choose rather to leap alive into the burning lake, than to mix themselves unto them, or so much as to put their head within that holy assembly.

Use 2. This circumstance of the gathering together saints, and their total separation from the wicked, is improved for comfort, by our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

In case of undue exclusion from church ordinances, of such as Christ would not have excluded. Our Lord Jesus hath foretold, that the power of the keys should fall, sometimes, into such hands, as would so diametrically pervert the use of them, as that oftentimes none should be excluded, but whom Christ would have admitted; nor admitted, but such as Christ would have shut out.

"They shall put you out of their synagogues," John 16:2; that is, excommunicate you: you, my disciples; you, my friends. Hard measure! but here is comfort; the time is coming, wherein all the elect shall be congregated into one universal assembly; never to suffer exclusion or ejection any more to all eternity. And then their unrighteous excommunicators shall be righteously excommunicated; yea, they shall be excommunicated with the highest sort of excommunication, higher than any church of Christ ever used, excommunicated for ever; delivered unto Satan, not for the destruction of the flesh only, but to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints," 2 Thess. 1:9, 10. That is a dreadful excommunication indeed; the anathema maranatha in the highest sense.

Now, the saints of God are glad to get into corners by twos and by threes, and blessed be God, not without a promise to seek the face of God; but in that glorious morning of the resurrection, they shall meet by millions and myriads of millions, Jude 14; and there shall be none to disturb or offend them; yea their enemies shall look on, and gnash their teeth for anguish and vexation of spirit, to see them now got for ever out of their power.

Use 3. And lastly, this universal gathering together of the saints may serve for comfort in case of the saints' separation one from another, whether by the unrighteous hand of violence, or the righteous hand of providence. Now, by means of dispersion, imprisonments, exile, &c. the people of God are like arms and legs torn out of the body, and lie bleeding in their separations.\* Yea, God himself is pleased to make sad breaches between them and their sweetest relations by death; under which they are many times like Rachel, weeping for her children, and refuse to be comforted, because they are not; lifting up their voices and crying, Oh! my father Abraham, and oh! my son Isaac. Oh! Absalom my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee. I will go down to the grave to my son, mourning, &c. But here is comfort; the time is coming when the parent and child, husband and wife, friend and friend, with the whole family of heaven and earth, from all their dispersions, from the utmost part of the earth, to the utmost part of heaven, shall meet together, and embrace one another; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

In a word; how may all the saints of God, in what state or condition soever for the present, solace themselves in the anticipation of the triumphant gathering together of the elect of God! What a joyful sight will it be, when all the saints and servants of the most high God, which ever saw one another's faces, or heard of one another's name; yea, and all they which never saw or heard of each other. All of every tongue, nation, kindred or family of the earth, of what age, sex, generation soever, from the day wherein God made time, to the day wherein time shall be no more, shall meet together, and stand on tip-



toe, ready to take their flight, to meet their Lord and Bridegroom, coming in the clouds with his mighty angels! Yea, what a glorious sight will it be, to see all the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the whole army of martyrs, with the holy church throughout all the world!

A congregation of kings and priests in all their royal robes; yea, as I may so say, a congregation or constellation of morning stars, yea of so many noonday suns, arising from the earth, ascending together through the several regions of the air, to meet the Sun of righteousness, now descending from his own orb of supreme glory and majesty in the highest heavens, to judge both the quick and the dead! Surely such an assembly eye never saw, ear never heard of, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, how immense, how august, how exceeding, it will be in glory!

(2.) The saints' meeting with Christ their Head, to meet the Lord in the air. Notice,

[1.] The persons meeting; Christ and his saints. He descends to meet them, and they ascend to meet him. Such is the love and condescension of the Lord Jesus to his saints, that he cometh out of his royal pavilion more than half way to meet them; and then sends his chariots and horsemen, a guard of angels, to carry them up in the clouds, and to conduct them unto the place, where he stayeth for them. There shall they be brought into his royal presence, and like a royal spouse, who hath been long separated from her bridegroom by distance of place, they shall fall down before him, and with tears of joy shall wash his feet, and wipe them dry with the kisses of their lips; while, at the same time, Christ will take his bride up into his arms, and, with the father of the prodigal, fall upon her neck, and kiss her; and with all the inconceivable expressions of love and joy, receive her to himself, and bid her welcome into his presence. Oh! what soul can conceive what mutual joy and triumph there will be between Jesus Christ and his saints in this blessed interview!

Oh how welcome will the saints be to the Lord Jesus at that day, when he shall look upon them under a threefold relation!

1. As the Father's election: to see the whole number of names which were given unto him by the Father, from all eternity, as the fruit and reward of his passion, John 17:6, now all gathered together, and given into his actual possession, as an inheritance for ever, Eph. 1:18.

2. As the purchase of his own blood. If it was a satisfaction to the Lord Jesus, when he was in the throes and agonies of his travail with them upon the cross, to see his seed, when they were but in the swaddling clothes of their imperfect regeneration, Isa. 53:11, according to their successive generations, wherein they were to be brought into the church; oh what infinite satisfaction will it now be to the Lord Jesus, to see the travail of his soul in their perfect and consummate estate; all the mixtures of corruption and infirmity now removed, and they come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ! to see them all brought in; not a soul wanting of all those whose names he bare upon his breast, while he hung upon the cross! that not one drop of blood, not one prayer, not a sigh, or groan, or tear, that ever he spent for them, in the days of the flesh is lost or fruitless, as to any one soul whom he purchased of the Father! In the pastoral charge of Christ, there was one "son of perdition," John 17:12; but in his mediatorial charge, not one soul shall miscarry; but all shall be presented to him safe and entire, at his appearance. And over them shall he glory, saying, as it were, All these are mine, the travail of my soul, the purchase of my blood, the fruit of my agonies; for these I was born, and for these I was made under the law; for these I bled, and for these I made myself an offering for sin. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," John 17:24. Come near unto me, my sons, and my daughters, that I may kiss you. See, the smell of my redeemed is as the "smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," Gen. 27:27.

3. As the charge of the Holy Ghost. Whom the Father did elect, the Son was to purchase; and whom the Son purchased, the Spirit was to sanctify. Who therefore is called the Holy Ghost, not only because, as the third glorious person in the blessed Trinity, he is essentially holy in himself; but because, by office, he is a fountain of holiness to all the elect. The blood of Christ indeed is the fountain of merit; but the Spirit of Christ the fountain of operation and efficacy; gathering the elect out of the world, wherein they lay, in common with the rest of the lost sons and daughters of Adam; planting their souls with the habits of grace, which are therefore called the "fruits of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22, 23, and then supporting, preserving, and ripening those habits into perfection.

Thus will the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, rejoice to meet the saints. And surely the saints, according to their finite capacity, will not less rejoice and triumph to meet their Lord. Oh! to meet him now, whom their soul loved; whom in the days of their pilgrimage, they often sought and could not find; and when they could not find him, mourned for him, lamented after him; bedewed their cheeks with tears; asking solicitously of every one they met, "Saw ye not him, whom my soul loveth?" I say, to meet him, now on the throne of his glory; of whom, could they have had but a glimpse in a glass darkly, in the evangelical ordinances, their souls would have made them "like the chariots of Amminadib," Can. 6:12. To see him, whom having not seen they loved; and in whom, though they then saw him not, yet believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory! I say, now to see him, and so to see him, as to have a full sight of his unveiled face, shining more gloriously than ten thousand suns at noon-day! Once more, so to see him, as never to lose the sight of him to all eternity. How will this transport their souls with unspeakable extasies of joy, which will cause them to break forth into triumphant hymns, yea, and to call to their now fellow angels, to help them with their celestial hallelujahs!

[2.] The place of meeting, and that is, in the air. We shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; that is the place where Christ stays for

his saints. There, they meet him; and there, this great assize will be held. The Judge shall sit upon the throne, and all the saints shall be placed on bright clouds, as on seats or scaffolds round about him.

If it be demanded, Why this solemn meeting must be in the air? it may suffice for answer, The Lord Jesus hath made choice of this place. Surely, it is the prerogative of this great Judge of the quick and the dead, to appoint the place where he will hold this last and tremendous judgment. And we may well acquiesce in the choice, not only because his will is the sovereign law of the creature, but as his infinite wisdom hath judged it the place most convenient for the design.

And yet, if it be lawful to make our conjectures, where scripture is silent, we may humbly suppose this twofold account of it. 1. The capacity of the place. 2. The conspicuity of the judgment.

1. The capacity of the place: vast, and, as to us, infinite will be the numberless numbers of those that shall meet in this universal assembly. "Behold, the Lord will come with ten thousands of his saints," Jude 14; yea "thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him," Dan. 7:10; all the saints that slept in Jesus from the creation of man, and all the saints which are found alive upon the earth at Christ's coming, must all appear before the Lord Jesus. And besides these, the Judge cometh with his royal satellites, his officers of state, myriads and legions of angels: "All his holy angels," Matt. 25:31. There shall not be an angel, as it were, left in heaven. Jacob met two hosts or camps of angels of God, in his travel, Gen. 32:1, 2. Our Saviour mentions more than twelve legions, Matt. 26:53; which as a commanded party, would have been, in an instant, sent out for his rescue, if there had been need. What an infinite army of angels must it needs be then, when all the angels come in Christ's train! "An innumerable company of angels!" Heb. 12:22. And all these must not appear in confused heaps and multitudes, but in their distinct ranks and order; and the saints are to sit in order, in their several degrees round about the

throne. Now the place had need be of a vast extent and circumference, that will suffice to receive and contain such variety of multitudes. So that even in this respect, no place so fit for this august and solemn convention as the air, for its vast extensiveness and capacity.

2. Much more in respect of conspicuity, that so, the Judge and judgment, with all the assessors and attendants, might be more eminently visible from heaven above to the earth beneath, that the whole process of this general assize may be heard and seen by all, good and bad, elect and reprobate, heaven and hell. Heaven would be too high, the earth would be too low; the smoke of the bottomless pit would obscure this glorious vision. The air, where is no interposition of hills and mountains, and now, serenely and brightened by the confluence of so many glorious suns, will render this last tremendous transaction visible and audible to every creature. Behold, he cometh with clouds! Clouds which will not obscure him, but bright clouds, which, filled with the beams of his glory, shall render him most visible and conspicuous. So it is prophesied, "Every eye shall see him," &c. Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:30. Thus it shall be, and this will make for the exceeding glory and majesty of the Judge.

[3.] The ends of this meeting; and the ends why the saints ascend to meet Christ in the air, we may conceive to be such as these:

1. Their public reception and owning by Christ.
2. Their full and perfect justification.
3. The consummation of their nuptial contract.
4. Their confession, or sitting together with Christ in the judgment.
5. Their complete and final benediction, or blessed sentence.
6. Their solemn and triumphant attendance on the Judge, going to take possession of the kingdom.

These, or the like, ends of the saints' meeting with the Lord in the air, are not obscurely hinted to us in scripture.

1. Their public reception and owning by Christ. The elect angels having gathered together the elect saints, according to the commission upon which they were sent forth, "Go ye and gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," and having carried them up into the air, where the Judge stayeth for them; I say, their angels shall now present them before Him, in the rich and glorious attire of their perfected resurrection; wherein their once vile bodies are now made like to Christ's glorious body. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought into the King's presence; and the first public act which the King shall do, is solemnly to receive them, "Come ye blessed of my Father;" and embracing them in his arms, and kissing them, as it were, as Joseph once did his brethren, in the open view of heaven and earth.

He will solemnly own them, and acknowledge them in their persons and relation unto himself; a prerogative long before promised, "They shall be mine when I make up my jewels," Mal. 3:17. That is the very work which Christ is now come about; to make up his jewels, to lay them up in their heavenly cabinet. And the first word he will speak, is, "These are mine;" he appropriates them for his own; they are mine, my jewels, my gems, my precious treasure. As the saints have not been ashamed of Christ before men; so neither will Christ now be ashamed of them before his Father, and all his mighty angels, Luke 9:26. He will not be ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. 2:11; yea, he will appropriate them as his children; a seed given him of his Father, as the great reward of his passion; saying, These be the children which God has given me, ver. 13; my sons and my daughters, who have served me; thus he owns them in their relations.

He will own and acknowledge all the holy duties, public and private, which they have done in obedience to his commands. Their hearing, praying, fasting, and afflicting their souls for their own sins, and for

other men's sins; their fearing of God, and laying to heart the reproaches of religion, and blasphemies cast upon his name; their mutual holy conferences, one with another, all these were written in a book of remembrance of old, Mal. 3:16, and laid up before him, that they might never be forgotten; and now the book shall be brought forth, and read in the audience of the world, for their greater honour: even the very secret duties which they have performed in their closets, when no eye saw them but God's; even they shall be proclaimed in the audience of this universal assembly at the last day. Thy Father which saw in secret, will now reward thee openly, Matt. 6:6. Not a prayer, but it was filled up; not a sigh, nor groan, but it is booked; not a tear, but is bottled; not a holy ejaculation, but was upon record, and shall be now publicly produced and acknowledged, Psa. 56:8. "I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first," Rev. 2:19.

Jesus Christ at that day will own the fidelity of his saints, their constancy and perseverance in their holy profession, and confess them before all the world. "I know your works, and where you have dwelt, even where Satan's seat was, and you have held fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas (Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, &c.) was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth," Rev. 2:13; behold! to you who have been faithful to the death, do I now give a crown of life, ver. 10. To you who have overcome, "do I grant to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," ch. 3:21.

He will own and acknowledge the saints, in their sufferings for his sake. All the reproaches, hard speeches, incivilities, abuses, scandals, persecutions, whichever they sustained in their names, persons, livelihoods, and lives, upon Christ's and the gospel's account, he will acknowledge; and bespeak them in some such language as he once encouraged his disciples in the days of his flesh; "You are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and behold, I appoint

unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom," &c. Luke 22:28–30.

Also, the Lord Jesus will own all the services and offices of love done to himself, or to any of his members; clothing, feeding, visiting them when sick, coming to them when in prison; he will acknowledge all before heaven and earth: yea, what they themselves have forgotten, never thought worthy of their own notice, much less of Christ's notice; "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" &c.

All this shall be proclaimed in the audience of that general assembly; "Forasmuch as ye have done it to one of these little ones, ye have done it unto me," Matt. 25:40; yea, those very acts of charity, which have been done so secretly, that the left hand did not know what the right hand did, Matt. 6:3, shall be now published upon the housetop, the great house of heaven and earth. They were not so closely done, but they shall as openly be rewarded; the book of God's remembrance shall be brought forth and opened, and publicly read, that all the good which any of the saints of God ever did, may be mentioned to their everlasting praise.

Observe, as a circumstance of signal honour, that, in that large recital which shall then be read of the saints' lives, there is not the least mention made of sin; they had, sure enough, the remainders of their original corruption surviving their conversion, defiling and molesting their most holy services; which were as so many scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes, incessantly tempting them, and exposing them to temptation; forcing from them sad laments and outcries; "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Rom. 7:24. They had, and not rarely, their actual surprises and seductions, their lapses and relapses, which brought them upon their knees with holy Job's confession, "I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?" Job 7:20, but none of these things come up into remembrance against them in that day. As, here below, God saw no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, to impute it to them:



so, in their appearance before the Judge, God remembereth no iniquity against the saints, to charge it upon them, or to reproach them with it. In the petty sessions which Christ held with some of his saints and churches here on earth, amongst their commendations, there were some exceptions; and some faultinesses were charged upon them, an "howbeit," 2 Chron. 32:31, a "nevertheless," ch. 33:17, as abatements of their excellences. "Nevertheless, I have a few things against thee," Rev. 2. So in the process against the church of Ephesus, ver. 4, "nevertheless;" a "but" against Pergamos, ver. 14, against Thyatira, ver. 20, a "notwithstanding," &c. But now in the judicial process of this last and universal assizes, there is not found in all those voluminous records, which shall be opened, so much as one unsavoury "but" to blemish the fair characters of the saints: as if (even before they got into heaven) they had obtained that privilege, to be, just men made perfect! This is very wonderful.

Had reprobate men and angels had the drawing up of the report of the saints' lives, what a black bill of indictment would they have preferred against them! to be sure, all the evil which they ever did in their whole lives, with all their blackest aggravations, should have been raked up, and produced against them. Yea, if the saints themselves had been trusted with giving in the history of their own lives, they would not have dealt much more kindly by themselves, than the seed of the serpent would have done; to be sure, if there were anything worse than other, they would not have concealed it; vilifying the good, and aggravating the bad, as some times they were wont to do in their desertions, even beyond truth and justice, as if Satan had hired them to belie themselves: but now the righteous Judge of heaven and earth is far from dealing so with them: but, as if he himself had never known any evil by them; he brings in his presentment, all fair and well, and so it is proclaimed in that high court of justice.

Another circumstance of honour in Christ's acknowledgment of the graces in, and duties performed by his saints, is, that although their graces were nothing else but so many drops of Christ's own fulness,

and their duties so many operations of his own Spirit in them; nothing theirs, but the very act of believing, and the act of repentance, and the act of love to Christ, and the act of prayer; yet Christ is pleased to ascribe all the praise, and all the glory, both of their graces and duties, unto the saints, as if not only the act itself, but the principle also, from whence they acted, had been their own. This is truly wonderful! here is the breadth and length, depth and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, Eph. 3:18, 19.

Oh, how will it fill the saints with amazement, while they are secretly accusing themselves, with Joseph's brethren, We are utterly guilty concerning our brother, our lord and elder brother, I say, to hear the Lord himself not charging them with the least unkindness; yea, representing them before God, men and angels, even, as it were, as immaculate as the angels themselves, who kept their first estate; yea in all this, putting the crown upon their heads, Rev. 4:10, which they cast down at his feet, saying, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give the glory. Behold such honour have all the saints!

2. I come now to a second end of the saints' meeting with Christ in the air, and that is their full and final justification.

They shall receive public absolution. Pardon of sin is the privative part of justification; imputation of righteousness is the positive part. Pardon, or remission, is the sinner's justification from sin; both from the guilt of sin, and from the sentence or punishment due to sin. "By him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they cannot be justified by the law of Moses," Acts 13:39 This now must be one branch of the solemn justification of the saints at their meeting with the Lord Jesus in the air; as a Judge, he shall fully and finally, in open court, absolve the saints from all their sins, both guilt and punishment, from which there was no absolution ever to be expected by the covenant of works.

Sin enough there was, for which God might sentence all the Jacobs in the world to condemnation; and cast all the Israels that ever were, into the bottomless pit; but it is gone, it is forgiven; pardon makes such a clear riddance of sin, that it is as if it had never been; the scarlet sinner is as "white as snow," Isa. 1:18; snow newly fallen from the sky, which was never sullied: the crimson sinner is "as wool," wool which never received the least tincture in the dye. Here is the reason why, when the iniquity of Israel is sought for, there is none; and the sins of Judah, and they are not to be found: "For I will pardon them," &c. Jer. 50:20. Yea, not forgiven only, but forgotten; and should they now be remembered? Jer. 31:34. The Judge had long since cast their sins behind his back; and he will not now surely set them before his face, Isa. 38:17; he had cast them into the depths of the seas (bottomless depths of everlasting oblivion) that they might be buoyed up no more for ever: yea, the Lord Jesus nailed all their sins to his cross, Col. 2:14, and buried them all in his grave; yea, and crossed the debt-book with the red lines of his own blood, Rom. 3:25. If now he should call them to remembrance, to charge the saints with their sins, he should undo what he had done; he should cross the great design of his cross, upon the matter, deny himself to be risen again from the dead, and disown his own hand and seal! Rom. 4:25. Upon this foundation stands the absolute impossibility that sin, the least sin, the least circumstance of sin, should be so much as once mentioned by the Judge, in the process of that judicial trial, unless it be in a way of absolution; and so sin shall be mentioned indeed, but in order to the magnifying of their pardon and absolution.

The saints shall then be fully and finally absolved in their own consciences. It is true, there are some of the saints even in this life, to whose consciences the Spirit of God doth evidence and seal up remission of sin; who are not only safe, but sure; and possess not only the blessedness of a pardoned estate, but the comfort and assurance of that blessedness: nevertheless, not all the saints, nor any at all times, nor always in the same degree. They have their dark times, their eclipses, as well as their transfigurations; and no wonder,

since the Sun of righteousness himself suffered an eclipse upon the cross so dreadful, as forced the great master of astronomy in Egypt to cry out, Either the God of nature suffers, or the whole frame of nature is dissolved; and caused the Lord Jesus himself, to the just astonishment of heaven and earth, to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is it any wonder then, if many of the poor saints of God, like Paul and his shipwrecked company, see neither sun-light nor star-light for many days together; and no small tempest doth often lie upon them, so that all hope of being saved is taken away? Acts 27:20; yea, not a few precious deserted Hemans are there, who from their youth up are afflicted and ready to die, and while they suffer the terrors of God, are distracted, Psa. 88:15; yea, and that which is more tremendous, their sun, as to any observation which standers by could make, though very rarely, hath set in a cloud.

But now, at this blessed day, the Judge of the quick and the dead shall absolve the saints of God, not only at the tribunal of his own justice, but at the tribunal of their conscience; he will proclaim that name in their bosoms, which he proclaimed before Moses, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, &c. And he will speak so audibly, that every saint shall hear the voice; and so particularly, that every one shall know he speaketh to him; and shall all echo back again with joy and joint acclamation, "Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity?" &c. Micah 7:18.

Also, the saints are then said to receive their full and final absolution; because then their absolution shall be proclaimed in open court; the Judge in person shall pronounce their absolution in the audience of God, and all the elect angels, and of the whole world of men and devils. What Christ, in the days of his flesh, said to one poor trembling penitent, he will now say to all, Sons and daughters, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you: this will be good cheer indeed. These are the times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord, when the sins of the saints shall be blotted out, Acts 3:19.

Blotted they were before out of God's book; but now they shall be blotted out in the sight of all the world; so that now, indeed, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? since heaven and earth, yea, and hell itself must be witnesses to the crossing of the book, and to the cancelling of the bond; wherein they stood obliged to Divine justice! Oh, what inexpressible, inconceivable refreshment will this be to the saints of God! even the perfecting of all their former refreshments! The sense of their pardon pronounced by the Spirit, to some of their consciences within, was wont to be exceeding sweet; yea, any scriptural hopes of pardoning mercy, though apprehended by a weak and trembling hand of faith, were a reviving to their drooping spirits; what must needs then the highest plerophory,\* ratified by the most solemn proclamation of the great Judge, (before the upper and nether world, as well as to conscience,) be, but life from the dead? Surely it will be even heaven, before the saints come to heaven! Nor shall any reflection either upon sin or sorrow, ever damp that joy any more; nor shall willow-boughs mix with the palms of the saints' triumph in that blessed jubilee; but joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The second branch of the saints' justification, is, that the Judge will pronounce them perfectly righteous.

This may seem superfluous, as supposed to be included in the sentence of absolution. Not to be a sinner, seemeth to imply a saint; to be pardoned all sin, and all the degrees of sin, and all kinds of sin, omissive as well as commissive; all defects of perfection, all want of conformity to, as well as transgression of the law of God, this seemeth to be perfection.

It doth seem so, and truly it doth but seem so; for pardon relates to what is past only; "remission of sins that are past," Rom. 3:25; it is but a freedom from guilt, and a freedom from punishment; it doth not suppose any real and positive righteousness, which may set a man perfect before the tribunal of God's justice.

If a scholar in the university be a candidate for an office there, or a fellowship in a college, where the statutes do require such and such qualifications, and upon examination, he be found not guilty of murder, or sacrilege, or any other crime, this will not capacitate the candidate for the preferment: this is the case in hand. The saints are now candidates for heaven and glory, and absolution or pardon is not sufficient to capacitate them for this glory. Before he can be so capacitated, he must be constituted perfectly righteous.

The person under the notion of not guilty, is an absolved person, and acquitted from hell and eternal damnation. And, as under the notion of righteous, he is capacitated for heaven and life everlasting: not guilty relates to freedom from hell; righteousness relateth to heaven as the proper qualification thereof. Do this, and live; though, where the one is, there is the other, yet the one is not formally the other.

And according to these two capacities and places, there are two great works which the Redeemer did undertake for the redeemed: the one to make satisfaction for sin to Divine justice by his blood, that is, by his death; the other, to yield most absolute conformity to the law of God, both in nature and life.

By the one, we may conceive the redeemed freed from hell and everlasting burnings; by the other, we may conceive them qualified for heaven and everlasting glory.

Interested in this twofold work of Christ, we may suppose the believing sinner appearing at the tribunal of the great God, pleading his righteousness, and pronounced righteous in the court of Divine justice. Thus the sinner is brought in, as it were, in a way of judicial process, Isa. 45:24, holding up his hand at the judgment seat, the Judge on the bench bespeaking him thus: Sinner, thou standest indicted for breaking the holy, and just, and good law of thy Maker, and hereof art proved guilty; sinner, what hast thou to say for thyself? &c. Rom. 3:9. To this the sinner, upon his bended knee, confesseth guilty; but withal, humbly craves leave to plead for

himself full satisfaction made by his Surety: "It is Christ that died," Rom. 8:34 and whereas it is further objected by the Judge: But, sinner, the law requireth an exact and perfect righteousness in thy personal fulfilling of the law! Sinner, where is thy righteousness? The believing sinner humbly replieth, My righteousness is upon the bench; in the Lord have I righteousness; Christ my Surety hath fulfilled the law on my behalf, to that I appeal, and by that I will be tried: this done, the plea is accepted as good in law. The sinner is pronounced righteous, and goeth away glorying and rejoicing! Righteous, righteous! "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isa. 45:25.

How does the prospect of being pronounced perfectly righteous through the imputation of the positive righteousness of Christ, tend to the settling of solid peace in the conscience of the believing sinner! That justification by faith is the aptest medium to establish solid peace in the bosom of a poor sensible sinner, may appear by comparing works and faith together. Send a poor sinner to his own righteousness, which is of the law, his own good works, holiness, fasting, prayer, or the best service that ever he did for God, they can afford him little ground of confidence; alas! hence his fears, and doubts, and diffidence do arise: his prayers need pardon, his tears need washing, his very righteousness will condemn him, Job 10. Here is no place for the sole of his foot to stand upon. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" Psa. 130:3. This was that which scared Paul from coming to the law for justification. Why, saith he, "I through the law am dead to the law," Gal. 2:19; which denotes, I seek not to the law for justification and life; the law may thank itself; I come to the law for justification, and it convinceth me of sin; I plead my innocence, that I am not so great a sinner as others are; I plead my righteousness, my duties, and good meanings, and good desires; and it tells me, they are all too light; the best of my duties will not save me, but the least of my sins will damn me, Job 9:20, 21. It tells me, mine own righteousnesses do, as filthy rags, defile me, and my duties themselves do witness against me. I plead repentance, and it laughs me to scorn: it tells me, my repentance needs pardon, and my tears need washing. Besides, if they were ever so good, what careth it for my repentance? It looketh for my obedience, perfect and personal, which, because I have not, it tells me, I am cursed, and pronounceth sentence; and when it hath so done, it hath no mercy at all for me, though I seek it carefully with tears. What can I expect from so severe a judge? I will come no more to that tribunal: behold, I appeal to the gospel; there repentance will pass, and tears will find pity; there imperfect obedience will find acceptance, though not to justification; there, there is a better righteousness provided for me; an exact, perfect righteousness; as perfect as that of the law; for it is, indeed, the very righteousness of



the law; though not performed by me, yet by my Surety for me, the Lord my righteousness. Here is a foundation for the feet of my faith to stand upon, here I can have pardon of all my debts, though the law will not abate me one farthing; here are long white robes, though I never spun a thread of them with my own fingers. To this tribunal will I come, and here will I wait for my justification; if I perish, I perish.

Here, may an objector say, is foundation for presumption to stand on; here is a bed for security to sleep in; here is a doctrine to send men merrily to hell; while they break the law, to tell them, there is one that hath fulfilled it for them; while they sin, Christ hath righteousness enough to justify them. Surely this is a doctrine that makes God not only the justifier of sinners, but the justifier of sin too: so disputed the free-will men of former times against the apostles; and so the free-will men of our times against us: but, for answer:

First, the apostle disclaims the consequence with a vehement negation; God forbid any one should be so impudent to force such a scandalous conclusion upon such immaculate premises.

Secondly, he shows the reason of it; and the reason is taken from the new covenant, wherein God hath inseparably joined the merit of Christ's cross and the power of Christ's cross together; insomuch, that whosoever hath a share in the merit of his cross for justification, hath also an interest in the power of his cross, for mortification: he instanceth in himself, Gal. 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ;" which denotes, while, through grace, I appeal to the merit of Christ's death for my justification; I can also, through grace, evidence my appeal to be scriptural, by the power of the cross, whereby the "world is crucified to me, and I to the world," Gal. 6:14.

And as it is with me, so it is with all truly justified persons; for, they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof, Gal. 5:24. They have crucified them, and they do crucify

them; they are upon the cross, and, with their Lord and Redeemer, refuse to come down, till they can say with him, "It is finished;" therefore, let the scandal of the cross and of justification cease for ever.

The sinner hath an indispensable necessity of such a righteousness to his justification, as for the securing of his appearance in the day of judgment. The great apostle, who had as fair a show for a legal justification as any other in the world, protesteth he dares not think of appearing without this positive righteousness in the last and dreadful judgment; but, oh that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, Phil. 3:9. In him, in Christ, not in myself; in his mediatorial righteousness, not in mine own personal righteousnesses: away with them, they are but filthy rags; rotten rags in comparison with Christ's robes. Give me the righteousness which is of God by faith, of God's ordination, and of faith's application.

And then again, how does this way of justifying believing sinners before the great tribunal exalt the infinite excellency of our glorious Redeemer, set forth, Heb. 7:26: "Such a High Priest became us," saith the apostle, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens."

And as such a High Priest became us, so, truly, such a way of justifying believing sinners became him; namely, it was becoming a person of such transcendent worth and excellence, to justify his redeemed in the most ample and glorious way, &c.; by working out for them, and then investing them with, a righteousness adequate to the law of God; a righteousness that should be every way commensurate to the miserable estate of fallen man, and to the holy design of the glorious God. It was a becoming thing, that the second Adam might restore as good a righteousness as the first Adam lost; that this should justify as fully as the other did condemn. This is the very design of that famous parallel instituted by the apostle between the two Adams, Rom. 5:15–21; namely, to signify an equality, not of

number in the persons receiving, but of efficacy in the persons deriving, and communicating what was their own to either of their seeds. The first Adam to his natural seed, and the second Adam to his spiritual seed; to the end that men and angels might take notice, that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, was not less powerful to save, than the first Adam was to destroy. To which purpose it is of great use to observe how exact the apostle is, in setting the specialties of either Adam's legacy one over against the other; the wound and the cure, the damage and the reparation.

Observe the parallel, in Romans 5:15–21.

### **The first Adam propagates his**

Offence.

Guilt.

Death, ver. 15.

Condemnation.

Bondage, slavery.

Sin, ver. 19.

### **The second Adam obtains**

Forgiveness for many offences.

A gift of righteousness, 17.

Life, ver. 18.

Justification, 18.

Reigning in life.

Righteousness.

Every way the salve is as sovereign as the wound was mortal; the cure as vital as the sickness deadly.

Thus it became our High Priest to justify his redeemed! The great apostle cannot pass it by without special notice; "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him," Heb. 7:25. To the uttermost of what? To the uttermost obligation of the law, preceptive as well as penal; to bring in perfect righteousness as well as perfect innocence: to the uttermost demand of Divine justice; perfect conformity to the Divine will, as well as perfect satisfaction to Divine justice: to the uttermost indigence and necessity of the lost creature; qualification as well as absolution: to the uttermost of our High Priest's perfection, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Oh, for such a one to have saved a cheap way, to drive the purchase to as low a price as might be, by pardoning their sin, and making reparation to Divine justice; to satisfy for the wrong which man had done to the Creator and his law; this only, with reverence may we speak it, had not become so august a Redeemer as the Son of God was. But, to set him upon his legs again, to make him as good a man as he was in his created perfection, such as all the attributes of God should acquiesce in; to put him into a capacity of demanding eternal life, not by gift only, but by merit, through a Redeemer; yet so still, as it is the Redeemer's merit, not man's: not that Christ hath merited, that we might merit, (as the papists would vainly varnish that proud doctrine of merit;) no: all was done by him, and is ours only by imputation.

Such a High Priest became us; and such a glorious way of saving sinners became him, who was made higher than the heavens; that is, than all created perfections whatsoever, angels, cherubim, or seraphim, or whatever order else may be possibly conceived.

This is the righteousness wherewith our Redeemer saveth us, and we need not fear to wrap up ourselves in this fine linen, to put on these robes; we need not fear to be made too rich by Christ, who, "when he was rich, became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," 2 Cor. 8:9.

And this righteousness, indeed, was made over to the saints of God by imputation, at the very first moment of their conversion. In this they lived; in this they died, as standard-bearers wrapt up and buried in their colours: and in this they shall arise and appear at that glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who will then, and thus, be glorified in all them that believe, to the admiration of all the elect angels, the extreme horror of the reprobate, and the infinite joy and rapture of the saints; who shall then sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," Isa. 61:10.

Oh how glorious will Christ be in his saints, when they shall all wear one and the same sparkling livery with Christ! and this shall be his name, Jehovah Tzed-kenu, "The Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23:6.

3. The third end of the saints' meeting with Christ in the air, is, the solemn consummation of the saints' nuptials with Christ their bridegroom. They were contracted here on earth, when Christ and the saints gained one another's consent; Jesus Christ did then solemnly espouse the saints to himself; "I betrothed thee unto me for ever, yea, I betrothed thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; I even betrothed

thee unto me in faithfulness," Hos. 2:19, 20. Indeed, the church in herself, when Christ came to make love to her, was a very unlovely creature, whose emblem, therefore, is a poor wretched infant in the blood of its nativity. But Jesus Christ did first love her with a love of pity: "I saw thee polluted in thine own blood," Ezek. 16:4, 6. I saw thee, that is, I cast an eye of pity upon thee, my bowels yearned towards thee; and then, as loveless as she was, that he might have a legal right to her, he purchased her of his Father; he purchased her at a dear rate, for he gave himself for her, Eph. 5:25. Christ gave himself for her, and then he gave himself to her. They were wont to buy their wives of the father of the damsel; but never did husband buy a wife at such a rate as the Lord Jesus did the church. Shechem bid fairly for Dinah, Jacob's daughter; "Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me," Gen 34:12. Jacob served seven years for Rachel, as it fell out, twice over; yea, but the Lord Jesus gave himself for his church; he purchased it with his own blood, Acts 20:28. That he might love it with a love of complacency, he doth sanctify it, and cleanse it, by the "washing of water by the word," Eph. 5:26. As he doth purchase the church with his blood; so he doth purify the church by his Spirit, compared to water for the cleansing virtue thereof, in the ministry of the word. Christ and his church like one another so well, that they mutually engage and contract themselves one to another; they do mutually give away themselves, one for, and one to another; "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Cant. 2:16.

This was the wedding unto which John was invited; "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," Rev. 21:9. He that had the bride was the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, King of kings, &c.; but John, the friend of the Bridegroom, stood and rejoiced greatly to hear the Bridegroom's voice, John 3:29; then indeed was his joy fulfilled. At the consummation of this spiritual union between Christ and his saints, what inconceivable triumph and rejoicing will there be! The loud music of heaven shall sound, the voice of mighty thunderings, all the angels, cherubim, seraphim, with all the blessed quoir of celestial spirits, who attend this glorious King of saints, shall

praise God with the music of their hallelujahs; yea, all the saints of God, whether patriarchs or prophets, and apostles, all the martyrs and confessors of Jesus Christ, with the whole number of the redeemed, who are both guests and bride in this glorious solemnity will make the arches of heaven to echo, when they shall be joyful in glory, and the high praises of God shall be in their mouths, singing one to another, "Let us rejoice and be glad, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Rev. 19:7. The gates of hell, and the very foundations of the kingdom of darkness, shall tremble, and be confounded at the report of this triumphant jubilee.

4. This sacred solemnity finished, the next act in that solemn meeting will be, that the Bridegroom will take the queen his bride, and set her upon his throne, at his right hand, as an assessor with himself in the following part of the judgment, which he, as Judge, shall pass upon the reprobate world of men and devils. They all this while stand trembling below upon the earth, beholding, to their infinite shame and horror, all this glory put upon the saints; and fearfully looking for their own judgment, and that fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries, which now succeeds. For the elect angels, who are appointed to attend the Judge, shall now drag that miserable company of prisoners, those reprobate caitiffs of infernal spirits, and wicked men, before the tribunal of the great Judge; there they shall pass under a most impartial, exact, and severe trial; the books shall be opened, the book of God's remembrance and the book of their own consciences, Mal. 3:16, and out of them, they shall be judged for all the evils which ever they committed from the time they first had a being in the world. The reprobate angels shall then be judged for their first apostasy; and for all their malice and revenge, which since that cursed defection, they ever acted against God, and against his saints; yea, and against the precious souls of men, which, they being damned themselves, ceased not to draw into the same condemnation. "The angels which kept not their first estate," or principality, "but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the

great day," Jude 6. With these chains rattling at their heels, shall they be dragged to the bar of Divine judgment; and there, having received their dreadful sentence, they shall be hanged up in chains, in the midst of unquenchable flames to all eternity. But first they shall have a just and a fair trial. And as the reprobate angels, so the reprobate world of ungodly men and women, shall be judged for all the wickedness done in the body. For the sin of their natures, for they "were by nature children of wrath," Eph. 2:3: and for their actual sins, for as they were children of wrath, so also they were children of disobedience; they shall be judged for their atheism, whether secret, by which, as fools, they have said in their hearts only, "There is no God," Psa. 14:1; or open, whereby, as proud blasphemers, "they have set their mouth against the heavens," Psa. 73:9, saying, "How doth God know? and Is there knowledge in the Most High?" ver. 11. Who through the pride of their countenance, would not seek after God, yea, contemning God, said concerning all this wickedness, and that to God's face, "Tush, thou wilt not require it," Psa. 10:4, 13. But that judgment shall fully convince the atheist; and he that would not believe a God, shall know him by the judgments which he executeth. Then shall the idolater, whether pagan or romish, or of what other impression soever; the blasphemer of God's name, whether by prodigious oaths, or by lighter taking his name in vain; the profaner of the sabbath, who violateth that holy day of God, by work or sport, either by sinning or idling out that holy time, either by writing against the sabbath, or by living down the sabbath; the disobedient to fathers or mothers, natural or political; the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, the false accuser, the covetous, whom God hateth; all these, I say, in what degree of wickedness soever, even to every idle word, Matt. 12:36, and every vile, yea, vain thought, which, with David, Psa. 119:113, they have not hated, shall be judged out of those books. The gospel-sinner shall then be brought to the bar, to answer for his unbelief, impenitency, his rejecting of Christ's yoke, his despising the tenders and offers of free grace; his ignorance of, and disobedience to, the gospel, shall then be judged: the "Lord Jesus is now revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey



not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. All the persecutions, whether by the mouth of the sword, imprisonment, banishment, martyrdom, &c.; or by the sword of the mouth, revilings, scandals, false accusations, cruel mockings of proud sinners; now, they shall be all charged upon the world of ungodly men, whether out of the church or in the church. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," Jude 14, 15, whether his person or members. Every sin, with all the circumstances and aggravations; yea, omissions shall then be reckoned to those who thought themselves safe, because they were not gross and scandalous sinners, Matt. 25:42, 43: men shall be judged for their nots; yea, for defects and coming short in the manner of duties, as well as the matter, Mal. 1:14. Formality and hypocrisy shall then come into open view. In a word, all the world of ungodly men, that have sinned, and not repented of their sin, shall be judged at Christ's tribunal, and every man, according to the light and law under which he hath lived; "As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law," Rom. 2:12. Heathens shall be judged by the light of nature; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; and they that have sinned under the gospel, shall be judged by Jesus Christ according to the gospel. Yea, they that sin against the gospel, shall be judged by the light of nature, by the law of Moses, and by the gospel too, as having not only sinned against Moses' ink, but against Christ's blood. And all these trials will be severe, but especially the trial in the gospel court; so that whereas sinners flatter themselves with thoughts, that trial by the gospel will be the easiest trial, as if the gospel were all mercy; the trial of the gospel will be found to be the most severe, and above all others intolerable. It was indeed a gospel of mercy, and a gospel of peace, in the tenders, and invitations, and exhortations, and wooings, and beseechings, that were used; the tears of the ministers, and the blood of a crucified Redeemer, while once the long-suffering of God waited in the day of grace. But all these are now past and gone, having been

rejected, despised, and laughed to scorn by wretched, proud sinners; who, with the bloody Jews, preferred a Barabbas before a Jesus; a base lust before a precious Saviour: now is the time of recompense come, the day of vengeance from the presence of the Lord is come, and the sinner shall know it. The terror of which day will further appear in these following particulars.

(1.) There will be no denying of any matter, small or great, that shall be charged upon those guilty malefactors. By the mouth of those two witnesses, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of conscience, shall every branch of the indictment be established. The one of these books was kept before the face of the Lord continually, so that the great accuser himself, nor any of his malignant agents, could get in thither to alter or add to any thing upon record in that sacred register; and the other book, the book of conscience, was in the sinner's own keeping, and who could break in there to interline it? Indeed, the sinner wrote down many sins there with the juice of a lemon, but the fire of the day of judgment will make it legible; he wrote them with the point of an onion, but God wrote them with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, in deep and durable characters, that should never be erased out of the conscience of a sinner. Now these two books will agree so exactly, like two tallies, one with another, that it will be impossible for the sinner to deny any particular, but he will be self-condemned.

(2.) As there will be no denying, so there will be no room for extenuation; this was one of the sinner's hiding-places while in the land of the living. Sinners now have their butts; it was but thus, and thus, it was but a little one, &c. Great sins were but small sins; and small sins were no sins. Now, the sinner will have no such sanctuary to fly unto: the account will now be inverted; those that were no sins before, will be sins now; small sins will be great sins, and great sins will be infinite. The last judgment will give sin its just proportion. That which the law could never do, though it were given on purpose, the fire of the day of judgment will effectually do—make sin appear exceeding sinful. The carnal protestant will then find, to his cost,

there is no such thing as a small sin; because then he will be convinced there is no small God, against whom sin is committed; no small law, whereof sin is the violation; no small Christ, whom sin hath crucified; no small heaven, which sin hath forfeited; no little hell, which sin hath merited, and by its merit, hath now justly plunged him into for ever.

(3.) There will be no putting off of sin upon others, as here below there was; the thief enticed me, the drunkard seduced me, the harlot deceived me, the serpent beguiled me, Gen. 3:13: yea, what bold sinners are not afraid to speak will not then be heard amongst the malefactors at Christ's bar; God tempted me, or God decreed it, Jas. 1:13. No; these, and all other palliations and colours, wherewith men do wash the face of sin, will melt before the fire of the day of judgment. God will say to the sinner, "Hast thou not procured these things to thyself?" Jer. 2:17. Yea, sinners shall then own their own guilt, and confess that their destruction is of themselves: their heart shall cry out, as Apollodore dreamed his heart cried to him in a caldron of boiling lead, O Apollodore, I am the cause of this vengeance; how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!

(4.) There will lie no appeal from this tribunal. Once, there lay an appeal from Moses to Christ, from the law to the gospel; but proud sinners scorned it, or securely presumed they had made the appeal by a loose verbal application of Jesus Christ; whilst yet they trusted in themselves and their own foolish presumptions, their serving of God, their good works, and their good meanings, and their good desires; and, why should not they be saved as well as others? But now, if they should appeal, their appeals, with themselves, will be cast out as reprobate silver. This is now the supreme and last judicatory; from hence is no appeal; once doomed here, the sentence is irreversible for ever.

(5.) Neither is there any pardon to be expected at this judgment-seat. Pardons were tendered in the gospel upon gracious terms, but ungracious sinners would have none of them, or would have them upon their own terms—sin and pardon too: their pardons were nothing unless they might have dispensations; but now the time of pardon is out; the day of grace is expired; no cries nor entreaties will prevail with the Judge: no, though the sinner would fall upon his knees, and weep as many seas of tears, as once the ministers wept tears of compassion over them; or as Christ himself shed drops of blood upon the cross. Christ was once upon his knees, in the person of his ministers, beseeching them to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20. Though the sinner was first in the transgression, yet God was first in the reconciliation; and followed the sinner, entreating him to accept of mercy, as if God had stood in as much need of the sinner, as the sinner did of mercy; but nothing would prevail, a deaf ear was still turned to Christ's importunity, and now repentance is hid from the eyes of the Judge, as once repentance was hid from the eyes of the sinner. The things of their peace are everlastingly hid, because they knew them not in that the day of their visitation. As sinners hardened their hearts against Christ's voice, so Christ will harden his heart against the sinner's cry, Prov. 1:24.

(6.) There shall be no mitigation of the punishment; not a farthing abated of the whole debt, Matt. 5:26. There was once mercy without judgment, before the sinner; now there shall be judgment without mercy: now sinners shall know that God is not mocked, that the Lamb of God is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His voice was once, "Fury is not in me," Isa. 27:4; now the voice will be, Meekness is not in me, mercy is not in me. Now must the sinner expect nothing but the utmost severity of Divine justice, who once despised the yearnings of Christ's bowels, the lowest condescensions of Divine grace; the sinner in his day, knew no moderation in sin, the Judge now in his day, will know no mitigation of judgment; there will be a sea of wrath, without a drop of mercy.

(7.) Not a word of any good that ever the wicked did, shall now be mentioned to their honour or advantage: as none of the sins which ever the saints committed, were mentioned to their shame in their process; so none of the good that ungodly sinners have done, shall be once named, unless it be by way of aggravation of their sins. The scripture tells us, these woful wretches will be ready there, to plead for themselves their duties and services which they have done for Christ, as vile as they are, as they did in the days of their flesh, "We have fasted, they said, we have afflicted our souls," &c. Isa. 58:3: so now also in the day of judgment; false apostles, and scandalous ministers will then be so bold as to plead their preaching in Christ's name, and that, possibly, not without success; "Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils;" peradventure even to the work of conversion. Judas might cast out the devil, and yet himself be a devil, John 6:70; he might convert others, and yet be unconverted himself. They will plead their doing of miracles, healing the sick, and raising the dead, making the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the lame to go, and in Christ's name have done many mighty works, Matt. 7:22. Likewise, loose christians and formal professors, will then also plead for themselves, their hearing sermons, and receiving sacraments, &c.: take it in their own language, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," Luke 13:26; their external familiarities with Christ in the assemblies of the saints, their common gifts and graces; anything then that hath but the likeness of grace upon it, Christ shall hear of it. But all in vain; the Judge, whose eyes are a flame of fire to search the hearts and the reins, Rev. 2:18, 23, will reprobate their persons and performances with an "I know you not," Luke 13:25; and again, with greater emphasis, "I tell you, I know you not," ver. 27; yea, once more with a more dreadful note of abhorrence, "I never knew you," Matt. 7:23; I never approved of you, nor of any of your services, which ever you performed from the first to the last; but my soul hated both you and them.

(8.) There will be no begging further time of the Judge; no adjourning the trial to another assize-day. That court knows no

reprieve; the sinner's trial, and sentence, and execution go all together: the day of patience was out in the other world; I gave her space to repent, and she repented not, and now the Judge swears in his wrath, that sinners shall never enter into his rest.

(9.) No days-man to intercede with the Judge. God will not; he "will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh," Prov. 1:26. Oh dreadful calamity, which God will stand and laugh at. Angels will not; and to which of the saints will those miserable sinners turn themselves? Job 5:1. They are upon thrones round about the Judge, but quite to other purposes than to become advocates to those guilty malefactors, as will anon appear.

(10.) Therefore, the Judge shall proceed to the last acts of judgment, which are two; first to pronounce them guilty of all the treasons and misdemeanours which those wretches have been indicted of. The Judge indeed, to vindicate the justice and equity of the court, will demand of the convicted sinner, whether he hath anything to say for himself, why he should not receive judgment to die, and sentence to be executed according to law? But now conscience shall speak impartially between the Judge and the sinner, justifying the Judge, and condemning the sinner; who having beforehand received in himself the sentence of death, shall now be without excuse, not able to make the least apology or defence on his own behalf, Rom. 2:20, but shall confess before that formidable assembly; Lord, though thou judge me to everlasting flames, yet thou dost me no wrong, but art justified in what thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest, Psa. 51:4. And alas! what a miserable thing is this, that all the time that the sinner and his conscience dwelt together under one roof, and conscience would fain have spoken out, the vile wretch should stop the mouth of his own conscience, and never suffer it faithfully to do its office, till now, when it will do him no good, and tend to no other end but to justify God, and to aggravate his own condemnation! Oh that sinners would seriously consider this, and lay it to heart in time, and hearken to the secret whispers of conscience before it be too late; and deal kindly with conscience now, that conscience may deal

kindly with them in that day, when one good word from conscience will be worth a thousand worlds. Oh if the sinner would have done that once willingly, which now he doth whether he will or no, if he would have judged himself in the day of the gospel; it might have prevented this fatal judgment now, he should not have been judged of the Lord, 1 Cor. 11:31. Oh if the Judge would now speak such a word to the convicted multitude of reprobate cast-aways, as once he did to wretched sinners! Behold I make you this offer, that, if yet before I proceed to sentence, you will unfeignedly judge yourselves, I will not judge you, neither shall the sentence of condemnation pass upon you. Oh, what an uproar of joy would there be among those miserable sinners! how would they down on their knees, and judge themselves worthy of a thousand hells, and be content to suffer a thousand years torment, to expiate their guilt! But though they would do this, and (if it were possible) ten thousand times more, no such word shall ever be spoken to them by the Judge; their time of sinning is past, and their time of being judged is come; and, though they do now really judge themselves, yet the Judge will proceed to judge them also. The sinner having thus justified the Judge, the Judge shall now condemn the sinner out of his own mouth; and solemnly setting himself down in the judgment-seat, shall openly in the court proclaim the sinner guilty; guilty of the whole indictment preferred against him; and then proceed to pronounce sentence in some such words as these: Sinner, thou hast been indicted, arraigned, and convicted of high treason, against the Supreme Majesty of heaven, in the breach of his holy law, and in contempt of his blessed gospel, trampling the Son of God under foot, Heb. 10:29, and crucifying him over and over again, and putting him to an open shame, &c. ch. 6:6. Hear now therefore thy sentence; thou art accursed for ever; the wrath of God abideth upon thee, thou shalt not see light; go, thou cursed into everlasting burnings, "prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. 25:41. And what shall be said to one, shall be said to all, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, where the worm never dieth, and the fire is not quenched; into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, there to be tormented with the devil and his angels for ever."

Now during all this tremendous transaction, the saints shall sit in judicature as assessors, or justices of the peace, with Christ upon the bench, seeing and hearing all that is done by the Judge; voting with him, approving and applauding him in his judicial proceedings, crying out with loud acclamations, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus:" and other saints shall echo to them, saying, "Even so Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments!" Rev. 16:5, 7. Thus the saints shall judge the world, 1 Cor. 6:2, yea, they shall judge the angels, the reprobate angels.

5. I come now to the fifth end of the saints' meeting with Christ, namely, to receive their complete and final benediction. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. 25:34. A blessed sentence indeed, every word in it is heaven before the saints come to heaven.

"Come," my love, my dove, my undefiled one, stand no longer at a distance, come and follow me, whither I go: I will that where I am, there you may be also.

"Ye blessed;" blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Your enemies on earth accounted you the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, 1 Cor. 4:13. Satan hath desired to have you, that you might be accursed with him for ever; but ye are blessed, and shall be blessed for ever.

"Blessed of my Father," blessed in the eternal electing love of the Father: blessed in the Son's purchase; you have washed your garments white in the blood of the Lamb: blessed by the laver of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. 3:5.

"Inherit;" ye are children, heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ; behold, I have adopted you to be fellow-heirs with myself, and the Father hath made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the



saints in light. O come now and take possession of your inheritance, behold it is not less than a

"Kingdom," for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, Luke 12:32; the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of glory. Behold it is

"Prepared," in the Father's decree; God hath laid it out for you before the foundation of the world was laid; and it is prepared by my purchase, and by my taking possession of it long since in your name: I went before "to prepare a place for you," John 14:2.

"For you," whom I also prepared for it; and for every one of you personally, every one of you shall receive an entire kingdom to yourselves, and you shall live and reign with me for ever and ever. As heaven hath been kept for you, so you have been kept for it, by the power of God, through faith to salvation, 1 Pet. 1:5. O come now and take possession! Behold, this is the saints' full and final benediction!

I should have spoke to this before I spoke of the sentence passed upon the reprobate; for in our Lord's method it doth precede, Matt. 25:34, compared with ver. 41; yet because execution of the sentence begins with the wicked, and ends with the godly, as ver. 46, to the end that the saints may behold with their eyes the sentence executed, and seeing they may (as God himself doth) address them, saying, "Lo these are the men that made not God their strength, but trusted in the abundance of their riches, and strengthened themselves in their wickedness," Psa. 52:7; I have, I say, therefore chosen to speak of the sentence of blessedness, which the Judge shall pass upon the saints, in this place, that from thence I might pass immediately to the happy execution thereof upon them, nothing intervening as to the persons of saints, which is the

6. Sixth and last end of the saints' meeting with Christ in the air; namely, their solemn and triumphant attendance on the Judge, to take possession of the kingdom. This last judicial process being thus

solemnly finished, sentence on both sides pronounced by the Judge; the reprobate already dragged away by the executioners of Divine vengeance, to the place of execution, where they shall be tormented with the devil and his angels for ever and ever; immediately the bench will rise, the court shall be broken up, that great assembly shall be dissolved, and forthwith the Judge shall ascend, his majestic chariot waiting ready for him; and all the saints shall follow him in their wedding-garments, glittering as the sun in his meridian glory, upon their several chairs of state; all the holy angels of God attending round about them, with their ensigns of glory flying, trumpets sounding, angels singing, the saints themselves shouting, all the regions of the air resounding with their celestial harmony, the like whereunto never entered the ear of man, from the day wherein God laid the foundations of the heaven and earth, to this happy moment. In this triumphant posture shall they march, till they come to the walls of the New Jerusalem, where the gates of pearl—to whom it shall be proclaimed, "Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall enter in,"—shall stand wide open to receive them; an entrance shall be administered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; through the streets whereof, which are of pure gold, as it were transparent glass, they shall ride in triumph, till they come to the throne of his Majesty, where "the Ancient of days sitteth, whose garment is as white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne is like the fiery flames, and his wheels as burning fire," &c. Dan. 7:9, 13. Then shall the Son of God come to him, and taking his new bride in his hand, shall present her to his Father, and bespeak him in some such language as this: "These are they which come out of great tribulation, who have washed their robes white in my blood; these are they which have kept the word of my patience; these are they that overcame by my blood, and by the word of their testimony. Thou gavest them me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scriptures might be fulfilled. I have given them thy

word; and the world hath hated them, because they were not of the world, even as I was not of the world. O righteous Father, for these I opened my mouth, and for these I opened my sides and my heart; for these was I mocked and scourged, and blindfolded, and buffeted, and crucified; for these I wept, and sweated, and bled, and died. Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world," &c. Rev. 7:14; 3:10; 12:11; John 17:6, 12, 14, 24. &c.

Then shall the Father rise from his throne, and say unto them, Come near unto me, my sons and my daughters, that I may kiss you: see, the smell of my children is like the smell of a field, which the Lord hath blessed. Then shall he call for crowns to put upon their heads, and bracelets upon their arms, rings upon their fingers, palms of victory and sceptres of royalty into their hands, and appoint them their several thrones; the mansions which their Lord went before to prepare for them; upon which they shall be placed, that they may sit, and live, and reign with Christ, their heavenly Bridegroom, for ever and ever; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. And so shall they ever be with the Lord.

X. I come to the tenth and last word of comfort, the saints' blessed cohabitation and fellowship with the Lord; "so shall we ever be with the Lord." This consequence of Christ's coming is the perfection and crown of all the rest; cohabitation, and fellowship with the Lord, together with the extent and duration of it.

Now cohabitation, or being with the Lord, containeth four glorious privileges. I. Presence. II. Vision. III. Fruition. IV. Conformity.

I. The first privilege which being with the Lord implieth, is presence. The saints, after their triumphant reception by Christ into his glory, shall ever be where he is. The scriptures abound with expressions of this nature; appearing in God's presence, Psa. 42:2; Col. 3:4;

standing before him, Luke 21:36; abiding in his tabernacle, dwelling in his holy hill, Psa. 15:1; yea, dwelling in him, and he in us, sitting upon his throne, and following of him wherever he goes, John 17:24, and 14:3, Rev. 14:4, and 1:5, 6. A glorious privilege certainly; for it is the purchase of Christ's blood, the fruit of his prayer, and one of the great ends of his coming in person at the end of the world, that his saints may be where he is; dwell in his family, be as near him, as rationally they can desire; ever stand before him, 1 Kings 10:8, and enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with him. If the queen of Sheba accounted it the happiness of Solomon's servants, that they might stand continually before him, and hear his wisdom; how much rather may we proclaim them happy, thrice happy, whose feet may stand within the gates of the New Jerusalem; for behold, a greater than Solomon is here, even he, of whom the psalmist sings, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore," Psa. 16:11,

II. Another privilege is vision. The saints shall not only be where Christ is, but they shall enjoy the beatifical vision; they shall see and behold that, which the seeing and beholding of will make them blessed for ever.

Now there are six beatifical objects in heaven; 1. The seat and mansions of blessed souls. 2. The glorified saints. 3. The elect angels. 4. The glorified body of the Lord Jesus. 5. God in the Divine essence. 6 All things in God.

1. The first vision which the saints shall see, is the seat or habitation of blessed souls, the mansions of glory, which our Lord hath purchased for his redeemed, and which he went before to prepare for them, John 14:2; the third heavens, 2 Cor. 12:2, the palace of the great King. A glorious place certainly, for therefore it is called paradise, Luke 23:43, 2 Cor. 12:4, and Rev. 2:7, to set forth the beauty and pleasantness of the situation; that as the paradise wherein God put man in his innocency, was the beauty and delight of the whole nether world; so heaven, the place which God hath

prepared for man restored to perfection, is the beauty and glory of all the upper regions, the top and perfection of the whole creation. Behold, the outside of this stately palace is very glorious, beautified, and adorned with all those bright and glittering luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars; what think you is the inside? Consult that description which the Spirit of God hath made of it in the Revelation. Surely, heaven will as much exceed the description of it in glory, as the bodies of the saints in the resurrection shall exceed in beauty these vile bodies of ours, when they are resolved into dust and rottenness. What shall I need say more? Heaven is a place as beautiful and glorious as the wisdom and power of God could devise to make it, that it might be the royal palace of his own residence. That august and magnificent fabric which the proud Babylonian tyrant stood boasting over, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Dan. 4:30, was but a prison or hovel in comparison of this building of God, "that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. 5:1. Those words are proper only for the mouth of God; Is not this the New Jerusalem which I have built for the house of the kingdom and for the glory of my majesty? What David spake of the temple, that little type of heaven, "The house that is for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent of fame and of glory," &c. must be infinitely more august and magnificent in the antitype; this the glorified saints shall behold, and it will, beyond conception, be marvellous in their eyes.

2. They shall see the glorified saints, all the elect of God that ever were in the world, from Adam until the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is a glorious sight to see the king, and all his peers and nobles in their parliament robes, with crowns and embellishments of honour, sitting in their state and order; this is a sight which every one covets and crowds to see. What then will it be to see the King of saints, with all the redeemed ones of God in their robes, washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and crowns of gold upon their heads, and palms of victory and triumph in their hands! a parliament all of kings and priests, every one of them shining forth "as the sun, in the

kingdom of their heavenly Father," Matt. 13:43. The sun when it breaks forth out of a cloud, and displays its refulgent beams in full lustre and brightness, what a glorious creature is it! and with what a beauty doth it gild and adorn the world! O my soul! what a sight will that be when I shall see a heaven full of suns, scattering their rays of glory through all those celestial regions! There is another scripture which makes the glory of this vision yet more splendid and radiant, every one of the glorified bodies of the saints shall be made conformable to Christ's own glorious body, Phil. 3:21. The glory of the Father shines forth in the Son, and the glory of the Son shall shine forth in the saints; he in his Father's glory and they in his Surely the luminaries of the first magnitude in the visible heavens, the sun and moon, will be turned into darkness before the glory of this vision. They shall shine as so many Christs in the kingdom of their Father, that will be a glorious vision indeed! And then too, the communion and converse with the saints in heaven will be as sweet to the taste as the vision of them will be glittering to the eye; there will be heaven in both. Behold! their fellowship and converse here was so sweet that David could say, All my delight is in the saints that are in the earth, and in the excellent ones, Psa. 16:3. David could take no pleasure in the company of any in the world, but only in God's holy ones, who were beautified with his image. Oh what will their communion and fellowship, think you, be in heaven, when they shall be totally divested of all their sinful corruptions and natural infirmities; when there shall be such a perfect harmony amongst the saints, as if there were but one soul to act that whole assembly of the first born? When there will be nothing in them to converse with but pure grace; grace without mixture, grace and nothing else but grace? Yea, not pure grace only, but perfect grace; when every grace shall be in its perfect state, and have its perfect works. Now the saints are like an instrument out of tune, jarring and disharmonious; when one is alive, the other is dead; when this is hot, the other is cold; when one is ready to give, the other is not fit to receive the communications of grace. But oh, when all the instruments of glory are alike strung, and equally tuned, what sweet rapturous harmony, what heavenly music will they make.

And there too it will be no small security to the mutual love of the saints, that in heaven they shall be set beyond all possibility of being mistaken in one another's condition. Here below, how easily and how often are we deceived! Behold a Judas amongst the disciples, whom none of them could discover, but only their Lord; "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil," John 6:70. Oh dreadful, Judas a follower of Christ, and yet a devil! a disciple, and yet a devil! a preacher, and yet a devil! fast and pray, and yet a devil! do miracles, and yet a devil! cast out devils, and yet a devil! Oh dreadful mistake! And such mistakes, when discovered, oh what a shame! what grief! what perplexity of spirit do they occasion amongst God's upright ones!

But now are the saints in heaven delivered from all danger and fear of such charitable errors. There shall be no hypocrite in heaven, upon whom the saints can lose their love. Hypocrites shall be all locked up in one infernal dungeon together, that they may never deceive any more, Matt 24:51. What an access of joy will this be to the communion of saints in glory!

It may be asked, whether or no in this blessed vision the saints shall see one another with a distinguishing sight; that is, see them so as to know them under such relations and respects as once they stood in one to another in this imperfect state? Whether Abraham shall know Isaac as once his son, and Isaac know Abraham as sometime his father? Whether the husband shall know his wife, and the wife her husband, as once such that have drawn together in the same conjugal yoke? Whether kindred shall know their gracious kindred, and friend his friend? Whether the godly minister shall know his gracious people that were of his particular flock, and the flock know him as once standing in that ministerial relation to them.

This, I say, is a question which seems neither difficult nor fruitless to be resolved. Probability, without doubt, falls upon the affirmative, and that whether we consult reason or scripture.

Reason saith, It is very likely we shall know them. Behold here in this dark region, what quick and admirable recoveries of things past, do the senses of the body and faculties of the soul make sometimes. The eye can distinguish its wonted objects after many years' separation; the memory can presently recall the face, and voice, and gestures of an intimate friend, after sleep, which is death's image, yea, after twenty years' absence, or more.\* At the resurrection, the soul, I make no question, will know its own body at the first sight; proportionably, in the state of glory, must the mutual knowledge and remembrance of old relations be more quick, lively, and, if I may so say, intuitive, according to the admirable and glorious capacity which they shall then be invested with. Make then but a just allowance for the vast disproportion between the regenerate state on earth, and the glorified state in heaven, and you may rationally conclude the affirmative.

And if we consult scripture, it votes no less for the affirmative than reason doth. Did Peter, and James, and John, know Moses and Elias at our Lord's transfiguration, whom they had never seen? Matt. 17:4; and shall not the saints know one another at the first view, whom they knew and mutually conversed with, while they were here on earth? Surely the knowledge of the beatifical vision shall excel the knowledge of Peter and John, as far as the state of glory excels the state of grace? 1 Cor. 13:12. Did Peter and John know Elias on the mount, whom they had not seen, and shall not Peter know John, and John Peter, whom they had mutually seen.

Again, the scriptures tell us, that Dives in hell knew Abraham and Lazarus in heaven, Luke 16:23; shall the reprobate have better eyes in hell, than the elect of God have in heaven? Shall Dives know Lazarus, and shall not Lazarus know Paul and Peter?

And again, the scriptures tell us, the poor saints on earth shall know their rich benefactors when they come to heaven, how else can they receive them, in what sense soever, into everlasting habitations? Shall the saints know one another upon the account of a temporal



alms, and shall they not know one another upon the account of spiritual offices performed one for another?

And again, Paul dignifieth his Thessalonians with those glorious titles, "his hope, his joy, the crown of rejoicing," his glory and joy, and that "in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," 1 Thess. 2:19, 20. Could they be all this to the apostle in the resurrection, and he not know them and be able to distinguish them from all other saints of God that shall stand on Christ's right hand at that day? It cannot be.

Ministers should so preach, so live; parents and governors so educate and govern their children and families; as that they may mutually rejoice one in another, and for another, in heaven. It cannot but add much to their blessedness and joy in heaven, and be matter of praise and glory to God to all eternity, especially over such as to whom God hath made us instrumental, either to their conversion or to their edification; while in this vale of tears, here we mourned and wept bitterly, when we kissed their pale lips and cold cheeks, when we followed the corpse to the grave, and laid them down in their cold beds of dust; but there will be joy and glory, with infinite compensation, when we shall see and say, Oh, here is my spiritual father, who begot me to Christ, under whose ministry I drew my first spiritual breath; how sweet are such acknowledgments here! Certainly they are the richest rewards of God's despised and persecuted servants and ambassadors here on earth; oh what will it be in heaven, when grace shall have put on its royal apparel! Oh what a joy to parents, to see the dear child that got into heaven, as it were, before its time! and the child to embrace the parent, Oh this is my father, my mother, my grandfather, my grandmother, that travailed with me the second time, till they saw Christ form in my heart; oh blessed be God that ever I saw their faces on earth, and now shall see them for ever in heaven! And so for friends, Oh this was my soul friend, this was a brother, that a kinsman, who loved me with a spiritual love, a heavenly love, that loved me into Christ, to heaven, to this glory I now possess.

We may not presume to speak definitely in cases not clearly stated by the holy scriptures; but this we may with safety and modesty conclude, that if such a mutual knowledge of godly relations in heaven may contribute any glory to God, and any addition to the joy of the saints, the absolute perfection of the glorified estate will not permit any doubt about this matter; surely, if our natural affections of love, and delight, and joy, be not extinguished in heaven, but perfected, it cannot but add to the elect mother's joy, to see her elect infant now adult in glory; and so for other nearest relations, will it not be some accent to their hallelujahs to say, This was my precious yoke-fellow, this my holy parent, this my gracious brother, kinsman, friend, with whom I had sweet communion on earth in holy duties? We went to the house of God as friends, &c. Especially, when it may be added, whom God made instrumental to the pulling me out of the infernal lake, where the devil and his angels are tormented for ever, and for the bringing of me into this place of rest and glory! Thanks be to God for ever and ever.

If it be objected, doth not this distinct knowledge of our elect relation infer a distinct knowledge also of the saints' reprobate relations in hell? And may not that be a vision of as much terror as the other of rejoicing? I answer, No; and that upon a twofold ground.

First. It stands with the analogy of faith, to believe that all those affections which imply defect or imperfection shall be totally abolished in heaven, as inconsistent with the glorified estate: "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes," Rev. 7:17; 21:4.

Secondly. We answer, that there shall be such a perfect conformity of will between God and the saints, that there will be no dissent in the least. It shall not be then, as it is now, to the no little embittering of their present estate, first by sin, and then by grief for sin, but what pleaseth God shall abundantly please them. This the saints pray for here, but there shall they be fully possessed of it; here it is their duty, but there it shall be their reward. The saints in glory would have nothing otherwise than God would have it; so that now, to the full

and perpetual silencing of this objection, I answer, that the glory of God shall so perfectly swallow up all private personal considerations, that, I am confident, it is no breach of charity to say, that the believing husband shall fully admit the justice of the damnation of the unbelieving wife, the holy parent in the damnation of the stubborn and ungodly child, &c. God's will is the law, and his glory the triumph, of the heavenly inhabitants.

Oh let parents, and ministers, and governors, and tutors, and yoke-fellows, brethren, friends, &c., be but as good now as Dives was in hell; I mean, let them be but in as good earnest here as he was there, that their relations may never come into that place of torment; and if they do wilfully cast themselves headlong into that irrecoverable gulf, it will be no grief of heart to them when they come to heaven: but even as God himself, they being then swallowed up in God, they will even laugh at their calamity, and mock when they see their condemnation.

3. Another vision which the saints shall have in heaven, is, that of the angels; they shall see those glorious, ministering spirits, those flames of fire, the angels of God, by what names or titles soever they are dignified or distinguished in their hierarchical orders; and not so only, but have sweet and heavenly converse and communion with them.

In what way and manner this mutual converse and communion betwixt the saints and angels in glory shall be managed, is not determinable by us poor mortals, until this mortal shall put on immortality. But whatever the way or manner be, this we may be sure, that the communion and converse with the angels in heaven, will be no small augmentation of their happiness, and of their joy; if we consider their angelical perfections, especially those two of knowledge and zeal; therefore they are called in scripture flaming fire: flames, for brightness of illumination, and fire, for the ardency of their love and zeal.

Oh what rare notions and experiences will the angels be able to communicate to the saints in heaven, having ministered about the throne of God from the foundation of the world, and been sent forth continually to manage the great affairs of the world, but especially of the churches! The apostle tells us, they are beholden to the lectures read in the assemblies of the saints, for some insight into the mystery of Christ in the gospel, Eph. 3:10. Oh how ready and able will they be to pay their debts, with an abundant interest, out of the immense volumes of knowledge which they have treasured up! The communications of their love, their holiness, their zeal, their heavenliness, &c.; what united flames will they make when they be joined in communion and converse with the graces and perfections of the saints!

If it be objected, Is there not enough in God to fill the saints, to the vastest capacity? What need then of starlight when the sun shines? Yea, may not the saints conversing with angels and one another, be thought to be a diversion from the supreme Object of light and love? To this I answer, No; and the reason is, because all the perfections and excellences which are in the creature, are as so many beams and emanations, leading the eye of the beholder to the sun itself, the body and fountain from which they do spring; or as learned and holy men's commentaries and expositions are to the holy scripture, which do neither detract from, nor add to that immense volume of truth, but serve only to illustrate it, and to render it more intelligible to the dark and imperfect understanding of the creature. Surely such an infinite full text as God is, will stand in need of some marginal notes, as it were, to help the reader. As Christ is said, in the days of his flesh, to be the Interpreter of the Father unto us, John 1:18; so may the angels be to the saints in heaven. And such is all the glory of heaven; yea, so is the human nature of Christ himself, now in glory, the great Expositor of the Divine essence; a mirror or glass, wherein we come to see God more clearly and fully.

4. Another object of the beatifical vision is, Christ himself, or the glorified human nature of the Lord Jesus; Christ, in his human

nature, exalted to the right hand of his Father, the highest seat in glory, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," Eph. 1:21. This is the highest beatifical object in heaven—the sight of Christ as man. It was the great design which the Lord Jesus had in redeeming them with his blood; "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," John 17:24. And surely this will be a glorious sight indeed; behold, of the glory of Christ in his transfiguration, it is said, that his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light! If the glory of his transfiguration were so excellent, what will the glory be of his exaltation! If the glory of his foot-stool were so excellent, how will the glory of his throne excel in glory! If he appeared so bright upon an earthly mountain, how transplendent will he appear upon Mount Sion, the mountain of God, that heavenly mountain! If such were his lustre in his state of humiliation, before his passion; what beams of majesty will shine from his face, in his state of glorification, when he is to receive the reward of his passion! Behold, there appeared then, with him, only Moses and Elias; but what will his glory be, when all the patriarchs and prophets, all the apostles and martyrs, the whole society of the saints, with the whole host of the mighty angels, shall begird his throne, with their hallelujahs and joyful acclamations. That vision of Christ on earth did fill Peter and the disciples with wonder and astonishment, even to an ecstasy, so that the text tells us, he knew not what he said, Mark 9:6. Oh with what joy and rapture shall the sight of Christ in glory fill the glorified saints, when their faculties shall be so raised, that they shall understand what they see, and profess what they understand! Surely Peter and all his fellow-saints will then say, and know what they say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

It were good sometimes in our thoughts to compare the abasement of Christ and his exaltation together; to set them, as it were, in columns one over against another. He was born in a stable, but now he reigns in his royal palace; then he had a manger for his cradle, but

now he sits in a chair of state; then oxen and asses were his companions, now thousands of saints, and ten thousand thousands of angels minister round about his throne; then, in contempt, they called him the carpenter's son, now he obtains by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels; "for to which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" Then he was led away into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, now it is proclaimed before him, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" then he had not a place to lay his head on, now he is exalted to be the heir of all things; in his state of humiliation he endured the contradiction of sinners, in his state of exaltation he is adored and admired of saints and angels; then he had "no form or comeliness, when we saw him, there was no beauty that we should desire him," now the beauty of his countenance shall send forth such glorious beams, that shall dazzle the eyes of all the celestial inhabitants round about him; once he was the shame of the world, now the glory of heaven, the delight of his Father, the joy of all the saints and angels; once he was the object of the reprobate's scorn and the devil's malice, now they shall be the objects of his most righteous vengeance; he shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure; he that was called the deceiver, shall now be adored as the Amen of the Father, the faithful and true Witness; a man of sorrows then, but now the mirror of glory, Prince of peace; then accounted a servant of servants, now he shall be called the Lord of lords, King of kings; then they put upon him a mock robe, but now he shall be "clothed with a royal garment down to the foot, girt about the paps with a golden girdle;" the feeble reed shall now be turned into a massive sceptre of gold; his cross of wood into a throne of glory, and the crown of thorns into a crown of stars. In the day of his abasement he was the butt and scorn of his enemies, spoken against by every profane fool, but now in the day of his exaltation, his enemies shall be made his foot-stool; yea, thrones and principalities being made subject unto him; surely the very prints of his hands and feet, and the holes that were bored in his sides, shall be so many signal marks and trophies of victory, and Thomas, set now above all doubting, may sing in triumph, "My Lord and my God." And lastly, the Lord Jesus himself,

instead of his desertion, the lowest step of all his abasement, shall solace himself for ever in the vision and fruition of his Father and of the blessed Spirit, and instead of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he shall triumph, "I and my Father are one; thou Father in me, and I in thee."

These are some crevices through which we may have a glimpse of the glory of our Lord's once crucified body; the full discovery of it you will never be able to make, until you come eye to eye, to see and enjoy it in the kingdom of heaven.

A second consideration, evidencing what a glorious beatifying object the glorified humanity of our Lord Jesus will be in heaven, is, the personal and hypostatical union which the human nature hath with the Divine nature of the Son of God; the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in Christ bodily, Col. 2:9; that is, in his body: the fulness of the Divine essence dwells in the human nature, and is, as it were, transparent through his flesh. Therefore he is called, "The brightness of the Father's glory," Heb. 1:3; the brightness or refulgency of God the Father's glory; not only in reference to his Divine essence, the second person in Trinity, but as he is the Word incarnate, as he is God-man; because all the beams of Divine majesty do shine forth with a most resplendent brightness in his flesh. The Divine nature and essence is the fountain and body of glory, from whence all brightness and splendour doth beam and issue. And as a glass or mirror receives into it the beams of the sun, such a mirror is the flesh of Christ to the Divine essence, wherein all the glorious beams of Divine wisdom, holiness, mercy, goodness, and truth, &c., do shine forth. This is the mystery St. Paul admireth; God was manifested in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16, or, God made visible in a body of flesh: Jesus Christ was nothing else but visible Deity; and so he was even while he was on earth; "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," John 1:14. The flesh of Christ was but, as it were, a veil, through which men might look upon the Sun of righteousness; which, open and naked, would have been too vehement and strong for mortal

eyes. We saw his glory; there did beam forth, at times, such rays of glory through the body of Jesus Christ, that whoever had not wilfully shut his eyes, might have discovered him to be more than man, and been constrained, with the centurion, to cry out, "Surely this was the Son of God;" "We saw it," saith the apostle of himself and the rest that were Christ's witnesses. Now, if by virtue of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, so much of God was conspicuous in the flesh of Christ while he was on earth, how much more abundantly do the emanations of Divine glory dart themselves forth through the human nature, now that that human nature is glorified and exalted to the right hand of the Father in heaven!

Go forth then, O ye daughters of Sion, behold your heavenly Solomon, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him in the day of his solemn nuptials, when he was married to his heavenly bride, in the day of the gladness of his heart, Cant. 3:11. Anticipate, O my soul, that beatifical vision, by spiritual and fixed meditation; get into heaven before thy time; and so much the rather, not only because of the eminency of the object, but because of the saints' interest in this object,—Christ in glory and Christ ours; as much of the eternal brightness of the infinite God, as is possibly visible to an eye of glorified sense, will be seen in the human nature of Christ; that will be glorious: and as much of that glory made ours, as the creature can be capable of; this will be joyful. To see all this glory that is put upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to appropriate it, to see it mine! And how mine? Why mine by purchase; he that is the object of this vision was the purchaser of it; he bought it for me; yea, he purchased both it and me by his blood: it for me, and me for it. The sight of his glorified body was the fruit of his crucified body; as once he gave his crucified body to my faith, so now he gives his glorified body to my sight, to be my portion and my bliss for ever! O blessed vision, wherein, indeed, Purchaser, and purchase, and purchased, do all meet together, to suffer no more separation for ever! This surely will make the saints sing their hallelujahs, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and



hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen," Rev. 1:5, 6.

5. I come now to the fifth object in the beatifical vision, which is the Divine essence. This is denied by some, and well it may, if the assertion were so to be understood, that the essence of God is to be discerned by the bodily eye, though in its glorified capacity; for whatever the excellency be which God will put upon the glorified bodies of the saints in heaven, yet still they retain the nature of corporeal beings; and God's essence is so infinitely pure and spiritual, that the angelical nature compared with it, would seem to be but of a material and corporeal constitution; so that to affirm God to be visible to an organical eye, though glorified, would seem to imply one of these two things,—either that the Divine essence hath matter and corporeality in it, or that the glorified sense were made altogether immaterial and spiritual; either of which is repugnant to the analogy of faith.

But it will be asked, What profit is there then of the beatifical vision? or, What advantage have they who see God in heaven, above the saints who see him in the evangelical vision? I answer, much every way. Concerning which, not to say any thing that exceeds sobriety, and yet to say somewhat that may help our understandings, I would ascend to the highest pitch of what my weak, narrow apprehension can reach unto of this blessed vision, by these several steps and gradations.

(1.) We shall know more of God than ever we understood of him in this life either by faith or by the highest revelation that ever God made of himself to our souls; more than ever the best of the saints discovered by faith or Divine manifestation; yea, we shall know more of God than ever the most holy of the patriarchs, the most illuminated prophet, the most seraphic evangelist, the most inspired secretaries and amanuenses of the Holy Ghost, on this side heaven did ever know. Yea, what Abraham, the friend of God; Jacob, who at one time had God in his arms, and at another time had his Peniel,

the facial vision of God, Gen. 32:24–30; Moses, the favourite of heaven, to whom God is said to talk as a man speaketh to his friend, Exod. 33:11, and to know face to face, Deut. 34:10; Elijah, who wore, as it were, the keys of heaven at his girdle, and could open and shut them as he pleased, James 5:17, and at length ascended thither in a fiery chariot; Daniel, who had the visions of God, Dan. 10:5–8; John the Evangelist, whose Patmos was turned into a paradise, where he had and wrote the revelation of Jesus Christ; and finally, holy Paul, who was rapt up into the third heaven, and heard things ineffable, 2 Cor. 12:4; what these, I say, or any of these knew of the most high God, was but as the primer learning of children, to the vast readings of the greatest masters of learning, in comparison of that of God which shall be known to blessed souls. The least of God's infants, going from their mother's womb to the grave, shall know more of God the first moment it entereth into glory, than the profoundest divine in the church of God could by study or revelation ever attain to in this world; this is much.

(2.) The glorified saints shall know more of God and the Divine nature, than Adam did in paradise. He was prevailed upon by the tempter, to affect a greater and higher degree of knowledge than he had, above what the Creator saw fit to bestow; more than belonged to his nature and state: he would have known as God knows; that is, to full satisfaction and complacency.

(3.) We shall know God as much as the angels in heaven do. They behold the face of God, Matt. 18:10. Glorified saints are with the angels, and are said to be like angels, and equal to the angels, as angels, angels incarnate. And what inconsistency is there to the analogy of faith, to conceive that the saints shall enjoy as full a prospect of God in heaven, as the angels themselves do? for though their bodies be united to their souls, yet shall not their bodies be any hinderance to their soul's vision of God; since the soul dependeth not now upon any corporeal organ of the body, inward or outward sense; and the body shall be refined, by the power of Christ in the

resurrection, to such a spiritual perfection, that it is itself even of an angelical nature.

In a word, the saints shall know God to perfection, though not to infinitude; they shall see him so as to repose themselves in him with full complacency and delight, so that they shall say they have enough. In this life, some of the saints, at some times, have had such manifestations of God, as have made them weep as bitterly, as ever any under desertion, crying out, Lord, withdraw thy glory, else the vessel will split, and I shall dishonour God. And it may justly be our wonder, how it should be otherwise to the saints in the other world; a wonder that a created, finite faculty should be able to bear the weight of glory which filleth the infinite object, and not be destroyed by the immensity of it; especially since we read of the very angels themselves, who in a vision of somewhat an inferior nature to that facial vision in glory, for the exceeding brightness of it, are said to veil their faces and their feet: their faces, as having their eyes dazzled with the exceeding brightness of his glorious appearance; and their feet, as abashed in the apprehension of their own meanness and imperfection, in comparison with God's incomparable and incomprehensible perfections.

In order to a full reception of these Divine manifestations of God, which shall be furnished in heaven, we learn from the scriptures that the glorified understanding shall be adorned with a six-fold perfection. 1. Spirituality. 2. Clarity. 3. Capacity. 4. Sanctity. 5. Strength. 6. Fixedness.

[1.] The first perfection of the understanding shall be spirituality: it shall be spiritualized. Spiritual it is now; as spiritual is opposed to corporeal, though not as spiritual is opposed to natural. The soul is now forced to be a caterer for a body of flesh, to provide things that are necessary for the sustenance of the animal life; it busieth itself to satisfy the appetites of hunger and thirst, &c. If it can redeem a few hours for actions more proper and peculiar to it, it is so clogged, so pressed down with the body's infirmities, as that it soon drops down

to the earth, and is drawn aside to attend the impertinencies of this present life. But when it shall be joined to an animate, spiritual body, and itself, in its glorified capacity, then it shall be wholly taken up with objects spiritual and heavenly, and made, as it were, connatural to them, elevated by the light of glory, to the vision of God.

[2.] By virtue of this supernatural influx of the Divine object, the faculty shall be brightened and cleared. There is now upon this mirror of the understanding many spots and stains, whereby the vessel is defiled; the breath of the world, and the steam of corruptions from within, do so sully this crystal glass, that it cannot receive into it the beams of light which shine upon it; the more impurity the dimmer the vision: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matt. 5:8. Why now in glory all these stains and spots shall be perfectly wiped off, and the vessel shall be made a clear, burning glass, to receive and contain the glorious rays of Divine excellency, which emit themselves into it. Hence this vision of God is called by divines, a clear, distinct, and perfect sight of God; not as if the blessed did see all whatever is in the Divine essence, but as opposed to our present dim, obstructed vision, 1 Cor. 13:12; so that it perfectly takes in what the Divine will is pleased to reveal, without any the least obstruction or diminution.

[3.] The faculty in glory shall be widened and extended to a vast capacity. Now the understanding is large, there is no bounding or limiting of it, it is higher than the heavens, and deeper than the sea, and wider than the world. But in glory, the understanding shall be widened to a vaster capacity, to take in, not the little things of the creature only, but the infinite God; I do not say infinitely, but apprehensively. It is worth our notice to compare those two expressions of the beatifical vision, the one, where it is said, "The angels do always behold the face of God," Matt. 18:10; the other, where the angels and saints, the number of whom is said to be, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, are described surrounding God's throne, Rev. 5:11, they are round about the throne. Compare them together; they always behold the face of

God, and yet are round about; and it hints us this blessed notion, God hath no back parts in heaven: God to the blessed inhabitants there is all face, and they are always beholding it. How should not so transplendent an object confound the spiritual organ, with the immense splendour and glory thereof, but that the object itself doth sustain and nourish the faculty!

[4.] Another perfection is sanctity; the understanding shall be made perfect in holiness. In the state of separation, the spirits of just men are made perfect, Heb. 12:23; and surely the soul loseth nothing of its sanctity, by being united to the body in glory. Now of all Divine qualities, none doth more capacitate the soul for the vision of God than holiness; witness that holiness is called the Divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. Holiness assimilateth unto God; and the perfection and delight of vision is founded in conformity: it is so in the evangelical vision, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" according to the purity of the heart is the vision of God. What a glorious vision of God will that be, which the perfection of holiness shall advance the soul unto, when the glorious object shall both enlarge and purify the faculty.

[5.] Another perfection is strength. The vision of God doth fortify the understanding. In nature, the more vehement and intense the object, the more it hurts and crusheth the sense; the vision of God, though but under a veil, did undo the prophet Isaiah. Holy Daniel's vision, though but a vision, did dissipate him, and left him without strength, Dan. 10:7, 8. St. John's vision, though but the darker side of the beatifical sight of God, slayeth him out-right for a time, "I fell at his feet as dead," Rev. 1:17. The souls of the blessed in heaven, are set beyond all fear of such a surprise of glory; while God fills their faculty, he doth also sustain and perfect it, by means whereof the faculty shall never be weary of its object, but shall behold it with fresh vigour and delight.

[6.] Another perfection is fixedness. In the state of grace the mind is exceeding slippery, like that of little children, whom you cannot fix.

We lie upon spiritual objects, as upon a bank of ice, where we slide, and slide, and never leave sliding, till we be in the dirt; and this comes to pass by reason of those mixtures of impurity which are in these natural minds of ours; the objects are pure and simple, but the faculty is wofully clogged with "superfluity of naughtiness," James 1:21; hence the lubricity and floating that is in the understanding, like the sea itself. But now in glory all that mixture is abolished, so that there is nothing remaining to divert or distract the faculty; yea, the object itself shall unite the faculty to itself. Oh blessed and blessed-making vision! Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou vision of God! Truly beatifical for ever! Eye truly hath not seen, &c.

Before we leave this vision, let us make some use of it.

Use 1. Study holiness. There are two visions of God mentioned in scripture. The vision of God in grace; the vision of God in glory.

But of both these visions, holiness is the indispensable qualification; without holiness there is no admission into heaven. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth," Rev. 21:27. And when entered, without holiness there is no vision, for "without holiness no man can see the Lord," Heb. 12:14. And holiness doth dispose the soul for this blessed vision three ways. By removing the distance between God and the creature; by assimilating the soul to God; by causing mutual delight and complacency between them.

Sin is that great gulf which separates between God and the creature; and surely sin sets a vaster distance between the holy God and a sinner, than there is between heaven and hell; yea, than there is between God and the devil; that is, between God as a Creator, and the devil as he is a creature.

Until this distance is removed, there is no possible access for the soul to God. This partition wall is broken down when holiness is set up; and according to the degree of purity is the degree of vision; as the soul passeth from one degree of holiness to another, so it passeth

from one state and degree of vision to another; "We all beholding as in a glass," &c, 2 Cor. 3:18. The purer the glass, the brighter the vision.

Christians, as then ye love God's face, look to your holiness. God loveth holiness more than he loveth the creature; God's holiness is his glory, "glorious in holiness," Exod. 15:11. He accounts it the most radiant jewel in his crown royal, the very varnish and beauty of all his glorious attributes; for the love he beareth to which, he loveth to see the very image and likeness of it in the creature. Oh love that, dear souls, which God loves so much, and loveth to see in his saints, who are therefore called saints from their holiness. There is nothing can make you so beautiful in God's eye as holiness; because in your holiness he seeth the reflection of his own beauty; "Thou wast comely through the comeliness which I put upon thee," Ezek. 16:14. God cannot fail to love his own likeness wherever he seeth it. O love the Lord all ye his saints, and "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," Psa. 30:4. Let your hearts leap within you as oft as you think what a holy God you have; who, if he can but see true holiness in your faces, will admit you to see that holiness which is in his face for ever. Love holiness, I say, but be sure it be such a holiness as God loves. There is a holiness in the world, which is but a thing like holiness, but is not so; moral righteousness, a harmless innocence, a sober retiredness from sensual excesses, a pretty ingenuity, a readiness to do offices of love; a negative religion, concerning which you may better tell what it is not, than what it is. And there is a superstitious holiness, which to the evangelical holiness it no better than what the ivy is to the oak, and hath eaten out the very heart of it; a brat which, as one saith, the devil hath put to nurse to the romish church, which hath taken a great deal of pains to bring it up for him; and it hath brought in no small revenue, as to herself, of worldly riches and treasure, so to him of souls; for such holiness is the very road to hell; the followers of antichrist fill up the greatest part of it. But hear our Lord plainly telling you, "Except your righteousness exceed the best of these, ye cannot enter," &c. O christians, get you a copy of grace out of the scripture records, those

court-rolls of heaven, which may be seen and allowed by God, and angels, and saints.

But as for such as are without holiness, to them the apostle sends this word expressly, there is no room for them in heaven. And indeed what should such do there? There is nothing in heaven but what is holy; holy angels and holy saints, and above all a thrice holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Rev. 4:8; the beauty of whose face is holiness: alas! there is nothing for them to see or hear, but what is an abomination to their souls! Holy words, yea, the very word holiness, they now stop their ears at it; it is vinegar to their teeth. Holy ordinances, they cannot bear them; the impurer the ordinance is, the better they like it. A holy God, they say of him, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to depart from before us," Isa. 30:11. Preach as much as you will of the Merciful One of Israel, and of the Bountiful One of Israel, &c., but tell us not so much of the Holy One of Israel. Molest us no more with messages of holiness, and the severities thereof; yea, they say not only so of God, but they say as much to God to his very face. They say to the Almighty, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job 21:14; they say so by interpretation, if not in words at length. He that can expound actions as well as language tells us they say so; yea, they are not ashamed of the very language; it is a piece of their gallantry to profess to them that reprove them, or but meekly admonish them, I say, to answer with scorn enough, "We are none of your saints." Proud scorner, what art thou then? An unclean swine; yea, an unclean spirit, incarnate devil, a profane scorner, for thy speech betrayeth thee? What need further proof? Put such an herd of swine into heaven, and verily they would need no other damnation. But God made heaven for better purposes than to be a hell for the haters of holiness. Tophet is prepared of old for them, Isa. 30:33; and thither they must be cast, with the reprobate angels; down they came, when they had laid aside their holiness, and shall such maligners of holiness and holy ones ever come there? Let them not fear, the company of saints shall never molest them; they would have none of their society on earth, and they shall have none of their



society in heaven. Possibly, with their elder brother Dives, they may have a prospect of heaven, where they may see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:23; and, with others of the reprobate family, they may see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, Luke 13:28; but that vision will be so far from beatifical, as that it will be the aggravation of their damnation; for as it follows, "They themselves shall be thrust out:" cast out with as much contempt and violence, as ever they themselves cast the saints out of their societies. Certainly that vision will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the backslider in heart be, indeed, filled with his own ways, Matt. 25:41. They banished God and his saints out of their company; and now they themselves shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, and his saints, "and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. 1:9.

Use 2. Labour to see God on this side glory, to begin your vision on earth, which shall never cease in heaven. Indeed, the vision in grace and the vision in glory are one and the same vision; the object is the same—God; and the faculty is the same—the eye of the soul: they differ only in two circumstances.

First. In the medium. Here we see in glasses, the works of God, the creatures are a glass, "The heavens declare the glory of God;" and the providences of God are a glass, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge," Psa. 19:1, 2. Every day's experience, and every night's experience, is a glass wherein much of God is to be seen. And the gospel is a glass, wherein we all, as in a mirror, behold the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. 3:18. And lastly, the glass of ordinances, preaching, and prayer, and sacraments, all these are glasses; and meditation is a glass. Faith is another way of vision; by faith Moses saw him who is invisible, Heb. 11:27. All these, I say, are glasses wherein we may see God. But, alas! the glass takes away from the object, and darkens our vision; it lets in some light, but keeps out more; but in heaven we shall see without glasses, face to face; the Lamb shall be the light in that temple.

Secondly. These visions differ in their degree of light and clearness; here we see in part, this is but a partial vision; that in glory is extensive, a full-eyed vision, as one calls it, a most ample perfect vision; we shall know as we are known. The understanding here is dark, dim, and narrow; there clear, and vastly capacious.

Now, that which this word of exhortation calls you to, is, to exercise yourselves much in the vision of God here, and to that end I would have you make much of your glasses; be thankful for them. How many churches of Jesus Christ have their glasses taken away or broken! Robbed and spoiled of all their precious things, and have not so much as a glass left, wherein they might have some glimpses of Divine light conveyed into their understanding! O christians, before it be so with you, make use of your mediums; "While you have the light, walk in the light," &c. Bless God that the sun is not totally gone down upon your prophets, Mic. 3:6, nor the day dark over them; God hath done that for you in as much wonder, and more mercy, that once he did for Joshua, caused your sun to stand still in your Gibeon, &c. O bless God for it! make his praise glorious.

Make then good use of your mediums, attend reading, and hearing, and prayer, and sacraments, while you have them; take heed of that dangerous notion, of being above ordinances; it is a precipice upon which many have stumbled into darkness. Oh that it may not prove utter darkness, the blackness of darkness for ever!

While, however, you use ordinances, take heed of resting in, and of resting contented with ordinances: an ordinance of God, without the God of the ordinance, what an empty glass is it? Oh then, let your hearts echo with David's; "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." What he meaneth by the face of God, he expounds himself, "That I may see thy power and thy glory in the sanctuary;" namely, the powerful and glorious manifestations of God in his ordinances, the manifestation of all his Divine attributes and excellences. Oh when it pleaseth God, by the Spirit, to beam in gospel-truth from the very face of Christ, not into the head only, but into the heart, with such a glorious light, that

it seems to be the same in the soul as it is in Jesus, the very glory of God, 2 Cor. 4:6, so that the soul stands wondering at the light, when in his light we see light, Divine truth, by a Divine irradiation; not by borrowed mediums and natural representations, but only by its own native brightness and lustre, 1 Pet. 2:9.

This, this, christians, is gospel-vision, which, as it doth necessarily tend to, so it will infallibly end in the beatifical, facial vision in glory. How rare are those christians that do experience this vision of God in the ordinances; yea, how rare are they that do thus breathe, and pant, and cry out for the living God, with the holy psalmist! Hence darkness, hence deadness, hence formality, a powerless profession hath wofully spread itself upon the face of christianity, yea, upon the very reformed parts of it. Let christians stir up themselves, and let their souls press hard after God, when they come to ordinances, or else this very thing will be worse to them than all the evil that befell them from their youth until now, it may provoke God to withdraw even the evangelical vision from them here, and, without great repentance, to deny them admission to the beatifical vision hereafter. They that will not seek God's face in grace, shall not see God's face in glory.

6. The last object of the beatifical vision is, all things in God. God is the universal library of all truth, whether Divine or natural; yea, all truth is Divine, and doth emanate from the God of truth, in whom it is; there to be read as in its original, and lieth open for all the whole university of those heavenly academics to peruse. There the saints may read to the full the mystery of the blessed Trinity, how three in one, and one in three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God blessed for ever! That thrice-glorious, and, till we come to heaven, not to be fathomed mystery, the wonder and adoration of the believing world, that immense ocean, over which so many daring spirits have assayed to fly, have fallen in, and been drowned: that burning light, unto which so many presuming to approach too near, have scorched their wings, and lost both their eyes and themselves together; that sacred ark, into which too many presumptuous Bethshemites, having dared,

over-boldly to look, have been smitten. What is essence. And what is person. And how they differ. How the Father begets, and the Son is begotten, and how the Holy Ghost proceeds from both; how they are distinguished by their order, their personal properties, and manner of working upon the creature; how the Father worketh from himself, the Son worketh from the Father, and the Holy Ghost worketh both from the Father and the Son. These will be lectures which shall be read in the Trinity itself in glory, and that in a most clear and intelligible notion.

Then shall the saints be able to understand the mystery of the incarnation of the second Person, the Son of God, that mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. 3:10; of godliness, because it transforms sinners into saints; and mystery, because it containeth so many deep and mysterious wonders in it. The blessed, blessed-making mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Why the second Person in the Trinity, rather than the first or third, should be incarnate. Why he should take the nature of man rather than the nature of angels, and that when it was at the worst? How he could take the nature of sinful man, and yet not take the sinfulness of his nature. The union between the Divine and human natures in the Lord Jesus, in one person? That mysterious union between the Lord Christ, the Head, and all believers, the true members of his body; what it is, and how they are made one with Christ, as the Father and the Son are one; this precious mystery, I say, shall then be made manifest, "At that day you shall know" both what it is, and how it is, "that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you," John 14:20, &c.; then, and not till then. How he that is every where, filling heaven and earth with his presence, should yet become a child. How he that made the law, should be made under the law. How the Ancient of days should become an infant of moments. How he that was begot before all time, should be born in the fulness of time? Eph. 3:10. These, and a thousand difficulties more, whereinto the very angels desire to peep, 1 Pet. 1:12; and for some imperfect discoveries, whereof they are glad to be beholden to the lectures read in the churches by their earthly angels, the ministers of the gospel, Eph.

3:10; these, I say, shall be clearly read and understood in that original wisdom wherein they were first conceived.

That profound and dark mystery of election, why God should choose one, and leave another? Why first the Jews should be a church, and the gentiles, aliens, should afterward be adopted into the covenant, and the Jews broken off and cast out? That God should break open the heart of one rebellious sinner by efficacious grace, and leave another to perish in his transgressions? These, with all the other dark and profound mysteries of God's decrees, shall then be made clear. And lastly, that mystery of wickedness and abominations, and why God hath suffered him so long to reign, and to usurp so great a part of Christ's purchased and promised possessions, with all his witchcrafts and sorceries, whereby he hath deceived the nations, they shall all be discovered and brought to light, to his eternal shame and confusion? That God should shine out only upon some few spots of ground, with the light of the gospel, and leave the rest in palpable darkness

The creation of the world shall then be more clearly understood in the cause, than now it is in the effect; how all things were made out of the first matter, and that out of nothing. Those hard mysteries of Providence, which do now try and exercise the faith and patience of the saints, Rev. 13:10; 14:12. Why they that are best should speed worst? "That there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked." And again, "That there be wicked men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous," Eccl. 8:14; insomuch that "now we call the proud happy, and they that work wickedness are set up, yea, they that tempt God are even delivered?" Mal. 3:15. Why the worse cause should many times have the better success? Why God should suffer his dearest children to be abused and insulted over, when wickedness in the mean while triumphs securely. Why wickedness should be set up in high places, and innocence should be trod under foot. Somewhat of these riddles the word doth now interpret unto the saints, blessed be God, to command their silence and submission to God; but "then shall they

return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not:" all this will be then seen in God to infinite satisfaction.

The grand article of the faith, the resurrection of the dead, being then already past, shall be fully understood; how the body, after thousands of years, through unutterable varieties of mutations and vast dispersions into all the quarters and corners of the world, should be revolved back again, bone to bone, and skin to skin, and every dust to its own dust, shall then clearly be expounded in the mirror of the Divine understanding, and exemplified in the counterpart thereof, the bodies of the aints. Then it shall no longer "be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead," Acts 26:8. All the hard places of scripture, that vex the profoundest divines, and make the believer sigh out his "How can I understand, except some man should guide me?" Acts 8:31, shall then be expounded in the original text of eternal verity, without looking into any other commentary; and oh what joy will that be, to understand the whole Bible without study! Then the meanest understanding shall be able to confute all the depths and fallacies of jesuitical seducers, whereby they have darkened the truth, and led away the willingly ignorant into their pernicious errors, and doctrines of devils, 2 Pet. 3:17.

In a word, all the arcana of nature, and all the mysteries of philosophy, properly so called, with all occult things under the sun, and the highest speculations of this nether orb; in the painful and knotty disquisition whereof the greatest masters of secular learning have tired themselves almost to distraction, and upon the gaining of some little supposed satisfaction, wherein they have so much gloried, and insulted over other men—shall now be made easy and familiar to the saints, the very A B C of heaven, and only need a cast of their eyes, either as such knowledge came from God, or as it leads them unto God again.

For the use of this last branch of the heavenly vision, it may serve to moderate and restrain the inordinate curiosity of our natures, to be

looking into dark and hidden mysteries. We inherit both from our first father and mother, a desire after forbidden knowledge; they desired a knowledge above the capacity of their natures; they would know as God knoweth; but by such an ambition of knowing more than they ought, they forfeited what they had. And while they aspired to be as God who made them, they became like the beasts that perish. It was the presumption of the Bethshemites that they would be prying into the ark, and they died for it, 1 Sam. 6:19: and there is a pride and wantonness in our nature, which sets us a prying into the hidden and secret counsels of God. Adam's children are yet sick of his disease; they would fain be as wise as God, and know all things. But the "secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do them." And in these revealed things there is matter enough to exercise our studies, had we Methuselah's lease of life sealed to us. In the revealed things of God, there is so much yet unrevealed, that we might search and dig into them, Prov. 2:3, 4, with the addition of a promise to encourage industry, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," Hosea 6:3; so much, I say, that when we have travelled many years in the disquisition and search thereof, we may sit down and complain, our lives are too short for our work, and truly confess, that the greatest part of what we know is nothing to what we are ignorant of. Oh that upon those studies christians would lay out their time and spirits! "proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," Rom. 12:2. And for your encouragement and satisfaction keep this consideration alive upon your hearts, we shall not always be ignorant; secret things shall not always be secret: the time is coming when mysteries shall be revelations, when we shall be able to read that in the original, which we cannot now so much as spell out in the translation, nor in any measure understand with the help of all our commentaries.

And so it may abundantly satisfy the insatiable desires of inquisitive spirits, into the deep mysteries both of creation and redemption; that "when Christ shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory." And then shall the veil be taken away, and they shall see God, and all

things in God's face which their souls desire to see; the soul shall be filled with variety of all desirable knowledge, that may any way tend to its perfection. This may satisfy; save that it may set their souls a longing for that day, and cause them to cry out with the bride, "Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

III. The third privilege contained in being with the Lord, is fruition.

A third privilege implied in the saints being with the Lord, is fruition: vision in glory is accompanied with fruition: and this is that which makes it truly beatifical; whatever glorified saints see, they do enjoy, else this vision would not differ much from report, nor that state of glory from a heaven in a well-drawn landscape. The very outcasts, it seemeth, have a prospect of heaven, but to their torment, they themselves being thrust out, Luke 13:28.

Now, fruition consists of a tenfold ingredient or property. 1. Proprietorship. 2. Possession. 3. Intimacy. 4. Suitableness. 5. Satiety, or fulness. 6. Freshness. 7. Present. 8. Fixedness. 9. Reflection. 10. Complacency.

1. Proprietorship. Whatsoever the saints see in heaven is their own. God saith to Abraham now in the heavenly Canaan, what he once said to him of the earthly; "Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee do I give it," Gen. 13:14, 15. Whatever is within that vast circumference of heaven it is Abraham's, and all his spiritual seed's for ever. Now David may tune his song of praise a key higher; and instead of, "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, Ephraim and Judah," &c., Psa. 60:7, 8, he may now sing, God is mine, and Christ is mine, and the Spirit is mine; all the elect angels are mine, and all the whole congregation of the first-born mine, all the glory of heaven is mine: and so may the least of the saints in heaven triumph, all is mine; and what pleasures, or riches, or honours, or glory, or joys, are in the presence of God, they are all mine. They did sing so while yet in the valley of tears; or they might



have sung so, John 1:12; faith gave them a title, a right to heaven, but the blessed vision giveth them now real interest and right in heaven; and they need not now fear to call it theirs. They might have said, My God, my Christ, and my Comforter, here below, but one thing was to be done first; sound scripture evidence was to be cleared out, and sealed up to their souls, but some or other defect therein did not seldom check their confidence, and damp their joy for a time. But now in glory, all is theirs beyond all dispute; their evidences were seen and allowed at their first admission into heaven, and now mine, mine, is their song and triumph to all eternity; and God is not ashamed to be called their God. Truly he was not ashamed to be called so, even when they had but too much cause to be ashamed of themselves, and gave God too much cause to be ashamed of them. But now God is so far from being ashamed of owning them, that he rejoiceth in them, and glorieth over them.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. 2:11; to own them for subjects, friends, co-heirs with himself in glory, his bride. And they claim their proprietorship in him as such. The King of saints, Rev. 15:3, with his Father's name written in their foreheads, chap. 14:1; they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, chap. 14:4; owning themselves as his beloved, his redeemed, kings and priests unto God and his Father, chap. 1:6; yea, as the Lamb's wife, chap. 21:9. They have a title in all the elect angels of God: they be still their angels, Matt. 18:10, as ready to do them brotherly offices as ever, and take more complacency in their company and in them than ever, by how much more purified and angelified they are, than when they lay among the pots of the earth; now made like themselves, fellow-angels, as it were, as well as fellow-saints.

They have proprietorship in one another, although they may know some of the saints under the notion of natural relations; yet do these all cease there, as now being retired into the first and chief root and spring-head of Divine relation; children of one heavenly Father, in whose house they are altogether, embracing one another in purest

communion and communications of love; each saint not more himself than his fellow-saints.

In a word, the place where the saints are met together, never to part, is their own; not a strange country, where they see one another as strangers and pilgrims do sometimes visit and comfort one another. Heaven is not a borrowed palace, where they are admitted by courtesy, to celebrate a festival for a few days or years; but the saints in heaven are at home now, in their own house and kingdom, 2 Cor. 5:2.

2. Possession. The saints have not only proprietorship in heaven, but possession of heaven. When their dearest and sweetest Lord left the world, and ascended to his Father, they took possession of heaven in him, as in their great Representative and Head, John 14:2. But when they ascend to him, they take possession of it in their own persons. They had livery and possession given them by the Father, upon the consummation of their marriage with his dear Son Jesus Christ, their royal Bridegroom. And it was done in the presence of the eternal Spirit, the public notary of heaven, 1 John 5:7. All the holy angels standing by as so many witnesses; so that God himself could not make heaven surer to them than he hath made it.

While the saints were upon earth, heaven was theirs, but it was only in reversion, and they counted themselves blessed in that, Matt. 5:3. But now reversion is turned into possession; the saints hold nothing in heaven by reversion, that title ceaseth there. All the beatitudes in heaven are present possession; God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit; angels, and saints, and all the glory of the upper world, are so many possessions: the saints are possessed of God, and possessed of Christ, and possessed of the Holy Ghost, and possessed of glory: as, on the contrary, the damned in hell are possessed of the devil, they are possessed of hell, and of utter darkness, and of the worm that shall never die, &c. O dreadful possession!

Hope was once their tenure; "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie," &c. Titus 1:2; Rom. 5:2; and this hope was very precious unto them, a little heaven upon earth; save that now and then some clouds of fear and doubts did interpose between heaven and their dim eye, and so eclipsed their vision. But faith and hope did set them down at the gate of heaven, and then, with Moses, died in the mount, and took leave of them for ever.

And if faith was so precious to them then, what is sight now? If hope made their hearts, not seldom, leap for joy, how doth possession now fill them with joy unspeakable and glorious, above all hyperbole of expression.

If any should be so critical as to object, In heaven the saints live in the hope and faith of the continuance of heaven! We make use of the apostle's maxim for answer; "Hope seen is not hope," Rom. 8:24. All the glory of heaven is seen, and all is present, there is no futurity in heaven; heaven is but one point of eternity; the saints have all beatitudes, and all at once in God; now abideth indeed faith and hope, but then possession, 1 Cor. 13:13. "They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 8:11. The kingdom of heaven is theirs, and they shall sit in it. All the precious privileges of the gospel, which cost Christ so dear, are now perfected into full possession. Adoption is now perfect; now they are the sons of God, and they know what it is to be the sons of God. Justification is now complete: sanctification is now at perfect age. In a word, all their hopes are now their inheritance. This is fruition!

3. Another ingredient, of which fruition doth consist, is intimacy. Proprietorship and possession are not sufficient to constitute fruition. Mutual converse will not serve the turn, without intimate communion: communion, not with one another's persons only, but with one another's spirits; this is fruition, when friends are possessed of one another's hearts, and one another's spirits. This is the great beatitude of heaven, even vital vision, with all the beatifying objects thereof; mutual in-dwelling, and mutual in-being. God dwells in the

saints, and the saints dwell in God: it was so here, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:16. The saints' love to God is now made perfect, without a figure, and as their love is, so is their mutual in-being, perfect; "I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one," John 17:23: perfect according to the supreme Exemplar; "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," ver. 21.

The angels and saints in light, behold they dwell not with one another only, but in one another; they inhabit, as it were, in one another's hearts. That primitive congregation, Acts 4:32, was a lively type of this royal congregation of the first-born, they are all with one accord in one place, Acts 2:1; so these, one place holds them all, and one soul animateth and acts them all. The whole multitude of saints in heaven are all of one heart and of one soul.

4. Another ingredient in fruition is fulness. There is in heaven good, and there is enough of it: fulness to satisfaction; "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures," Psa. 36:8. The joys of heaven are compared to a feast, consisting of all imaginable rarities, both of meats and drinks; fatness expressing the delicacy of food; and the river of Eden, for so the word signifieth—of the river of thy Eden, the delightful sweetness of their drink, infinitely beyond all that is fancied by the poets, of the nectar and ambrosia of the gods; which, indeed, was but an imperfect notion of the joys of heaven, filched out of some fragments of scripture by those blind naturalists. But of such deliciousness doth this marriage supper consist of, and there is plenty of them, plenty even to satiety, they shall be satisfied with the fatness, and filled with those wines upon the lees well refined. The Master of the feast will say to his guests, then in the feast, what he said here below in the figure. "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved," Cant. 5:1.

And it must needs be so; for every one of the glorified inhabitants doth enjoy a whole heaven, with all the felicities of it, as much as if

heaven had been made but for one individual person. For although the church of the first born in heaven consists of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, yet hath no one the less for what others do enjoy. As in nature, every beholder hath a whole sun, and the whole heavens to himself, with all their splendour and influence, as much as if there were but one man in the world. In terrestrials, indeed, it is not so; there what one man hath, another hath not; and where many share, every single man's portion is the less; whence it is that Mine and Thine fills all the world with quarrels and confusions. But there is no such thing in heaven; the multitude of heirs do not divide or lessen the inheritance; the reason is, because there are no particles in essentials; every one hath all, and none the less for what another enjoyeth. Yea, the more, because the joy of one is the joy of all; every heir of glory enjoyeth not only what himself hath, but what his coheir hath too; so that upon the point each saint enjoys as many heavens as there be angels and saints in heaven: a blessed mystery of multiplication.

The saints shall have as much glory as they are able to stand under; hence we read of a weight of glory, a weight that would utterly sink and crush them into nothing, were there not an arm of omnipotence to sustain them, and to make them bear it, as their crown, not as a burden, with ease and delight.

5. Suitableness is another ingredient in fruition, without which both the former would be a burden, and not a bliss; suffering rather than fruition.

Earth is a place of mixture and composition, somewhat suitable, and somewhat unsuitable; some pleasure, some vexation: hell and heaven are the extremes. Hell is a place of unmixed torment; nothing there but what is opposed to the will of the damned; nothing present but what the reprobate would not; nothing absent but what he wisheth for. Heaven is a place of unmixed joy; nothing wanting of all that blessed souls can rationally desire; nothing absent, the absence whereof can possibly give any check to their fullest delight.

All the beatitudes of that upper world, both in their nature and degree, shall be most agreeable to the constitution of the saints: in their nature, they being suitable to the nature of the saints, to the heavenly principles of purity and holiness communicated to them from the Divine nature; both the objects and subjects of glory are of one and the same constitution. This must needs produce inconceivable delight.

And as suitable are all the joys of heaven in their degrees and proportions to the heavenly capacities; neither too much, nor too little, nor too heavy, for the saints to bear; nor too light, neither too vehement, nor over-flat. The weight of that prepared glory shall not be heavier than those blessed souls shall be well able to sustain with exceeding pleasure, neither shall it be so light, that they shall be able to say, I could bear more. The light of glory shall not hurt the organ by an over-vehement brightness; neither yet shall there be the least dimness in it to abate the delight of the acutest sense.

The language of the New Jerusalem shall be one and the same throughout all the streets thereof, not a speech deeper than the meanest saint can perceive, Isa. 33:19, nor a barbarous tongue that they cannot understand, shall be heard there, but the mother-language, Gal. 4:26, intelligible and easily to be understood and spoken by the meanest inhabitant, shall be the language of the upper Canaan, that all may hear, and all may understand, to their unspeakable satisfaction.

The music of heaven shall be sweetest melody to every ear; and though it consists of the rarest strains and most delicate airs that ever ear heard, yet it shall not transcend the skill of the lowest capacity; but the meanest chorister in the heavenly temple shall bear his part with the most seraphic angel, in the higher or lower praises of the most high God in most perfect symphony.

The infinite variety of the greatest delicacies wherewith the table shall be spread, where Abraham and all his spiritual seed shall be

feasted, shall consist of relishes suitable to the palate of every guest there; what is fancied of the manna of the nether heavens, shall be fully verified of the manna of the third heaven; it shall give that taste to every palate which every palate likes best; yea, all the saints shall be but of one and the same taste, the delight of one is the delight of all.

And though, possibly, there may be several orbs of glory, "for as one star differeth from another in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead," yet shall not the inferior orb envy the superior, nor think itself too low; there shall be no such voices heard from the mouth of any the meanest inhabitant: Oh were I but in such a superior orb I should be happy; such a mansion would please me better. This would destroy fruition, and make heaven cease to be heaven; but no such whisper is to be heard, no such thought in that holy mountain; because the glory of one is the glory of all, and every saint is as happy in another's fulness as in his own; yea, it enjoyeth its own and the other's glory too: the narrowest capacity is widened by the other's fulness; the joy of one is the joy of all. In a word, the saints shall live in love, and have all in Him who is all, not so much as wishing their fellow-saints less; or themselves more, nor any thing in that whole world of felicities otherwise than it is. This is fruition!

Oh that all who have this hope in them would study to begin this life here below!

6. The next property of this fruition is fixedness. There is scarce a comfort which we possess in this movable world, that we can find the same at the year's end, or at the month's end, which we fancy them to be at the beginning; all our most beautiful objects, how quickly they change colour! "In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down, and withereth," Psa. 90:6.

The world is compared to a stage, where the scene is quickly changed, and another face of things doth suddenly appear, 1 Cor. 7:31; 1 John 2:17; but heaven is a place of fixed and immutable

beatitudes. Heaven is still of one fashion, their work the same; "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come," Rev. 4:8. And their joy the same; "They do always behold the face of their heavenly Father," Matt. 18:10. They are in God, like God, "Yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever; with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The saints in heaven are so far from mutation, that there is no shadow of it. Here on earth our choicest delights meet with changes; created beings show their face awhile, then hide them again; their colour goes and comes. Godly acquaintance is sweet, but the farewell is bitter; we call at the door, and sip of the cup, but we cannot stay by it. The best of our time is but a seventh part of it, and how wofully full of diversions! Such is our heaven on earth; but our heaven in glory, or our glory in heaven, is not so. God is the only unchangeable object of the soul; there the soul stays, and sucks, and drinks immeasurably, and yet there is not a drop less in the object.

7. Another property is assurance. Assurance is one of the choicest ingredients in fruition: to enjoy heaven in all the beatitudes thereof, and to know I do enjoy it, this is the beatitude of all beatitudes.

It fareth with many a poor believer here in the wilderness of desertion, as it did with Hagar in hers, Gen. 21:16–18; they sit down to die, for want of water, when there is a well before them, yea, many a well of living water, the precious promises, out of which wells of salvation they might with joy draw water, Isa. 12:3, and drink and forget their sorrows, but alas they see them not, until God open their eyes, and then they can go and fill their bottles, and drink, and cause others to drink also, Gen. 21:19. This is often the state of the way! Oh but now, in the country, the land of fruition, there the saints see, and they know they see; they love, and they know they love; yea, they are beloved, and they know they are beloved. They are bathing themselves in the rivers of pleasures, and they know where they are, and what they do. All tears are wiped from their eyes, and they know who wiped them off with the kisses of his mouth. They are safe, yea, and they are sure; they are blessed, and they know they are blessed.



The spouse is now got into the throne, the bosom of her beloved, the King of glory, and there she singeth, "Here I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see sorrow no more for ever," Rev. 18:7.

In a word, all the acts of love, and joy, and delight, in heaven, are acts of highest assurance, without the least mixture of doubt and uncertainty. There is no fear in this love, because love being now perfected, hath cast out fear.

8. Freshness The joys of the glorified saints are always fresh from the spring-head, that makes them so sweet: what we receive by the mediation of creature-conduits, loseth much of its native delicacy.

Adam and Eve were created in the prime ripeness and bravery of the human nature, in perfection of beauty and strength; and such shall all the saints be restored, of what age and state of body soever they lay down in the grave; the children of the resurrection shall rise, in the morning, in the most sparkling beauty and vigour of youth, and in that posture shall be for ever.

We would fain espouse all our worldly beatitudes to ourselves, and write eternity upon them; but how brave and sprightly soever they appear in our first apprehension of them, they quickly grow old and fastidious, and signify no more than so many impotent grasshoppers. But now there is no such thing in heaven; there is eternity, but no old age; the joys of heaven are always young. The flowers of paradise, of which the saints' posy is made, do neither wither nor change colour; the drops of their morning dew standing thick upon them, like orient pearls, preserve them in their perpetual verdure and odoriferousness.

God himself, the fountain and spring of all those glorious beings, is not a moment older than he was from all eternity; and therefore all their fresh springs being in God, their roots feed their branches with continual and unchangeable moisture and influence. God, who is an object of infinite fulness, doth always feast the glorified saints and

angels with fresh visions of delight and wonder. Yea, God himself, the fountain and spring-head of all those glorious beatitudes, doth wash their roots perpetually with fresh moisture and influence.

9. All the joys of heaven are present.

Glory borrows that immense title of the God of glory, (what the Jews say of the ten commandments,) "is, and was, and is to come," Rev. 1:4; a name that is not to be divided or taken asunder, but must be spoken all together in one word. So is, as that it was; so was, as that it shall be; so shall be, as that it is. Eternity is a single point, such are all the blessednesses of the saints, were, and are, and shall be: so past, as to come, and so to come, as present; this is a mystery, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

10. Out of these nine ingredients or properties, there ariseth a tenth, the very top of all, delight and complacency; and this makes heaven to be heaven indeed, the joy of the Lord, even the same joy which God himself possesseth; the same for kind, though not for degree.

Behold faith in the glorious Redeemer doth, at times, raise the soul of the poor believer to a marvellous high pitch of joy and rapture; "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though ye now see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. 1:8. The expression is very full; faith brings the soul in love with an unseen Christ, and fills the heart with joy; not ordinary joy, such as men do easily express upon all occasions, but unspeakable; the heart conceives such joy that the tongue cannot utter; yea, it is not to be uttered by the tongue of men or angels; it cannot be spoken, it is ineffable; and that is not all, it follows, it is glorious; and our translation gives it an addition very emphatical, full of glory. And yet that reacheth not the top of this joy, for the Greek signifieth not glorious only, but glorified: faith fills the heart with glorified joy, a joy that rivals, as it were, the joy of the glorified saints; a joy which sets the soul for the present above itself, and puts it into heaven before its time. O christians, if faith, which must not enter in within

the veil, can transport the soul into such ecstatical raptures, what can vision and fruition do? Oh the mountings of mind, the rapturous joys of heart, the solace of soul, which glorified saints possess in the beatifical vision!

The soul shall live in joy, and be filled with delight in the mirror of all delights; love and joy shall run in a circle, and mutually empty themselves into one another; love shall dissolve into joy, and joy shall resolve into love, a river, an ocean of unmixed complacency, wherein the soul shall bathe itself for ever.

IV. The last privilege contained in being with the Lord is conformity.

Even in the evangelical state below, conformity is the fruit of vision; vision produceth assimilation. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. 3:18. Surely the heavenly vision will beget so much more full and perfect conformity, by how much the mirror is more vital and energetical. The apostle reacheth forth this blessed truth, and the reason of it together, as a known doctrine.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." 1 John 3:2; that were dignity enough for a poor sinner, one would think, but that is not all; it is well, and it shall be better. God hath laid out much upon us; but how much glory he hath laid up for us we cannot conceive; "it doth not yet appear what we shall be!" This only we know, "that when he shall appear, we shall be like him!" That is infinite honour indeed! But how doth he prove it? Why, he proves our conformity from our vision, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him." Even in the days of his flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16, the flesh of Christ was a veil, through which the Deity of Christ did appear, God was conspicuous in the human nature; if it were so, upon earth, how much more will it be verified in heaven! The glorified body of our Lord will be as transparent glass, through which the glorious beams of Divinity will display themselves to the eye of the blessed beholders: and in the beholding whereof,

there will go forth a transforming virtue, which will change them into the same image.

"We shall be like him." Like him in our souls; like him in all the faculties of our souls: our understandings shall be like the Divine understanding; we shall know all things, past, present, and to come, so far as shall be for our good.

The will is made like unto God's will, not a fountain indeed, but a large vessel full of goodness and holiness. The saints shall be holy as God is holy, pure as God is pure, perfect as he is perfect; they were so on earth, truly; now in heaven they are so, perfectly; the will shall be as holy as it would be, as holy as the holy God would have it be, so holy that there will be mutual joy and delight between God and the saints in the contemplation of their holiness. In heaven there is but one will between God and the saints, and that will is God's.

Moreover, the saints are like God in their affections. They love what God loveth, they hate what God hateth; their joy is God's joy; they rejoice in God and in his glory; they rejoice in Jesus Christ, their Bridegroom, and he rejoiceth in them. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee, Isa. 62:5; that was but the word spoken to the church at her espousals, what must the joy be upon her wedding-day!

The saints are like God in their memories. They shall have holy memories; their memories shall be like the ark of the covenant, which was overlaid with gold, wherein, according to the apostle's inventory, were the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant. The ark of the memory now overlaid with glory, likewise shall contain the manna, that angelical food of word, sacraments, promises, ordinances, providences, experiences, wherewith God was wont to feed the soul, while in the wilderness of the world. Aaron's rod that budded; God's fatherly rod of correction, which though "for the present seemed not joyous but grievous, yet afterwards it yielded the peaceable fruits of

righteousness, in them that were exercised thereby," Heb. 12:11. And the tables of the covenant: the two covenants, which God made with man; the one of works, the witness of God's holiness and perfection; the other of grace, the witness of God's goodness and commiseration.

In a word, the entire image of God, which was imprinted upon the soul in the first creation, and reprinted upon it, though in an imperfect character, in the new creation, shall now be perfected to the life in the regeneration; the saints shall be as like God as ever children were like their father; Eph. 5:1, so that there will be nothing but looking and liking the one upon the other.

Anticipate that holy gaze now, O ye children of the most high God; be often taken up in the beholding and contemplation of the face of your heavenly Father; behold, will it not quicken you to duty? comfort you in your droopings? cause you to overlook the contempt of the world with an holy pride, and even be the dawns of glory upon your faces, whereby some line and lineaments of beauty shall be added daily to that blessed draught begun already against that day?

Once more, before we go off from this pleasing contemplation, we add, the very bodies of the saints shall share in this blessed conformity, as well as the soul. It had its degree in the first paradise; man had an evident superiority in the very make of his body, beautiful, upright, active, no such visible picture of God, in heaven or earth, as man was; not sun, moon, nor stars, not earth, and sea, or the visible heavens themselves, have so much of their Maker in them as the body of man; his very corporeal senses had much of God in them, one might easily have known who was their father

But now in glory, saith the apostle, "Our vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body," Phil. 3:21. The glorified body of Christ shall be the glory and the wonder of heaven; and our body, saith the apostle, shall be like his, conformable unto his glorious body. What a mirror of glory will the saints be, in their souls conformed to the Divine nature, and their body conformed to the glory of the human

nature of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory; Oh wonderful, astonishing transfiguration! Well said the apostle, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Surely eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can it enter into the heart of man, &c.

This will be an infinite compensation to the saints of God, for all their holy endeavours of being like to God; that as obedient children they have been followers of their heavenly Father, Eph. 5:1; and for all the reproaches and abasements they sustained from a reprobate world, because of those endeavours.

Oh, how much better are the reproaches of Christ than all the grandeur and applause in the world! Be of good cheer, all ye servants of God, the time is coming when you shall not repent of your conformity to God and Christ in holiness, but shall ever sing, I thank the Lord who gave me counsel, and taught me to choose the better part, which shall never be taken away from me.

I come now to the completion and perfection of this last fruit and consequence of Christ's coming, the saints' cohabitation and fellowship with the Lord, namely, the extent and duration of it in this particle, "ever." "We shall ever be with the Lord." Ever, a little word, but of immense signification! a child may speak it, but neither man nor angel can understand it. Oh who can take the dimensions of eternity? The whole space between the creation of the world and the dissolution of it, would not make a day in eternity; yea, so many years as there be days in that space would not fill up an hour in eternity. Eternity is one entire circle, beginning and ending in itself. This present world, which is measured out by such divisions and distinctions of times, is therefore mortal, and will have end, 2 Cor. 4:18.

If eternity did consist of finite times, though ever so large and vast, it would not be eternity, but a longer tract of time only; that which is made up of finite is finite. Eternity is but one immense, indivisible point, wherein there is neither first nor last, beginning nor ending,

succession nor alteration, but is like God himself, one and the same for ever.

But why? What good have the saints done to merit such an everlasting of bliss.

Nay, christians, if we go that way to work, we shall be sure to fall short of this ever. A heaven proportionable to the saints' merit is not to be found; unless it be amongst their antipodes in the regions of darkness, if there be a heaven there: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. 6:23. Hell is the wages of sin, pure and proper merit; but heaven is a free, gratuitous gift, a gift in regard of us, though merit in regard of Christ. Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So that if it be demanded, Why heaven must be for ever? The first and only account of merit is the blood of Jesus Christ; the saints were once a lost generation, that had sold themselves and their inheritance too, and had not wherewithal to redeem either. But they had a near kinsman, even their elder Brother by the mother's side, to whom the right of redemption did belong, who being a mighty man of wealth, the Heir of all things, undertook to be their Goel, and, out of his own proper substance, to redeem both them and their inheritance; them to be his own inheritance, Eph. 1:10, and heaven to be theirs, 1 Pet. 1:4. And therefore, had heaven been but a moment short of eternity, the Redeemer had over-bought it, for he laid out the infinite treasures of his blood upon the purchase, Acts 20:28. Had not heaven been infinite also, as in value, so likewise in duration, it had not stood with the justice of God, or his love to his Son, to have taken so dear for it.

It is this "ever" in the text, which makes heaven to be but an even bargain: were there a period of time, though after the revolution of never so many ages, wherein the purchase were to expire; price, and inheritance, and heirs, were all lost for ever.

A second account may be in respect of the saints themselves. The saints have immortal souls, souls that have an "ever" stamped upon them; an ever, an enduring ever, though not a beginning ever, or rather an ever without beginning; of such an ever the saints were incapable: God himself, with holy reverence be it spoken, could not have bestowed such an ever upon the creatures, for then he must have made them so many gods; and this God could not do: but now an ever, an enduring ever, God by Divine covenant conferred upon their souls, and will invest their bodies also with at the resurrection, that so eternal beings might be capable of eternal rewards: the wicked of torments, the godly of bliss, both eternal; if there were not this ever upon the beatitudes, as well as upon the persons of the saints, they would be extremely losers by it, and outlive their own happiness

A third reason is, that such a cessation of the joys of heaven would be as inconsistent with the saints' graces, as it is with their beings. God hath beautified their immortal souls with immortal graces, their love abides for ever, 1 Cor. 13:13; their zeal is eternal, their holiness eternal, and all their qualifications for glory are eternal; and can their glory itself be mortal? It were in vain to contend for perseverance in grace, should we admit falling away from glory. Poor saints indeed, if neither grace here, nor glory hereafter, could secure their happiness! If grace, indeed, could be lost in this life, and glory in the future, the foundation of the Lord were not sure, and the saints of all men most miserable! Such a cessation is totally inconsistent with the orthodox faith.

But the main pillars upon which this blessed article of our faith, everlasting life, is built, are the glorious attributes of God: I shall therefore pursue the discovery of this delightful contemplation unto the spring-head.

1. The wisdom of God is the head corner stone, upon which we build the belief of this doctrine, heaven's eternity. Not to recur to any thing already spoken, I shall only take the hint of the psalmist's question,



Psa. 89:47; "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" For the better understanding whereof, we are to take notice, that the rise of the question is an affecting complaint of the prophet concerning the brevity and misery of the present life, in Job's phrase, (Heb.) "Short of days and full of trouble:" in the former part of the verse, "Lord, remember how short my time is." And in this latter part of the verse he doth, as it were, expostulate the case with God, why God would have it so? "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" In which words, although he seem to ask God the question, yet he giveth himself the answer, and the answer is negative—No; God made not men in vain: it is not possible that the wisdom of God should make such an excellent creature as man, the masterpiece of the whole nether world, to no purpose. It cannot be, that God should bring in such a creature only to take a turn or two in the world, and then to disappear, never to be heard of any more! What then? Why thence he doth rationally infer, that certainly in man's creation God had a design upon him, in order to a future estate. And what was that? but what the wise man discovers to us, "The Lord hath made all things for himself," Prov. 16:4, for his own glory: the wicked for the day of evil, to the manifestation of his justice, and the godly for the day of redemption, to the exaltation of his free grace.

But now after all this, should there be a period wherein the flames of hell should be extinguished, or the joys of heaven annihilated; if after the first creation suffered a miscarriage, the second also should prove an abortion; if man should outlive his heavenly paradise, as he did the earthly, though his lease should be made for ever so many lives, this would but aggravate the vanity of his creation. Surely such an improvidence is totally inconsistent with that immense understanding, whose most just title is, the only wise God.

2. Another attribute upon which this beatifical truth standeth is, the veracity and truth of God.

The Father of glory, who best knew what he had begotten, baptizeth the new and spiritual being of the saints, and all its high

prerogatives, with the name of eternity, and of eternal glory, 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10. Everlasting life; fourteen times so called in the New Testament, and once in the Old, Dan. 12:2. Eternal life; thirty times so called by the evangelists and apostles. Everlasting kingdom, 2 Pet. 1:11. Enduring substance, Heb. 10:34. An incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9:25. Pleasures for evermore, Psa. 16:11. A kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. 12:28. An eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. 4:17. Heaven is a weight of glory; both the Hebrew and Chaldee words signify both weight and glory; heaven is made all of massy glory; glory that would be too heavy even for the shoulders of glorified saints, were not underneath them the everlasting arms.

But as God puts forth omnipotence to cause the damned to subsist under their otherwise intolerable pains, for the glory of Divine justice; so, in heaven, he is pleased to exert the arm of his almighty power, to sustain the saints under their inconceivable weight of glory, for the more illustrious manifestation of his everlasting love.

But this is not all; as there is a weight of glory to make heaven as great as the saints can joyfully bear, so that weight must also be eternal, that so the glory may not be too short for them, but every way commensurate to all the dimensions of their souls.

This, this is the witness and testimony which God himself hath given to the saints' inheritance in light; and to show the infallibility of this testimony, the apostle gives that glorious character of God, "God that cannot lie," Tit. 1:2; and that in the very same scripture wherein he makes this glorious promise, "Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised before the world began." Observe it, as if the apostle by the Spirit did foresee what atheism might object, or weakness of faith might call in question—the eternity of heaven. How can that be? Oh yes, saith the apostle, it must needs be so, God who cannot lie hath called it eternal life: cannot—he saith not will not, but cannot lie.

If heaven were but a moment shorter than the measure which the scripture giveth us, the apostle had ascribed to God a mistaken title, God that cannot lie. Upon such a testimony as this from the mouth of God, how securely may the saints lie down in their beds of dust, in confidence of enjoying an eternal rest, after the resurrection?

3. Another attribute which mightily contributes assurance to the faith of heaven's eternity, is God's immutability. The unchangeableness of his counsel and purpose, will set the "ever" of the saints' vision and fruition of God beyond all dispute and hesitation. It was the very design and purpose of God upon the saints, in their regeneration and renewing by the Holy Ghost, which he shed upon them abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, they should be made heirs of eternal life. Did God manifest his eternal purpose to the world, of eternal life, and make such solemn provision for the carrying on that purpose upon the heirs of promise, by interesting the third person in the glorious Trinity, the Holy Ghost, in it, and after all this can heaven become but a peradventure, and the saints' everlasting communion with God prove a scepticism or ungrounded opinion only?

4. Such a supposed cessation of heaven's glory is totally inconsistent with the mercy and goodness of God. That man of God, holy David, begins his psalm of thanksgiving, in this lower choir of saints, with this strain, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever," Psa. 136:1. And having begun in that strain, he can sing no other tune all the psalm over, it is the burden of the song, "For his mercy endureth for ever." And shall we imagine he is now tuning his hallelujahs to a lower key in that celestial choir, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb!

No; mercy in God is not a moral, or mortal, virtue, but an essential attribute, God himself eternal. Mercy in God hath been from eternity, and shall be to eternity; it can no more outlive its objects, "the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory," Rom. 9:23, than it can cease

to be mercy. God is the Father of mercies, and mercy can never go childless; God must exercise the infiniteness of his mercy extensive to all eternity, as well as intensive above all dimensions.

5. The omnipotence of God doth gratify his mercy in this design; for while mercy poureth in this strong cordial of the Lord's joy immeasurably into the vessels of glory, omnipotence doth support and strengthen those vessels, that they split not with their own fulness; it were not else imaginable how created vessels should hold uncreated glory; and if the vessel should run out, or fail, the liquor would be lost.

6. God is eternal, and therefore heaven must be eternal also. In heaven there are no second causes, which are obnoxious to contingency or alteration. All causes there are resolved into the first Being and sovereign cause, where they remain fixed and immutable as that immense Being himself; and because he liveth eternally, they shall so live also. The eternity of God's being lays the foundation of the eternity of the saints' glory.

"The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it," Rev. 21:22; the sun that shineth there by day, and the moon by night, are no part of the first creation, which is to pass away, Matt. 5:18, but "the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Rev. 21:23. There shall not be so much as a post of the old fabric in this new building, to weaken or endanger it. God alone is the roof and foundation of heaven; the very centre and circumference is God. All the arches and pillars of heaven are made of the tree of life, in which no worm can breed, which may corrode or consume the saints' mansions. No moth is there to fret and eat out the long white robes wherewith the saints are adorned; nor thief to break into the palace of the great King, to steal away their crown from them. There is malice enough, indeed, in that Apollyon, the angel of the bottomless pit, and all his cursed crew, to act such hellish villanies, not upon the saints only, but upon God himself, even to pull him out of his throne if they could; but thanks be to God, they are made fast enough in the

lowest dungeon, where they are staked down by a perpetual decree, and "reserved in chains of darkness for ever;" so that the saints need not fear that anti-christian brood shall ever break loose to cast one fire-ball into the walls of the New Jerusalem, or to break open the gates thereof to disturb their peace.

In a word, the manna of those upper heavens, which is the angelical food the saints live on, is not subject to breed worms, which may corrupt their constitution: behold! the worm is only in the nether place of darkness; and yet neither can that eat out any part of the subject on which it feedeth! Oh how sweet would that worm be to the lost, if but once in a thousand years it might eat out but a piece of them, till they were utterly consumed! but, woe and alas! the worm knows only how to augment, but not how to shorten the torments of the damned; but as it is a never-dying worm itself, so is the miserable subject also upon which it feedeth. There is fire in hell, but it is such only as doth nourish its fuel, not diminish it. Whence should this be, but because "the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it?" Isa. 30:33.

And if the justice of God gives eternity both to the torment of hell, and the tormented also to sustain it, how much easier and sweeter is it to conceive that the shining of God's face is both the eternity of the blessed in glory, and of their bliss also.

7. Another attribute is love. Which way should the glory of the saints come to be extinguished, or so much as eclipsed? If such a thing could be, it must arise from a cessation of Divine love, which cannot be supposed. Will God grow weary of their company? Behold! he made them, when he brought them into that state of glory, as perfect as he would have them be; I had well nigh said, as perfect as he could make them, that they might be a meet bride for his only begotten Son; and now behold, he that hated putting away in the fantastical Jew, unless it were in case of adultery, will he give the Lamb's wife a bill of divorce, and put her out of doors, in whom, since her first reception, there was never found the least disloyalty, no not in

thought, but remaineth without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, as immaculate as the elect angels? or must they also fare no better than the angels that kept not their first estate? Must all be cast out for ever, and heaven stand as a house to be let, without a tenant? Were not this more than a "shadow of turning?" James 1:17. Of the Lord and Head of the saints in the days of his flesh it was said, "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end." And is his love less now in heaven than it was on earth? These are prodigious blasphemies, not once to be admitted into our thoughts. Nay, saith God, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. 31:3.

8. Another attribute is justice. The cessation of heaven and hell would utterly destroy Divine justice, and make that cease also for ever. Take away those two tremendous patterns of rewards and punishments, by which the saints here below do justify God, and vindicate the truth of the christian religion against all other religions in the world, and you cut the very sinews of religion, and make the laws of God vain and insignificant; you starve the hope of the godly, and extinguish the fear of the wicked.

Christians, this is the measuring reed of the New Jerusalem, the cube of the heavenly temple, the breadth, and length, and height, whereof none but he that can lay his right hand on the one end of eternity, and his left hand on the other end, hath given unto us; the computation whereof infinitely exceeds our arithmetic, yea, the arithmetic of all the angels in heaven.

Those comparisons of the running out of an hourglass by a single sand once in the revolution of a thousand years, by which computation there would be scarce six sands lessened in the glass since the creation of the world to this day; or, a little bird's carrying away a mountain of sand by one small dust once in a twelvemonth; the emptying of the sea by a drop once in an age, and whatever of the like nature, these are but like the span of an infant to measure the

circle of the heavens, so many empty ciphers without a figure to calculate eternity by, though they may seem hyperboles to our childish capacities; oh who can describe eternity? It is an ocean without a bottom, it cannot be fathomed; a sea that can never be sailed over from shore to shore.

Ever is that which cannot be measured but by itself; ever is that out of which take ever so many ages, and worlds of time, there is not a moment less to come; ever is still to begin, never to end. Eternity is still entire, a spring which fills as fast as it empties; a vast circle, which begins where it ends, and ends where it begins.

And now christians, is this the duration of heaven? Is this, nothing less than this, the measuring line of the saints' abode with God? What! ever with the Lord? Oh the purchase of Christ! Oh the gift of God! Oh the love of the Spirit! How unsearchable are his counsels, and his thoughts past finding out! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

And here might fix a full point to mine own and the reader's labour; but because I find our apostle closing his words of comfort with a word of counsel. "Wherefore comfort one another," &c., give me leave to follow my guide, and before we dismiss this beatifical contemplation, let us inquire a little further what blessed improvement may be made of it, even on this side of eternity!

Use 1. Learn then in the first place, who is the truly blessed man, and wherein real blessedness consists. We see all the sons and daughters of Adam seeking for happiness, but few or none finding what they seek for; all agree in the notion, but they differ in the object. People generally go for happiness to the world's trinity; "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life," 1 John 2:16. But, alas! these have it not to give; men would fain squeeze that out of the world which God never put into it.

Such of the sons and daughters of Adam as have had the candle of the Lord, which was put out by the fall, lighted anew by the Sun of righteousness, are mightily enabled by the irradiation of the Holy Ghost, to discern the airiness and emptiness of all sublunary and elementary happiness; and to make choice of more solid, supercelestial excellences for their chief good; to sing with the sweet singer of Israel, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," Psa. 16:11.

Moses in the Old Testament, and Paul in the New, stand as two pillars of fire, to light men the way to true blessedness. Moses was courted by all the honours, pleasures, and treasures of Egypt, to espouse them as his ultimate and supreme beatitudes, but he shakes them off all, as once Paul the viper into the fire, not less full of poison than that venomous beast was, Acts 28:3, 4. The honour and grandeur of Pharaoh's court came to do him homage; every one in the king's court, for there he was brought up, bowed the knee, and saluted Moses by the prince-like title of the son of Pharaoh's daughter; it is generally thought that he was no less than heir-apparent to the crown of Egypt, Pharaoh having no child but that daughter, and she, having adopted him to be her son from the cradle of bulrushes; yet all this glory did Moses, when he came to years, and able to make his own choice, refuse, by faith seeing what a hollow, insignificant advancement this was. It was not the Egyptian monarchy which could make Moses happy, especially in the terms he must take it; namely, to turn Egyptian, and forsake the society of God's people. No, said Moses, I will have none of it; to suffer with God's people here, and to reign with God hereafter, is a felicity infinitely to be preferred before all the empires in the world.

This temptation failing, next succeeded pleasure, called by the apostle "the lust of the flesh," and impudently solicits Moses. All the beauties of the king's court, delicious fare, ravishing music, beautiful gardens, stately walks, fruitful orchards, pools of water, princely sports and pastimes; in a word, all the delights of the sons of men, the sensual fruitions of an Egyptian paradise; if these can make



Moses happy they are at his service, he may be where he will, and do what he please: oh dangerous temptation! Did it not take? What is the reason? Why, faith here also stepped in to Moses' rescue; Moses by his piercing eye of faith did quickly discern a sad blemish in the face of pleasure, though it was ever so artificially painted.

This offer also thus despised, the mammon of Egypt presents itself to Moses; money may tempt him that is not taken with beauty. What say you, Moses; all the treasures of Egypt attend your highness, ready to make you one of the richest monarchs in the world, for so at that time Egypt was for jewels, gold, silver, precious stones, all the peculiar treasure of kings; the most opulent of all kingdoms round about, the very magazine of the world; Moses need never to fear being poor any more; is not this enough to make a man happy? No, not a Moses; a covetous mammonist might have taken it down with a grateful swallow, such a one as Felix was, that insatiable gulf of riches, as the historian calls him; but Moses, as the papists once said of Luther, could not be caught with money. The reproach of Christ was a mountain of infinitely more valuable, invaluable treasure; esteeming the reproach of Christ, that is, Christ in the promise, or the reproach of the church, which is Christ mystical, 1 Cor 12:12. Oh, saith Moses, let me be counted worthy to suffer reproach for Christ and his people's sake, and I desire no more riches in the world. How so? Moses' faith did clearly outbid all the proffers of Egypt, he looks within the veil, fixing his eye upon the "recompense of reward," Heb. 11:26, and there he discovered such honours, pleasures, treasures, as eye never saw, ear never heard, nor can enter into the heart of man, 1 Cor. 2:9, in comparison whereof all the preferments, delights, and riches of Egypt were but as so many gilded crowns, painted banquets, insignificant ciphers, ten thousand of which in the sum total make just nothing.

Thus Moses turns his back upon the world and all her glittering elements, protesting, as it were, as it is said of Luther, that God should not turn him off with these things; he had weighed them in

the balance of faith, and found them too light to make a chief good of, there wanted something within.

Such an account doth the apostle Paul, that evangelical Moses, bring in concerning the whole visible world, when it was, as it were, set forth to sale in all its splendour and gallantry, to what merchants would bid for it. Paul would offer nothing, but passeth by in a holy scorn, and will not so much as cast an eye upon it. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," 2 Cor. 4:18.

How much doth the judgment of saints differ from the judgment of the men of the world; the things which fall under sight and sense were Paul's nothings, but they are the men of the world's only solid substances and realities; on the other hand, invisible things of eternity, they were in the holy apostle's estimation, the only entities and real beings, but in the judgment of the men of the world, they are the only chimeras and shadows, which have no more being than what they have in the fancy: so far were the things of the world from being able to make up a happiness for a rational creature, that the apostle accounts them not worth a look, unless it be of contempt and derision. Mark the most proper title which the wisdom of God can give these seen things is, a nonentity; the world in all its gaiety and bravery is nothing else but an apparition, a great, goodly, gilded nothing; and why so, but upon the account of their lubricity and fickleness, there is no more staying of them than of the running stream, or wind, or bird in the air, for riches verily make themselves wings; riches, that is, whatever it is which men make their confidence, they make themselves wings; a metaphor from a bird in the nest, it is hatched naked, yet feathers out of the very nature of the bird, if no hand take it out of the nest, yet in short time it will take wings and fly away; just so it is with riches, of what species soever, if the plunderer or oppressor, the thief, fire, inundations, &c. give them no wings, they will quickly give themselves wings, and take their flight towards heaven, from whence they came.

And are these the things which are proper to make up to a man a standing, holding felicity? No, saith the apostle, the "things which are not seen are eternal." God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and heaven, and glory, &c. these are the only beatifying objects, as being only of a pure, spiritual, fixed, immutable nature; the "things that are not seen are eternal," and upon that account only able to constitute an adequate blessedness for an immense and an immortal soul, an intellectual being.

Corporeal delights, like so many sparks, may make a crack and vanish; nothing can seem great and excellent to him that knows the infinite vastness of eternity. "Ever with the Lord," here is a chief good for a heaven-born soul: this Moses kept his eye upon, and therefore all terrestrial felicities were but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, much noise, but no harmony. He saw Him that is invisible; an elegant contradiction: he saw him that could not be seen; he saw him by an eye of faith, whom he could not see by an eye of sense, and so did saint Paul, and so did all his fellow-apostles and saints, "We look on the things which are not seen," that is, we look on them, and them alone, as our ultimate, unmixed, and supreme good.

Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, and be instructed, O ye people of the earth, spend not your strength in vain, and your labour for that which satisfieth not, strive not to force that out of the creature which God never put in; you may as well extract fire out of the ocean, mollify rocks into syrup, wash the Ethiopian white, as squeeze happiness out of mortality.

Behold! vast sums are required to make up a chief good, as goodness, fulness, suitableness, and immutability.

Find me such a creature under the moon, and do with it what you please: but saith the church, "Lord, thou shalt choose our inheritance for us," Psa. 47:4; yea, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul," Lam.

3:24. It is impossible to churn happiness out of a chest of gold, it will never come; you can never make unfading crowns of fading flowers.

Or, I will tell you when pleasures, profits, honours, will make you blessed; when you can sow your fields with grace, and fill your barns with sheaves of saffron; when the Lord Jesus is your wine, the word of God your bread, the bosom of Christ your bed of love, the honour of Christ your trade, the graces of the Spirit your gold, then, and not till then, you may write happiness upon these things. These are the pleasures which are for evermore, this is the enduring substance, these the crowns that wither not, here you may find that which your soul seeketh for; here is the mine, here is the vein, here the spring of happiness, "ever with the Lord."

The devil offers you the glory of the world, God offers eternal glory; put not a scorn upon God's offers, nor a cheat upon your own souls. The devil's offers are not only inconsiderable, but fraudulent, he offers that which is none of his own to give, the world; or if it were, it would be infinitely too short of the price he will have for it, your precious and immortal souls: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And suppose thou shouldst repent of thy bargain, the devil will not repent of his, nor will he sell as he buyeth, shouldst thou say to him, Here, devil, take the world, and give me my soul again, I repent; he would but laugh at thee, and say as the priests said to Judas, "See thou to that, what is that to me?" thou hadst what thou agreedst for, I have done thee no wrong.

The sinner's feast is soon served in, but the messengers of Divine justice are preparing the reckoning, and then are ready to take away. And how sad will the catastrophe of that pleasure be, when the sting of the payment must survive in the conscience of the sinner to all eternity! Glorified saints are entertained upon free cost; no affrighting thoughts need discompose them, so as to break any one draught of those pleasures wherewith their cup runs over, or to hinder the pleasing swallow of those delicate morsels wherewith

their table is full fraught; no army of evils or of devils can break in upon them, to make them forsake their nuptial feast.

Oh what a prodigious forfeiture of reason is this, for the momentary satisfaction of a sordid lust, to lose an eternal dwelling with God, this transcendant beatitude, "ever with the Lord!" Yea, to plunge oneself into that opposite gulf of misery, never with the Lord, but to "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. 1:9.

Use 2. It may serve, in the next place, not only to inform the erroneous judgment, but also to awaken the sleepy conscience. Is this heaven? Is this the chief good of immortal souls? Then oh how much is every one of us concerned to secure our interest in this glory! What a folly is it for men to take such indefatigable pains to make sure an earthly inheritance, to run from lawyer to lawyer, to attend early in the morning, and late at night, to give fee upon fee, to spend half a patrimony or an estate to secure the rest, and as if heaven and the beatifical vision were the only trivial, worthless thing, a mere accident that might be present or absent without the least prejudice at all to a man's happiness; I say, to take up that upon trust, and to leave this "ever with the Lord," upon a peradventure! Oh unspeakable folly and madness!

Oh that men would consider seriously, what avail will it be at death and judgment, to have had assurance of many large earthly possessions while they lived, and then to have neither scrip nor scroll, as we say, to show for heaven, that blessed inheritance of the saints in light, when they come to die! to be able to say now, My house and my land, and my silver, and my crown, and my kingdom, but not then, My Lord and my God, my heaven and my inheritance! I have bestowed all my time and strength to assure my earthly possessions, but now I can keep these no longer, and can call nothing mine own but the dungeon of darkness, there to be staked down to easeless and endless torments; or at best to cry out with Adrianus, I

know not whither thou art going, O my precious darling, my never-dying soul!

Confident and presumptuous suppositions may quiet and satisfy the sleepy and slothful conscience in fair weather; but in the hour of temptation, when the rain shall descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, then these foolish confidences will fall, because they were built upon the sand, and great will be the fall thereof, Matt. 7:27

Then, when in hell, the miserable soul, made now as sensible as formerly it was secure, shall from thence lift up its eyes, and see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and itself thrust out, what furious and fiery reflections will then rend and vex the conscience, and the sinner cry out with horror, "O wretch that I am, I might have had pardon and glory as well as others; I had as many means and motives, I had as much need as they, it was as much my concern as any others, but I trifled and took up all upon trust, and would not give diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end; oh now a thousand worlds, if I had them, for a may be, which once I had; oh for one of those days of grace which I then sinned away, and idled out in the pursuit of vanity; for one of those tenders and offers of salvation, which then pursued me, and I would not hearken, but thought I might have had heaven time enough when I had done with the world; but now I see how miserably I have mocked God, and deceived myself; the day of grace is now gone, and the time of peace is at its full stop and period, and instead of ever with the Lord, here I must lie in these flames with the devil and reprobate spirits for ever."

Oh that sinners would therefore in this their day be wise, and know the things which belong unto their peace, before they be hid from their eyes.

I knew a rich mammonist, near the place where I was born, that would once a day take all his bags of silver and gold out of his trunks, and laying them in several heaps (for he was exceeding rich) upon a

large table, would go to the utmost end of the room, and there having glutted his eyes with so delightful an object for a good while, would all on a sudden take his run to the table, and with stretched out arms, gathering all into one vast heap, as a man overcome and distracted with joy, cry out, All is mine, all is mine! Why may not the children of the kingdom rejoice in hope of the glory of God? and collecting those treasures of glory into several heaps, and embracing them with the arms of faith, cry out in an holy ecstasy, All is mine, all is mine! Shall the adult heir of a fair lordship, or principality, be often inquiring into his patrimony, search into his writings, and even grow great with the thoughts and contemplations of what he is born to? And shall not the heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light, much rather delight themselves with the fore contemplation of their incorruptible, undefiled inheritance, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them? 1 Pet. 1:4.

Yes, so we would, if we were sure it were ours. And is that the cause of your apathy and flatness of spirits to these heavenly fruitions? Truly, this very uncertainty should even startle and affright us into an earnest contention to make heaven sure; so infinite a weight of glory, and we not ascertained of our interest upon some good scripture evidence, is enough to make us to forget to eat our meat, enough to break our sleep, and to keep our eyes waking all the night long, and to make us take little comfort in the present comforts we possess.

You will surely ask, then, what are the evidences?

Evidence 1. Why, truly this one thing would amount to an evidence, (and not the least evidence,) namely, active endeavour to assure ourselves of a share in this inheritance of the saints; this would argue an high estimate of this estate in the practical judgment, as most incomparably and absolutely eligible; this is the very language of an heaven-born soul, What have I to count upon but my treasure which is in heaven? What business have I on earth comparable to this, to ensure my portion in heaven? for this cause I was born, and for this

end I came into the world; the whole earth, in comparison of heaven, is but a dunghill.

Evidence 2. Especially if the holiness of heaven do kindle those desires in us more than the happiness; when a poor soul can truly say, I should not account it an heaven, were it not that it is a land of holiness, a land flowing with milk and honey, of pure and immaculate joys; that there the beauty of holiness shines forth with inconceivable lustre and glory; and there, saith the soul, I shall be in some degree like my God, glorious in holiness; this is not only an evidence of heaven, but heaven itself.

Evidence 3. Again, an universal hatred of sin is a good token that heaven is designed for thee; for hatred of sin is the negative part of holiness, and heaven is a place provided by God on purpose, that there the saints may be as holy as they will without disturbance or reproach. Fear not to think much and often of heaven; if sin be an offence to thee, if sin be a hell on earth to thee, heaven is designed for thee to be thy paradise. Fear not to be often solacing thyself in the contemplation of that place where sin never entered, or if it did, it was cast out as soon as ever it was conceived. Indeed it is but a fancy men have taken up, that they love happiness, while they continue to love sin; a chaste love of heaven can never consist with the love of impure lusts. Sin is the devil's image, holiness is God's; he loves not the beauty of holiness that would have the devil advanced thither. If men would not have it so, why else do they give sin such free entertainment in their own bosoms, and will by no means give it a bill of divorce?

Evidence 4. A superlative love to Him that hath purchased this state for us, and us for it, is an infallible evidence of our right to it, and interest in it, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ; and a strong motive upon which gracious souls are so often in heaven by their contemplations, is, that thereby an eye of faith they may behold, not the purchase only, but the Purchaser, whom having not seen we love, and whom loving, we would fain see; and this is the glory of every one that is so



affected; so it is expressly said, "The things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. 2:9. Dost thou love the Lord Jesus? Ascend often in the chariot of love, that thou mayest see his face, and in his face the glory and beauty of heaven. Surely such as love not Christ, and yet think they love heaven, are miserably mistaken, they know neither heaven nor Christ, and may well cry out, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. 44:20.

Well, christians, you that would gladly have your portion in this glory, shut your eyes downward. I may invert the angel's question to the men of Galilee, Acts 1:11, and say, Why stand ye poring upon the earth? Yea, why crawl ye with your bellies upon the ground, as if you had inherited the serpent's curse as well as your own? Lift up your hearts, let your souls often withdraw and bid the body farewell for a time, that you may, with Paul, be rapt up to the third heaven, and then see things which may even transport your souls out of your bodies; seek the things above, set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Pre-enjoyment by faith is a kind of prepossession, an entrance beforehand into the glorious joys of our Lord and Master; an ascent into the mount of transfiguration, when the soul may truly say, "Master, it is good for us to be here;" and the oftener ye come, the more welcome Christ will make you. They that know the Divine relishes of such contemplation, would not exchange them for the most delicious fruitions of the whole inferior creation. Oh strive to antedate glory, and to get into heaven before your time!

Strive above all things to obtain full assurance of future bliss. To this end take heed of neglecting your communion with God in holy duties; take heed of bitterness, wrath, anger, by all these the Spirit is grieved. It is a tender thing, and you may quickly grieve it; and if you grieve your Comforter, who shall comfort you? And if you grieve the Holy Spirit, who shall sanctify you? And if you grieve the sealing Spirit, who shall seal you to the day of redemption? Never expect a pre-enjoyment of heaven as long as you are not afraid of grieving the Spirit, which is the earnest of the inheritance. Carnal men's question

is, May I do this, and not be damned? But a godly man's question is, Can I do this, and not grieve the Spirit of God? Will not Jesus Christ take this unkindly?

Take heed too of any thing that may darken your evidences; a small drop of ink or dirt falling upon an evidence, may make it illegible, or darken it: people make nothing of small sins, but small sins do not the least hurt to the soul; the least hair casts its shadow; and a barley-corn laid upon the light of the eye, will hinder the sight of the sun as well as a mountain. "Abstain from all appearance of evil," if you desire God should be a "God of peace" to you, 1 Thess. 5:22, 23. Abstain from all appearance of evil, if you expect a pre-enjoyment of heaven.

Make much of the least intimations of love and favour from God, in prayer, hearing, or reading, meditation, at Christ's table, or any other of your holy converses with God; the least beam or ray of God's face upon thy soul, let it be as life from the dead; do as Benhadad's servants did to the king of Israel, "Diligently observe whether any thing will come from him," 1 Kings 20:33; any smile from Christ's face, any wink of his eye, any sweet breath, any whisper of peace from his lips, such as, possibly, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," or the like, and hastily catch at it; Thy son, Lord! I am most unworthy to be called so, not worthy to be a hired servant; but, Lord, since thou pleasest to deign me so infinite an honour, "Behold the servant of the Lord, and be it unto me according to thy word," Luke 1:38. Come in, thou blessed Lord, and take possession of my soul, and rule in me according to all the desire of thine heart, making me meet for that heaven thou hast prepared for me.

Be much in duties of mortification: lie often in sackcloth and ashes before the Lord; exercise thyself in frequent acts of self-denial; little dost thou know how soon God may put a new song into thy mouth: "Lord, thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness, to the end my glory may sing praise unto thee and not be silent," &c., Psa. 30:11, 12.

Be careful to mortify corruptions, "and to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. 5:24. A mortified christian is the fittest vessel to contain the precious liquor of assurance: mortification first purifieth, and then dilates the heart, and makes it capacious to Divine consolations. "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. 9:27, was his voice that could say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God," &c. 2 Cor. 5:1. "He filleth the hungry with good things."

Set others to pray for thee: yet not every one, who, it may be, can pray; assurance of future glory is not an errand to send every common christian to the throne of grace about: special favourites are employed to princes for special favours; thou canst not pray thyself, nor set any of the household of faith at work for a higher boon than for assurance. Oh get some special favourite, under the great Mediator, some Noah, some Job, some Daniel, &c., men or women of great acquaintance and much communion with God, christians of large experience and eminent holiness, to such God usually denieth nothing. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant," Psa. 25:14.

Speak to others as men and women ordinarily bespeak prayers; Pray, pray for me, and the like; and, truly for the most part, it passeth for a common, if not a vain compliment, and there is an end of it. Speak to some, not heathen, and they will laugh at thee, they know not what thou sayest; speak to others, and they will forget thee: he that makes not assurance his own concernment, how can he make it thine? Speak to serious, solid, broken-hearted christians, who know what assurance is, and what it is worth, earnestly beg of them, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies?" that they would plead hard for that, in the interest of our Lord Jesus, if God would remember your poor thirsty soul for one draught of this wine of consolation, assurance of heavenly bliss; and they cannot, yea, they dare not

forget thee: they know whose prayers have prevailed for themselves in the like petitions, and they dare not but pay their debts.

But whilst thou settest others to pray for thee, forget not to pray for thyself: if thou settest others to pray for thee, and prayest not thyself, thou art a hypocrite, and God will account thee as one that mocketh, and thou wilt get a curse, and not a blessing. Wherefore pray, pray constantly, and pray instantly; knock hard at the gate of heaven for this grand mercy, and if God open not the first, or second, or twentieth, or the hundredth time, yet, with Peter, continue knocking; let God know, as it were, that thou art resolved to take no denial to thy petition for assurance. This was the greatness of the poor woman of Canaan's faith, she would not be denied, Matt. 15:27.

Be constant and conscientious in your attendance upon Christ's table; behold it is the sealing ordinance, his banqueting-house, his presence-chamber, his marriage-feast, his bed of love, where he doth use to give out to his spouse his loves, Cant. 6:12. Behold, the spirits run in the blood, and the sealing Spirit of Christ is not seldom conveyed in the precious streams of Christ's blood, in that mysterious ordinance. The holy supper was the pledge of his dying love, a seal of his last coming to receive home his spouse to himself. "This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat," &c. 1 Cor. 11:25, 26. Christ would have his spouse perpetuate the remembrance of his dying love, that thereby they might look for a hastening of his coming, 2 Pet. 3:12.

Oh let not thy place be empty at such a glorious festivity, who can tell whether the Lord may come in the very hour of this solemn ordinance, which he hath appointed to be the very sanction and pledge of his glorious and triumphant coming, and say concerning thee, "Where is the son of Jesse today?" 1 Sam. 20:27. Oh, such a time for the Bridegroom to find thee absent, how unkindly may he take it! Who that he might be sure not to miss thy company at this love-feast, hath said, "As often as ye eat," &c.

Use 3. It may serve as a spur to diligence and activity in the ways of God. On the other side of the resurrection, God hath prepared an eternity of glory for you, and therefore bestir yourselves in good earnest; do somewhat for God on this side the grave, that may, if possible, bear some proportion with your future expectation. Thou hast but a moment to work in, but an eternity to rest in; be industrious now, and anon thou shalt be glorious. Enter now into thy Lord's vineyard, and soon thou shalt enter into thy Lord's joy. Take pains here, there remains a rest, an eternal rest; not an eternity of being only, but an eternity of well-being; ever be with the Lord.

Ply the oar of duty, christians, a blessed haven is at hand; you look for more than others, what do you do more than others? Never did servants expect such a recompense of reward, "The gift of God is eternal life," Rom. 6:23. Oh let the fear of missing this glory urge you to the greater diligence; let it stir you up to the most devoted acts of holiness and obedience.

There is no inducement to take pains comparable to this, "Ever with the Lord;" ever in the presence-chamber of the greatest Monarch in the world. Nay, ever upon the throne, giving laws to kingdoms; ever increasing treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones; ever bathing in the full streams of sublunary pleasures, is no ways comparable to one moment's enjoyment of the presence of the Lord in heaven. Let that man's money perish with him, said that noble marquis Galeacius Caracciolus, who esteemeth all the gold in the world worth one day's society with Jesus Christ and his holy Spirit, &c.

I have often thought with myself, that if heaven were capable of grief, those very rivers of pleasures would swell with the tears of glorified souls, to think that they have served God no more, served him no better, did no more for that God who hath prepared such a heaven full of glory for such an unprofitable servant as I have been. Oh how coldly did I pray for this inestimable blessedness! With how little affection did I hear the report of this great salvation! And what little

pains did I take for this exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which exceeds all hyperbole; while the slightest expressions are too big for my diligence! What! all this joy, and so little pains to obtain it! All this glory, and so little zeal for the glory of God! So great a harvest, and so little seed sown! So great a reward, and so little service! Surely there would be a day of humiliation kept in heaven, and it might well take up half eternity, to bewail the saints' remissness in the work of the Lord, were heaven capable of it, or did not the reflection of glorified souls upon the former iniquities of their holy things, issue only unto the admiration of the riches of that grace which hath brought them to glory

But though heaven will not admit of grief, thy present estate will: mourn, therefore, that thou hast been so dead and so dull in the service of God, who hath set before thee no less a reward than the enjoying of himself to all eternity; and let the sense thereof quicken thy dead heart to work after another rate for the little remnant of mortality yet behind. say not, Yet there is too much sand left in the glass for God and eternity; say rather, Oh that, were it not to keep me so much the longer from my Father's presence, oh that every hour yet behind were a day, every day a month, every month a year, every year a life! it were all too little for that hope which is laid up for me in heaven! Oh had I a hundred pair of hands, they were too little to employ in my heavenly Father's work! a hundred pair of feet, they would not carry me fast enough in the way of his commandments! a hundred pair of eyes were not enough to behold God in every creature round about me! a thousand tongues were not sufficient to trumpet forth his praises, "who hath made me meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light!" Col. 1:12. Oh, what shall I do? If I cannot love God more, serve him better, bring him more glory, than hitherto I have done, I am undone, I am undone. Oh redeem your time, Eph. 5:16.

Christians, the eternal jubilee is at hand, the trumpet is ready to sound, and the glorious eternal liberty of the saints and servants of God ready to be proclaimed; up and be doing now, as ye would be

found, when Christ shall come with his mighty angels, and his reward with him, that you may hear the blessed welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. 25:21.

Use 4. This may serve as a preservative to the people of God to keep them from fainting and falling away in time of sufferings, and persecution for righteousness' sake.

"Ever with the Lord;" here is a short fight, but an eternal triumph; a short race, but an imperishable crown of glory; a short storm, but an eternal harbour, who would not almost be covetous and ambitious of suffering upon such gainful terms? One day with the Lord will more than pay for all the saints' sufferings, how much more this "ever with the Lord?" There is no proportion between a christian's cross and his crown, if the apostle have brought us in a true account, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. 8:18. Compare a mole-hill with a mountain, a glow-worm with a sun, a drop with the ocean, and more disproportionable are a saint's sufferings unto his glory: here he lets drop a few tears, there he swims in a river of pleasures for evermore. To convince us of the odds, the apostle puts both into scales, and the scales into the hand even of reason itself, See, saith he, how infinitely the reward preponderates the sufferings, 2 Cor. 4:17. Affliction light, glory heavy; a weight of glory, yea, an exceeding weight, yea, a far more exceeding weight, hyperbole upon hyperbole. Affliction but for a moment, glory eternal; let sense and reason give sentence, what equality or proportion! A heavy burden may be borne a moment; how much more easily a light one, especially if ye add this consideration, that after that little, little moment past, burden shall never be laid upon the back any more for ever! We are apt to think that our sufferings are not only heavy, but intolerable, the only unparalleled affliction in the world; never sorrow like our sorrow! But they will appear as they are, poor and inconsiderable, when we come to heaven; then our mountains will appear mole-hills. How will a prison look then, when for a few days'

confinement we shall have the glorious liberty of the sons of God, in the highest heavens days without end? How will then the reproach of Christ appear to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, when for a little shame and ignominy, thou shalt shine as the sun in the firmament for ever? How will thy former poverty for Christ look then, when thou shalt be possessed of the inheritance of the saints in light; "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you?" 1 Pet. 1:4. Nay, if thou shalt lose thy life for Christ, it shall seem but a poor stake, when thou shalt be crowned with all the beatitudes of life eternal.

If there could be grief in heaven about sufferings, it would grieve the saint, who is now led by his sufferings into so much glory, that he had suffered no more for Christ, or suffered with no more patience, courage, and holy triumph over the persecutors. Pore not then upon thy sufferings, but look up to the crown that is prepared to be set upon thy head after thy sufferings; behold martyrdom itself shall be but as Elijah's chariot, to carry thee up to heaven in triumph: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him;" if we wear his crown of thorns, we shall wear his crown of glory; if we die with him, we shall also rise with him, and reign with him for ever. Think much of the kingdom to expel base fears in sufferings. Heaven in our eye will make us heroic in our persecutions; we glory not only in God, but "we glory in tribulation," Rom. 5:3. Hold out then, faith and patience, but one stile more, said Dr. Taylor, when he went to the stake, and I am at my Father's house. Oh this word, at my Father's house, at home, ever with the Lord! this made the holy man to leap over the stile, as if he had been a young man going to be married to his bride.

Use 5. It may serve as a sovereign cordial against the fear of death. Man having an immortal soul, naturally desireth and breatheth after eternity; but man in his corrupt estate, being ignorant and mindless of a blessed eternity with God, is not willing to die, to leave the shore of this life, and to venture upon the unknown, immense ocean of eternity; none but a Paul, who is ballasted with the hope of an



everlasting habitation with the Lord, can desire to loose from the shore, to hoist up sail, and make for the heavenly Canaan.

Come hither then, O you trembling souls, who through the fear of death have all your life-time been subject to bondage, come hither, I say, and set your feet upon the neck of this king of terrors, and fear not to make that triumphant challenge of the apostle, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15:55. Death is swallowed up in victory, and, being conquered, serves to that high and honourable end—to be the saints' usher of state, to bring them into the presence of the King of glory, to behold his face, and to hear his wisdom; from thenceforth to be, for ever to be, with the Lord. Death serves the saints now for no use, but to kill mortality, and to extinguish corruption; "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," ver. 53 We shall ever be with the Lord in a perfect, incorruptible state of glory; and this must be effected by means of death. Oh, what were ten thousand deaths, ushering in the soul into so much glory!

The glimmering presence of God with a believer here below, may conquer the fear of death; "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me," Psa. 23:3. How much more may the hope of a full fruition of God in glory, deliver the saints from the bondage of fear.

"Ever with the Lord:" this puts lilies and roses into the ghastly face of death, and makes the king of terrors to outshine Solomon in all his glory. "Ever with the Lord," this makes death not only tolerable, but amiable, desirable; for in this we groan, in this tabernacle, for this is earthly, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven; the reason is, because that house is eternal in the heavens. A saint looks out of the windows of this earthly tabernacle, and crieth out, as the mother of Sisera, "Why stay the wheels of his chariot thus long?" When shall I be carried to those eternal mansions, where I shall ever be with my Lord and Bridegroom?

Then tremble thou not, believer, at the approach of death, but go forth and meet him with this friendly salutation, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; art thou come to fetch me to my Father? Welcome death! thou art my best friend next to Jesus Christ: death is only my passage into a blessed eternity. Death is Joseph's chariot, not to carry the saints down into Egypt, but up into Canaan; and how quickly doth he carry a believer thither! It is but winking, and he is at home; as soon as the eye of the body is closed here, the eye of the soul is open there! O blessed vision! to behold at once all the glories of eternity! Say then, with Jacob, Jesus, my Lord and Redeemer, is yet alive, and seated on the throne at the right hand of the Majesty on high, there proclaiming in the ears of all his trembling followers, "I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold I live for evermore. Amen, and have the keys of hell and death," Rev. 1:18. Fear not, O thou believer, to say with Jacob, "I will go and see him," not before I die, but I will die, that I may go and see him. Death is but the flame that must singe asunder the cords of thy mortality; the hand that shall open the cage, that thy soul may get loose, and take her flight for the mountain of spices, the glorious immortality and liberty of the sons of God.

Use 6. Lastly, it may teach us how to prize Christ, Love is a triumphant grace, a grace that hath eternity stamped upon it; it out-lives faith, for faith gives way to vision; and it doth out-last hope, for hope is swallowed up in fruition; what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? "Whether there be prophesies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away," 1 Cor. 13:8; but charity never fails, but as long as God lives it lives; for God is love, and they that love, dwell in God, and God in them.

I have finished, I cannot say perfected, the main work intended, namely, the opening of the ten words, or arguments of comfort, here laid down in this model or platform by the Holy Ghost, as so many sovereign cordials to revive disconsolate and fainting christians over the death of their hopeful relations, with the several improvements

which each word by itself may afford unto us. But before I do dismiss this discourse, I do observe divers useful instructions lie couched in the general improvement of these words, "comfort one another," which will serve as so many branches of information, which I cannot omit, and they are ten.

1. Sorrow not as men without hope, but comfort one another. There is a sorrow for departed friends which God condemns not. Hopeless sorrow is forbidden, ver. 13, but simply to mourn for the loss of our gracious relations is not. He that hath wrapt up natural affections in our hearts, doth not prohibit the due and moderate exercise of them. Those persons without natural affections are in the black roll amongst the most abominable part of mankind: to be without natural affections is to do violence against nature herself, and to violate the law of humanity. Covenant breakers without natural affection are monsters, not men. Christ himself, who knew no sin, yet being acquainted with all our griefs, even had this kind of sorrow for the dead; "Jesus wept," John 11:35, and his tears do here instruct us in our duty. Holy Paul blots his epistle to the Philippians with his tears for Epaphroditus, "Lest," saith he, "I should have sorrow upon sorrow;" he was sorrowful for his sickness, had he died there would have been another flood of tears, sorrow upon sorrow. Where mention is made of the death of public persons, there public lamentations for them is mentioned also: the Spirit of God doth nowhere reprove those tears, but rather puts a value upon them as so many pearls. As in the mourning for Jacob, Gen. 50:11, for Josiah, 2 Chron. 35:24, for Samuel, 1 Sam. 25:1, for Stephen, Acts 8:2. It is reckoned amongst God's thunderbolts, their widows made no lamentation, Psa. 78:64. The removal of God's peace from a people, and prohibition to mourn for their dead, are twin-judgments, or one the birth of another. "Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them, for I have taken away my peace from this people," Jer. 16:5. Tears are like wine, you may pour them out, but take heed of excess; you may weep, but as those that weep not; you may mourn, but not as others, which have no hope, 1 Cor. 7:30.

2. Hence we learn, there is another work or duty incumbent on christians, under the loss of gracious relations, than only to mourn for them, namely, to inquire, yea, with Benhadad's servants, diligently to observe what words of comfort do fall from the lips of scripture, and hastily to catch at them, 1 Kings 20:33. Comfort one another with these words: yea, Lord, with these words do thou comfort thy servant!

We are usually either senseless under, or swallowed up, with great losses; either our affections are made of iron, or they melt like wax, and we faint away. Vehement sorrow is like raging fire, that turns every thing into its own nature. It is thy work therefore to study consolation, as well as to pore upon thy losses; to ballast thy soul with Divine comforts: "If I go not away the Comforter will not come." Many times the best of our earthly enjoyments stand between us and our heavenly consolations: "But if I depart I will send him unto you," John 16:7. It is good to resolve with ourselves, be my loss in this world ever so great, it is capable of a reparation. For certainly, if the loss of Christ in his bodily presence were to be repaired, there is nothing under the whole heaven, the loss whereof we can sustain, but may much more easily be made up with advantage; to be sure the presence of the Comforter is able to do it with an infinite overplus. It is thy wisdom, therefore, to balance thy soul with Divine comforts; as afflictions abound, run to thy cordial, these words, that thy consolations may abound also. If the affliction scale be heavier than the consolation scale, thou wilt certainly sink in thy spirit, and then thy burden will break thy back: The spirit of a man is able to sustain his infirmity, Prov. 18:14. Thou mayest mourn, but that is not all thou hast to do, it concerns thee to get a cordial to keep thy heart from fainting: "For this cause we faint not," 2 Cor. 4:16. Mark, the apostle had always his cordial about him; so do thou, be equally just to thyself, as to thy deceased friends Thou owest them a debt of tears, hast thou paid it? Now be just to thyself; thou owest a care to thy soul, that thou sin not, to thy spirit, that it sink not; must thou needs die, because thy husband, thy child, thy friend is dead? Look after Divine consolation; let it not be a small thing to thee, neither say

thou, by interpretation, Nay, if God will have this comfort from me, let him take all. Take heed of weeping thyself blind, as to the consolations of God, as Hagar did; there was a well-spring of water close by her, but she had cried out her eyes, and could not see it, Gen. 21:16, until God opened her eyes, ver. 19. There is too much of the pride and sullenness of the Babylonish favourite in us, who, when he had made a large and boasting recital of his court favours, could throw away all in a pet for want of a complement, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate," Esther 5:13.

3. Observe, further, the goodness and condescension of God, who hath laid in comfort beforehand against a time of sorrow and mourning.

God dealeth in this case with his people, just as he dealt with our first parents, providing a plaster beforehand to clap on the wound of conviction of sin, in the promise of the seed of the woman "that should break the serpent's head," Gen. 3:15. Lest the wound should take cold, fester, and, by delay, prove incurable, all the promises in scripture are but so many receipts written down beforehand in the book of the great Physician of souls for the use of all God's family, the saints of God from the beginning of the world; there are given unto us "exceeding great and precious promises," 2 Pet. 1:4. Thither, therefore, let all God's patients go, and search, and read, and take whatever receipt suiteth best with their malady; and they shall, rightly applied, find present ease, and infallible cure, in the constant and believing use thereof: "For whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope," Rom. 15:4.

4. Here you may see the absolute and indispensable necessity of faith; without which, all the choicest consolations, and richest cordials the word can afford, are but so much water of life in a dead man's mouth, or as Elisha's staff upon the face of the dead child, 2 Kings 4:31, which causeth neither voice nor motion. "The just shall

live by faith," Heb. 10:38; an unbelieving man is but a dead man; for as faith is the first principle of spiritual life, so it is the constant medium, whereby the spiritual fuel and restoratives of that life are brought in, and made vital to the soul. The word of God is the "power of God to salvation," Rom. 1:16; but it is to them only who believe. God hath provided a cup of consolation for his fainting people in their swooning fits, but it is the hand of faith that must take it, and the mouth of faith only that can drink it. There is an inexhaustible fulness of comfort in Christ, and in the promises, but not one drop to be drawn forth without faith. A man may as well live and laugh without a soul, as have true evangelical comfort without faith; which is the bond of union between Christ and the soul, and so being united to the fountain, "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. 1:8. This is that golden pipe, through which all the golden oil of grace and comfort, Zech. 4:12, is derived into the heart. The men of the world may have vast proportions of knowledge, both natural and divine, but mere knowledge is light without heat; but faith warms the heart, as they said one to another, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked unto us?" Luke 24:32. If I assent and consent to the glorious doctrine of the resurrection, knowing, with Job, that my Redeemer liveth, &c., I can triumph over all evils that occur, over the grave itself, though it swallow up my dearest relations: if I believe not, I am like a thirsty man at a well without a bucket, where I may sooner drown myself than quench my thirst. Oh get the bucket of faith, and then with joy may ye draw water out of these wells of salvation.

5. Hence we are informed, that it is a special duty of christians, to administer words of comfort to their mourning friends, according to their various temptations and trials. It is the very law of those consolations, wherewith the Holy Ghost doth comfort us in our afflictions, that we may be able to comfort them, which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. A lesson, it seemeth, Job's friends had learned, and came to put in practice, when by mutual consent they met together at Job's house, Job 2:11; this was their end, though unhappily they mistook

their work, by spicing their cup of consolation with too many bitter ingredients: let their error be our caution. Thus also we read in the gospel of many friends, who came to comfort Martha and Mary concerning their brother.

Christians, your eyes are not your own; we are commanded to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep. In point of affection, we should be like the primitive christians, have all things in common; we should joy in our brethren's joys, mourn their sorrows, lament their sufferings, and seek after their comfort as our own, else we turn engrossers; yea, we become guilty of sacrilege in robbing one another of Divine treasure; our comforts are not given us for ourselves only, but for the afflicted. Saints have a common right one to another's graces, comforts, and experiences; and Christ's word should always sound in our ears, "Strengthen thy brethren." How ornamental were those christians in the once famous Roman church, of whom the apostle presumeth, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another," Rom. 15:14. Oh that as many as do abound in abilities, would pray for wisdom to parcel out those abilities into all the christian offices commended to them by the Holy Ghost in their several seasons: to warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, &c. Oh how beautiful are the feet of those christians, who are "ready to every good work," Tit. 3:1, as the hand in joint, ready to turn every way for the use and service of the body! A christian should never be unfurnished with a reproof for sinners, a word of comfort for distressed saints. Let none have cause from thee in their sorrows to complain, as the weeping church in the Lamentations, saying, "There is none to comfort me." Be not of the sect of the stony-hearted Levite, who had not one drop of pity to pour into the wounded traveller, lest thy wounds another day, as so many mouths, plead for pity to deaf ears. Hast thou not thyself been comforted in thy troubles? Hath not Christ made good that great promise, "I will not leave thee comfortless, I will come unto thee?" John 14:18. How often have the everlasting arms kept thy soul from sinking! How frequently have the messengers of Christ

refreshed thy weary soul! And hast thou so forgot those arms of mercy, as not to help thy brother with thy little finger? Hath God conferred on thee such treasures of comfort, and hast thou not one mite to bestow upon thy disconsolate brother?

6. God's words of comfort are the only words of comfort: God is the God of consolation; "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," 2 Cor. 1:3: all comfort doth emanate from God as water out of the fountain; nothing can be in the stream, but what was first in the fountain. He is the Father of mercies; there are no mercies pure and legitimate but what are from him; no waters are pure and vital, but those that are fetched out of the fountain: and therefore those pronouns are very sweet, and carry the greatest emphasis with them, "Thy comforts delight my soul," Psa. 94:19. "My peace I leave with you," John 14:27. It was not all the honours and pleasures of David's dominions, it was not all the victories and spoils of his enemies, yea, it was not all his prayers and tears, though every night he made his couch swim with them, Psa. 6, that could whisper a syllable of comfort to his sinscorched conscience, until God himself spake them. That is the specialty of comfort, which the apostle begs for his Thessalonians, "Now the Lord of peace himself, give you peace," 2 Thess. 3:16. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, himself, comfort you," ch. 2:16. That is right peace which God himself giveth, and that is true comfort which Christ himself speaks: therefore prayeth the holy man, Make me to hear joy and gladness; which denotes, Lord, speak so loud, that I may hear the voice, and speak so distinctly, that I may know whose voice it is; that I may know it is thou thyself that speakest to my soul, that I may say, It is the voice of my Beloved, &c.

It is true, the devil and the world have their counterfeit cordials, their gilded pills and plasters, which make quick cures, but they never really heal; they may for a time stupify the sense, but they do not mortify sensuality; ease the smart, but not cleanse the wound. Saul, when the evil spirit was upon him, calls for a harp; and when God hath forsaken him, he goes to the witch, as if, because God would not



answer him, the devil should. Most people have learned a way of their own, some to drink down their sorrow, and sleep out the sense of those breaches, which God hath made upon their relations, or in a crowd of worldly business can lose their sorrows; but, alas, all these are but lying vanities, and will stand men in least stead when they stand in most need of comfort. Oh that men had faith to believe, that all these are physicians of no value. Christ's words are the only words of comfort, Then shall we be ever with the Lord. So our Lord again, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me; in my Father's house are many mansions," John 14:1, 2: "With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light," Psa. 36:9. These, these indeed, are apples of gold, which, when they meet with pictures of silver, Prov. 25:11, hearts truly capable of such consolation, are very beautiful. "Comfort one another with these words."

7. Hence be we instructed, if it be the duty of christians to administer words of comfort to mourners, then it is also the duty of mourners to open their ears and hearts to receive those words. If God should send an angel, or any messenger of peace to comfort you in your trouble, what a sin would it be to make him go away ashamed, with an Who hath believed our report? Or, Lord, I have delivered thy message, and all thy precious cordials were of no value. I know there are few or none of God's mourners, who dare do this in express language; but what and if a deaf ear, and a dejected countenance, and a dead heart, and uncheerful conversation, after all the words of comfort which God sends thee by his messengers, be so with God, by interpretation? May not this provoke God to afflict thee more, and to increase thy sorrows, until the pride of thy heart be abated? May I not say unto thee, as Joab to David, when he grew sullen upon the death of Absalom, Thou hast shamed the face of God's messengers, and hast declared, that the consolations of God are small in thine eyes? 2 Sam. 19:5. Now therefore arise, and thankfully embrace their message of peace, or else it may be worse unto thee, than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth, until now. Surely it is as great an indignity to slight God's comforts, as it is to scorn God's counsels: this spurns

against God's authority, that tramples upon his compassion; this man doth resist the Spirit, that man doth grieve the Spirit, and if thou grieve away the Comforter, who shall comfort thee at length? If David took the affront, which Hanun put on his messengers sent to comfort him over his father's death, so heinously, that he armed Joab, and all his men of war against him, to avenge the indignity, how justly may God send forth armies of afflictions against thee, for thy sullen refusal of his tender-hearted consolations?

Poor disconsolate soul, know thou that every crumb of comfort, which falls from Christ, is more precious than a ruby; and who art thou, that thou shouldst refuse cordials from heaven? Jewels taken out of God's own cabinet. Away, away, christian, with Rachel's peevishness, and Jonah's passion, which serve for nothing, but to turn sorrow into sin. I do well to be angry, doth ill become the meekness of Christ's spouse; say rather, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," Mic. 7:9. What if God hath given thee a bitter potion, he comes now to comfort thee, he offers thee a sovereign cordial. Oh, spill it not upon the ground, as a vile thing, nor say in thy passion, Let God keep his cordials to himself, and so, as it were, take revenge on God for afflicting thee. Oh, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, yea, put thy mouth in the dust, that it may not cause thy flesh to sin.

8. In the next place, hence we gather this sad truth, that there is not a word of comfort belonging to wicked men when they die, nor while they live in sin. Comfort one another; none other but one another: not the ungodly; they and their parasites may flatter themselves and one another; but there is not one word of comfort belonging to them: of all those rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand not one drop for a Dives. Of all those treasures of glory not one mite for an Esau. Indeed pity belongs to wicked men, and reproof belongs to them, "Reprove them rather," Eph. 5:11, and counsel belongs to them, Let the wicked forsake his wickedness: and exhortation belongs to them, Why will ye die? &c. And prayer belongs to them, Father, forgive them, &c. But comfort doth not belong to them.

Consolation is none of their portion in the state wherein they are. As there is no peace to the wicked, so consequently no comfort for them. Indeed a wicked man hath his portion, but it is a dreadful one; "Upon the wicked shall the Lord rain snares, fire and brimstone, (alluding to the destruction of Sodom,) this shall be the portion of their cup," Psa. 11:6; these fiery ingredients shall be put into their cup, after the delicious draughts of sinful pleasures: this was the rich man's case, Luke 16:23, 24, &c.; after his delicate fare, flaming fire was his portion for ever; and this is all the comfort that is to be administered to them. Say thou to the wicked it shall be ill with him, Isa. 3:11; they shall be cast into utter darkness with the devil and his angels for ever, &c. These are their words of comfort; they are ministers of hell, who have any better words of comfort for wicked men, while wicked: for the devil would have them dance about the snare till their foot be taken in his gin. They that can cry, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, are the devil's factors, who bring him in the greatest revenues to his kingdom.

But alas! how shall a wicked man be comforted? His death is not a sleep, but death indeed; death armed with all its horrors, Rev. 6:8; death with its sting, which is sin; death with hell at the heels of it, death with the wrath of God, and death with the loss of eternal life. Indeed, a wicked man shall rise again, but it is that he may have the more solemn trial, and more tremendous sentence from the Judge, in the face of heaven and earth; and who can comfort him, that doth truly represent his condition to him?

9. How much then are we concerned to labour to be such as may have comforters in our own death, and leave matter of comfort to our surviving friends. It is a duty incumbent on us, to make our death as comfortable to ourselves and our godly friends, as may be. And how is that done, but, in a word, to get an interest in Christ, scripture evidence of that interest, and the seal of the Spirit to those evidences?

The death of some persons is exceedingly dreadful, not only to themselves, but to standers by; this is the supposed reason of that lamentable cry of David, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. Absalom died in his rebellion, I fear he is fallen into a worse hand than Joab's: O that my death might have prevented so dreadful a miscarriage; O Absalom! would God I had died for thee!

But alas, my brethren, it is not freedom from such parricidal villanies; no, nor all the moral innocence in the world, nor civil righteousness in the altitude of it, that can fill a dying saint with joy, or the surviving godly mourners with comfort: whatever blaze unregenerate persons make in the world, they go out like a stinking snuff; but a saint leaves a perfume behind him, he embalms his own death, he leaves every one of his weeping friends a legacy of hope concerning his eternal state; he sets up a lustre in the house of mourning, brighter than those were with which great men's hearses are watched, and in an instant turneth it into a house of rejoicing; he is entered into glory, and hath left behind him the prints of his feet to guide us thither; and being dead yet speaks to us, as Christ to Mary Magdalene, Why weepest thou? "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death," Prov. 14:32. Study therefore, I say, an interest in Christ, that while you are enraptured with the joys of heaven, you may leave comfort on earth for your godly relations.

Carnal friends are satisfied with a negative holiness for themselves, or for their relations that die before them; to be better than the worst is evidence enough to them of a blessed state; or, whatever their life hath been, put but in a little dead repentance into the premises, they will put heaven into the conclusion; Oh, say they, he is happy, he is in heaven sure enough.

But christians, whose eyes have been opened to look into the horror of the bottomless pit, out of which free grace hath redeemed the saints, the purity of the gospel rule, and the glory that shall be revealed at the appearance of the Lord Jesus; they cannot take up

with such miserable comforts as men usually die with. And it must needs be an addition to the torments of hell, to leave godly relations mourning under the dreadful apprehensions of a relation miscarrying to all eternity. And to be regardless of our friends' anxiety of spirit even in this respect, is somewhat less charity than they have in hell. Dives in hell was solicitous to prevent his brethren's coming thither.

Graceless relations dying, with the marks of their unregeneracy upon them, do even scorch the hearts of their gracious surviving friends, with the sense of those flames which they suffer.

Therefore, impartially and accurately examine your own estates, make your consciences faithfully to answer this question, Can I give myself or friends comfort in this present state, should I die this very moment? If conscience, assisted with scripture light, say No, this is a lost estate, this is a damnable condition I am now in; oh poor wretch! how highly doth it concern thee this very hour to look about thee! for thou knowest not how near thou art to the last point and period of thine appointed time. It is a vain thing for thee to comfort thyself without some scripture grounds of interest in Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. Paul sends Tychicus to comfort the Colossians, but he must know their state first, that he may comfort their hearts, Col. 4:8.

We have a generation that comfort others, without knowing their spiritual estate; which is to clap on a plaster without searching the wound; a way to lead men to hell hoodwinked; the spiritual estate must be known before comfort can be well applied. Examine, therefore, and suffer others to examine and search how it is with your souls in relation to Christ and grace; what knowledge, what repentance, what faith, what mortification, what contempt of the world, what love to Christ, what thoughts of the world to come. If these things be in you and abound, then comfort your hearts; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

10. In the last place: hence we are informed how much it concerns every man and woman, that would comfortably observe this blessed command, of administering comfort to himself, or others who are in tribulation; I say, how much it concerns them to search the scriptures. Oh study the scriptures, that magazine and storehouse of all Divine comfort! Especially in the reading of the scriptures, to make a collection of the promises, which are the nests and boxes of Christ's cordials and antidotes against the fainting fits to which believers themselves are subject: there are the soul-refreshing water-brooks, the wells of salvation, ever sending forth streams of consolation, to make glad the city of God. Here is Christ's wine-cellar and banqueting-house, to which he doth invite his disconsolate spouse, and where he doth revive her fainting soul, according to her longing desire; "Stay me with apples, and comfort me with flagons, for I am sick of love," Cant. 2:5.

What though the scriptures and the promises do abound with consolation, if we be ignorant and unacquainted with the variety, nature, and use of these heavenly ingredients; they signify no more to us, than for a man to be in an apothecary's shop, fraught with the richest drugs, but he knows not the boxes where they are laid, nor the virtue of them; he and his friends may die in a fit, and miscarry in the midst of all those preservatives; or if he venture on them, he may, peradventure, take poison instead of cordials. Wherefore study the promises, and in studying of them, be careful to refer them to their distinct heads: make yourselves catalogues of promises, that refer to several soul distresses and exigencies; and do as apothecaries, write their titles over their heads:—promises for pardon, promises for power against corruption, promises for comfort, prison promises, sick-bed promises, promises relating to the loss of gracious relations, &c. I say, be careful skilfully to sort your promises, that you may know whither to go when you repair to the scriptures, and may not administer mistaken ingredients, corrosives instead of cordials, as Job's friends did; nor cordials instead of corrosives, as the generality of ignorant christians do.

Labour to know to which of the offices of Christ every promise doth relate; which to his kingly office, as the promises of grace, and increase of grace, and power against temptation, the conquering of death, and the fear of death: which belong to his prophetic office, as promises of knowing God, and Christ, and the Spirit; promises of being taught of God; inward, powerful, experimental knowledge; what promises belong to his priestly office, as promises of reconciliation to God, peace with God, acceptance of the person and performances, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, comfort in the loss of sweetest relations: and this will be of great use to enable you in prayer to plead the promises, and to put them in suit in the proper office; a great honour to Christ, and a mighty help and encouragement to faith.

Pray for the Spirit, whose office is to make good the promises to the children of promise, and upon that account called the Comforter; the promises are never comfort until the Spirit apply them to the conscience, and then they are cordials indeed, whether to ourselves or others; then they are full of life and power, and can with one taste comfort more than all the arguments of philosophy in the world.

And verily, christians, as all the cordials in scripture are no cordials, until they are applied to the conscience by a powerful hand, and breathed into the soul by the warm vital animation of the Spirit of God to know it; you are physicians of no value in this great work of comforting one another, until you learn to join the words of prayer with the words of comfort; until by prayer you call in the presence and power of the Comforter, who only is able to make these words to be so many real consolations. Amen.

-----

MONERGISM BOOKS

Mount Pisgah: A Prospect of Heaven, by Thomas Case Copyright ©  
2022

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions September 2022. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068