

AN
ATTEMPT

ON THE BEHALF OF

THE CALLED AND BELIEVING PEOPLE

OF

THE MOST HIGH GOD,

TO SET BEFORE THEM

THE FOUNTAIN OF EVERLASTING CONSOLATION

IN

Christ Jesus,

SO THAT THEY MAY BE PERFECTLY RELIEVED FROM ALL FEARS

CONCERNING

DEATH AND DYING.

This will be derived from what is revealed in the Gospel of the blessed God, in which *Glory and Immortality* are so enlightened, that it well becomes all Saints to say individually, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." PHIL. i, 21.

BY SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

Second Edition.

"Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." 2 COR. v, ver. 6, 8.

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C O N T E N T S.

INTRODUCTION.

In which an account is given, first, of that which gave the first conception of it to the Author's mind; and, secondly, of the nature, end, and design of this work; with the reasons why the writer was prevailed on to put it into chapters.

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INTRODUCTION.

BELOVED READER,

I AM now in the seventieth year of my age, it cannot, therefore, be expected by me to continue long in this my present tabernacle, especially as I have most certainly passed through the first stage of the breaking up of nature. I have been for four years past in deaths oft. Many a time I have expected every moment to expire. How my mind at such seasons was employed, and in what manner sustained, I have written, and given the paper into the hand of a friend, with a positive charge that it be shewed to none till after I am actually deceased; then it is to be published. What is felt when nature begins first to break, is only known to such as have had the experience of it. The Lord hath, within these two months past, most wonderfully revived me. I think I know all about death except the act of dying. I know Christ, and am fully persuaded he is every way all-sufficient for his beloved ones, both in life and death. I have had some very peculiar dealings with him, and ac-

cesses unto him, in various cases and circumstances in the course of my journey through life; and some very interesting accesses to him, when, in my own views, just at the moment of departure. I conceive I am left to live, to experience further the efficacy of the knowledge of Christ, in keeping up the mind in the free and full exercise of it on him, in the most immediate views of him in death and dying circumstances.

In the course of my time, I have been called upon to visit sinners and saints in their drawings nigh to the house appointed for all living; I have found what the excellent Mr. *Toplady* expresses to be a truth: "It is very difficult to know how to perform this service." The last time I was called upon to visit a sick friend, was since I myself received a very severe crush, as it respects nature's failing. The person in my view was one with Christ. She received what I said concerning him with great satisfaction; and this was what first gave occasion of my conceiving I would, if permitted, write a small treatise suited to put into the chambers and hands of such of the Lord's people as might, either through sickness or old age, be drawing downwards to the grave, the house appointed for all living.

I reflected thus with myself, whilst I doubted not of the person I had visited concerning her eternal state, yet I considered her very great weakness of body, such that she could not bear much talk.

This I had done in many, very many instances, in the course of visiting such as I really looked on as saints, and many scores of times. I thought, could any short matter be drawn up, so as for such to peruse, or for others to read to them, it might serve, in the hand of the Lord the Spirit, to draw out their minds to such subjects as are particularly suited to such circumstances.

These were my thoughts; and as I have declared the original from whence my first conception of these sprung, so I will, secondly, declare the nature, end, and design of this work. It is to take off all fears from the minds of the Lord's believing people concerning death and dying, by pointing out Christ as an all-sufficient antidote against the fears of dissolution. Some express their fears of death as arising from what may be felt at that time, and when the parting stroke is given which separates body and soul. Others, their entrance hereby into a state they were never in before, fills them with perplexity and dread. Others, that they must hereby be in the immediate presence of the Lord, and having their minds too much and too deeply exercised on these, forget those glorious subjects which alone can carry their minds beyond all perplexity. My end and design, therefore, in this work, is to bring forth Christ, and those everlasting consolations which the gospel reveals as hid in him for his people, so that the hands of feeble saints which

hang down may be lifted up and strengthened. My design is so to set forth Christ as most exactly suited to his weak, sick, and beloved ones, who are in dying circumstances, and are actually in the very article of death, as may serve to comfort them, seeing our Lord is a friend that loveth at all times, and that friend who sticketh closer than a brother. The subjects I shall treat of will be, *Death; the Consolations suited to Dying Believers; on the Act of Dying; on what may be conceived concerning the Invisible State; on Eternity; of the actual Entrance of disembodied Saints into Heaven, and their Reception there; on the Vision of Christ, and the Life, Glory, and Blessedness which will flow therefrom; of our Employment in the State of Glory, until our Lord's Descent at the Last Day.* It must be acknowledged they are important ones. I shall treat of these very particularly, yet briefly; and shall therefore give these in chapters, placing the contents over each, as thereby the reader will know what he is to expect; and shall close each with a soliloquy addressed to my own soul, and a short prayer, leaving the reader to think for himself how far it may suit him. I have chosen this form, as it may fix the subjects the more particularly on the mind, and also hoping each of them will be found quite sufficient for proper and particular consideration at any one season. I would also say, that as I shall aim to be comprehensive in what may be expressed in each chapter, I the

rather prefer this division, as thereby any part may be read that may be most suitable to the mind, case, experience, and circumstances the person may be in. I conceive the subjects mentioned are also, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, calculated to be a proper preparation at all times, and in all places, for saints who say in their own individual persons with the apostle, "I die daily," 1 Cor. xv, ver. 31.

Death is universal: *it reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* Some die unborn, others as soon as they are born; some die babes, some infants, some youths, some in the very prime of manhood, some in middle age, some in old age. More die before ten than after sixty; when arrived to thirty-five, the body begins to decay; at forty-five, the mind begins to drop; at seventy, the lease is up: if any live to be eighty, it is but labour and sorrow. When the ages of men were procrastinated, so as to live 200, 400, 600, 900 years, yet it is recorded of them, *they died* Only two have ever yet escaped the stroke of death; one before the flood, another since, and though they died not, by putting off their bodies, yet they underwent a change in their bodies analogous to the change we shall undergo at death, and such an one as must pass on ours at the resurrection.

Enoch and Elijah could not enter heaven in

their mortal bodies any more than we can; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. No; they cannot. The saints, who will be found alive in their bodies at the second coming of Christ, will not die; yet they will undergo such a change as Enoch and Elijah did, or they could not enter heaven, and it will be to them as great a change as death is to us—it will be *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.*—1 Cor. xv, ver. 52.

Were we, therefore, to conceive rightly of these subjects, I conceive our minds would be delivered from a variety of fears, which are very distressing.

I conceive the act of dying must be in all alike: that there is not much felt in the immediate article of dissolution; that it cannot take place before *the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; then, (and not before) the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* Ecclesiastes xii, ver. 6, 7. This I conceive comes on gradually, by which means the body loses its senses; it becomes insensible; the pulse stops; the body expires, which is no more than to fall asleep, only that the soul hath left it. I conceive that every one is alike in this; one feels no more than another in it; the body is passive, it is breathless. I am not speaking of what

goes before this takes place, I here speak simply of the act of dissolution.

Our Lord Jesus Christ went out of his body in the same way, or he could not have been a breathless corpse; and by the same means we must.

I wish, for myself, to take in distinct views of every subject revealed in the word, so as to have clear and proper conceptions of the same in my mind. I would understand death, and its process on the body, from the scripture, and look on what is actually visible in every death as the realization thereof. I would look on sickness, disease, and old age, as prognostics of death, whilst at the same time I would look on death as distinct from them. I would consider myself under the sentence of death, and also as having it inherent in my constitution, and be living every moment in the certain expectation of the same. Yet I would also live as though it had no existence in me—as though it was passed—as though I should never see it, or be brought under it, by living on these words of Christ, who says, *I am the resurrection and the life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.* I would be looking unto, and living on Christ, thus: I would consider his person as God-Man, and contemplate Him, and my oneness with Him, as the Father chose me in Him before the foundation of the world. I would consider Him in his incarnation, by which he became flesh of my flesh,

and bone of my bone, my near kinsman, my brother, and redeemer. I would consider the holiness of his human nature; and consider that he sanctified it, by taking the same into union with his person. *He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, partakers of one and the same nature, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.* Here I would behold my antidote against all the unholiness of my fallen nature, and all the inherent sinfulness of the same. I would look at Christ the Lord my righteousness, and on my person in Him; and receive this truth into my mind from the everlasting gospel of the blessed God, that *He made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,* and consider this to be my complete salvation, perfection, and glory. I would look at Christ's death as the conquest of death; at his laying a cold corpse in the grave, as sanctifying and perfuming the grave for me to lay where he did. I would consider his passage out of time into eternity, to be all-sufficient to remove all fears concerning this in my own particular case. I would consider the change this made on Him, as giving proof of what I am to expect, and which will take place in me as one of his members. I would meditate on his life in glory, and receive these sweet words of his into my mind: *Because I live, ye shall live. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my*

Father, for my Father is greater than I. I call this living on Christ, and am fully persuaded, that so far as these important realities prevail in the spiritual mind, it is raised up to some real and blessed views of what is contained in glory and immortality.

I do not mean that I have so fully attained, as to be perfected in this life of faith. No; all I mean is, to excite the Lord's people to consider, that living on Christ by faith is the only mean whereby we may conceive what it will be to live with Him in heaven and glory everlasting.

The truths of the everlasting gospel, received into the spiritual mind, will produce supernatural effects. In the true knowledge of them we receive Christ; in our real believing on Christ, as set forth in them, we enjoy everlasting life. As the Lord the Spirit goes on to glorify Jesus, and the Father's love to us in Him, we are so established in our communion with God as makes us confident in it, and leads us to expect all influential blessings therefrom. I consider God's elect as having their minds drawn forth towards the Lord, in proportion as they are operated upon by the truths contained in the revelation of Christ, in the sacred page of inspiration. I consider all the Lord's people alike in Christ, both in life and death: one is not more blessed than another: they may be so in the revelation of Christ to their minds, and in the communications of his love, in

a way of sense and enjoyment. In death, all the Lord's people die equally blessed, because they all die equally and alike in Christ; yet some of them are favoured with more of Christ's manifestative presence, others with less, but the one does not die more beloved of Christ than the other. You are not, therefore, to expect I am going to fill up the ensuing pages with the happiness of saints in their dying moments. I am not. No; it is their state in Christ which I shall be principally concerned with; as also, what those objects and subjects are which their minds should be influenced by and reflective on. They will not lose their bodies by death, nor any one member of them; they will not lose their friends and comforts, neither will they know what death is; they will only fall asleep in their bodies. These bodies, with all the members of them, will be raised up at the last day: they will not lose their friends, they will only exchange them for their friends in heaven. They will not know death, it will only be a translation to the state of glory. Death is to saints what regeneration was, a passage from death into life: by the former we were translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; by the latter, we are admitted into the state of glory. As in the former, we perceived not the change which was then wrought on our souls; so neither shall we in the latter, when sin is for ever eradicated, and we are clothed with immortality and eternal glory.

Our comforts will not cease in death, but we shall have them changed for those which are far more glorious and divine. These things, thus mentioned, will be more fully opened and explained in the course and body of the work before us. May the Lord give his blessing unto it! May it, in the hand of the Spirit, lift up the heart to the Lamb in the midst of the throne! May we consider, He will feed his saints in heaven, and lead, them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!

Reader, the Lord be with thee. May it be given thee, so to read as to understand!

I am,

Thy wellwisher in Christ Jesus,

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

BETHEL HOUSE, BRIXTON,

July 30, 1815.

AN
A T T E M P T,
&c.

CHAPTER I.

On Death. What it is. With its universal dominion over all the human race.

OF all the evils in this our world, there is no one which we seem to dread so much as death. Not that it is the greatest. Sin is infinitely greater: it produced death: death is the wages of it. So says the apostle: *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The same apostle tells us the original of death. It entered and was enacted by the ordinance of the Most High God, in consequence of Adam's fall: its sentence was, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* Gen. iii, ver. 19. Paul says, *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, (in whom, or) for that all have sinned.* Rom. v, ver. 12. When we consider the trials, sorrows, miseries, and pains of this present state, and what may befall us in our bodies and minds, whilst we remain in this pre-

sent evil world, it may be of some relief, and be looked on as a mercy, that we are not always to remain here. We are at times disposed to speak agreeable with this; yet it is but seldom: we are, I conceive, chiefly distressed in our minds, because by death we are translated into an unseen state. It is commonly said, none ever returned after death to give an account of what they passed through in the article of death, and what their state now is. No; nor is there any need they should, for the word of inspiration is sufficient for all this. We are informed therein concerning the creation of man; of the fall of all men in one man; of death; what it is; of its universal dominion over all the human race. There is a sense, in which it may be said we need no other book but it, for all knowledge is comprized therein. Our bodies are in it so opened, and every part of the animal frame so explained, that were we to attend closely unto the same, we should know the cause of our every disease, and thereby be capable of understanding what is most likely to give us relief; for surely, he who made the body, and gives an account of what is the union knot between body and soul, in the account he gives us of fluids and solids of which our bodies consist, must alone be capable of giving us the knowledge of those outward means and medicines which are properly suited to the diseases and injuries which befall them.

The body of man is a wonderful structure : it was formed by the Holy Trinity out of the dust; it is the microcosm of the whole world. The account of its original is given us in these words: *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* Gen. ii, ver. 7. The body was first formed, and then the soul infused into it; when it was infused, then it was created—then the body was animated, and the soul was created when it was infused. As man hereby had a sensitive, animal, and rational life, so, when the Lord God is pleased to gather to himself man's spirit and breath, the body dies: its union with the soul is then dissolved, and it returns to the elements out of which it was formed.

Man was made for the world, and all things in it were made for his use, benefit, and advantage. We have a most beautiful scripture to this purpose in the prophecy of Isaiah. *Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there is none else,* chap. xlv, ver. 18. *I have made the earth, and created man upon it,* ver. 12 of the same chapter. Solomon, speaking of God and his works, says, *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.* Ecclesiastes iii, ver. 11.

Adam was the epitome of the whole world, and it was the epitome of him: there was every creature in it, every tree, herb, plant, and flower, suited to him to satisfy his body and mind; and in all he saw such evidences of the eternal power and Godhead of the *Three in Jehovah*, as made way for him to give unto them, as his *Creators*, glorious praise.

Yet Adam was not in an immortal state, neither was he created immortal either in body or mind. Jehovah might continue, but he could not create a creature either immortal or immutable: it is his property to be immutable; and it is said, *He alone hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi, ver. 16. We say, the souls of men, as also angels, are immortal; they are so: but this is by the gift of God. We conceive Adam's body to have been so in Paradise before the fall; it was, and it was not so: it was in this sense immortal, that he would never have died had he not sinned. But his body would have needed recruiting, to keep up the continual expense and activity of his spirits, therefore the tree of life was appointed for this end; which, had he continued in his creation state, would have been to him the balsam of life, and recruited his body and senses with perpetual vigour. As to his body, it required the power of God every moment to sustain it, to poise the elements of it, to keep it in a perpetual equilibrium, otherwise Adam had no immortality in his own nature. It was possible

for him to sin: he did actually sin when he was in this state; he fell under the sentence of death in his body as we are under it in ours. It passed on him, and on us; on us as considered in him; he lost the image of God, in which he was created, for himself and us also: thus, *by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.*

Death is a solemn subject: it is for a season the destruction of the body; it dissolves the beautiful microcosm of it; all the parts of it are left without any animality in them; the senses are all gone; the faculties of the mind all cease; the soul can no longer dwell in it. This makes death to us the king of terrors: our soul, mind, thought, that thinking faculty which hath hitherto possessed the body, can remain in it no longer—it is separated from it by the violence of death; it must, therefore, as it cannot cease its existence, be in an invisible state without it. I conceive this is the chiefest reason why any of the godly cannot look on death comfortably; they think it would be far more agreeable to go to heaven in their bodies, as Enoch and Elijah did. Why, these were as truly changed in their bodies, and it made as great an alteration in their minds also, as death and separation, and entrance into heaven will in us. They do not reflect, that though these two saints in Christ died not, yet the change which actually passed on them was equal to that which will pass on us at death; we shall by it be

as truly translated to heaven as they were changed in their bodies without death, and translated body and soul thither without it.

As it respects death, it is the disunion of body and soul. The union knot between these is the breath in our nostrils, which, when it ceaseth, the body drops off, and is nothing but a breathless corpse: it is found to be nothing but a case, or sheath, in which the soul was implunged; which, being disunited from it, the body is but a dust heap, and therefore fit for nothing but the grave, where it is to rest until the resurrection morning comes. There is nothing in all this to affright the people of the Most High: it is the ordinance of heaven; it is the divine will; *It is appointed unto men once to die.* It is but once, and it is past for ever. The most holy and useful are not exempted. Prophets, patriarchs, saints, and believers of the highest attainments—apostles, evangelists, the saints of all ages, past and present, and all the saints who are to come, did and will depart out of this world to heaven; only the saints who shall remain and be alive in their bodies when the last trumpet shall sound, will be excused from dying. Yet, as in the cases of Enoch and Elijah, a change will pass on them, which will be equal to death. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head, Saviour, and Representative of his Church, passed out of our world to glory in this very same way that we must. His body and soul were seperated by death,

so that it is a consecrated path: it has been trodden over and over; multitudes, even millions of millions of millions, have gone to heaven before us. Some of them have so spoken of Christ, so praised him, so triumphed in him, when the cold death sweat has been upon them, that they have proved fully they found no evil in death—it had no sting. *The death of Christ is the death of Death He that believeth on Him, hath everlasting life.*

Death, natural death, hath universal dominion over all the human race: it is a most solemn evidence of the fall of all mankind in the first Adam, the natural head of all his posterity. As we are conceived and born in sin, so we receive death into our constitutions, as soon as we are framed in the womb. Death may well be entitled themortality which is in our bodies: it seizeth on some infants who were never born into our world; on others, so soon as they enter it. *There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die;* and every one dies when they least expect, yet no one dies, but at God's appointed time; and the wisdom, goodness, and power of God, are most eminently displayed in the deaths of all men, as well as in their lives. This should make us contented to live, and also to die. The time, the place, the season, the circumstance, and all which concerns our going out of this world, is most divinely ordered by the Lord. Every one dies at the best time, and in the most convenient season for themselves and

those they belong unto. All God's purposes, for which he brought us into being, and the reasons why he hath upheld us so few, or so many years in this world, all are accomplished in us, and by us, before he removes us out of it by death. Let it be saint, let it be sinner, God's end is answered. It would be of no use to church or state, for the holiest man, the wisest man, the greatest statesman, to continue alive in the body one single moment beyond what the Lord hath fixed in his immutable will. This should put saints on activity. All should be useful in their day and generation; all cannot be useful in one and the same way. Let saints who have property settle their minds, make their wills, and leave nothing undone, that if death seize them, they may not want to live one single moment, but be ready and willing to go immediately. Let saints of every description so carry on their affairs in the world, in the family, and in the church, as to have nothing to do but to die: let them take advantage of death's secret undermining their constitutions, of its frequent warnings by disease and sickness, or other symptoms of its intended secret attack on them, to be in constant expectation of it;—then they will not be surprized, but meet it with holy cheerfulness and serenity. Most blessed is the advice which our Lord gives us in the following scripture: *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men*

that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching! Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Luke xii, ver. 35—40.

The death of the body—our sleeping in it every night, might serve to save us from all unreasonable fears and concerns about it. Nature's nurse is sleep; nothing is more recruiting to the animal spirits; nothing more acceptable and reviving to the body; all its senses are then locked up; the whole frame is at ease; it rests sweetly, and is quite refreshed; thereby it is fitted for further uses and services. We are not afraid to sleep. We go to bed for that very purpose. We know not when sleep falls upon us; when it does, we cannot resist it; we awake, and are refreshed. So death is compared to sleep—to sleeping in Jesus. In death, all our senses, faculties, and members, are closed up; we know not the moment we ac-

tually depart the body, for this comes on us instantaneously. We fall thereby into a fast sleep: the grave is then prepared for the body, as its proper place and bed. We feel no pain, no uneasiness of any kind. When our Lord calls for us to awake out of sleep, we find our bodies altogether the better, for having slept the sleep of death. We awake; we are satisfied; we are renewed with immortal youth. We see Christ face to face; we are completely conformed in body and soul, and made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself; so that death did us no kind of injury in performing its office on our bodies, bringing such sleep on them as to fit them for resting in the proper bed prepared by God himself for them in the dust. The Lord said to Abram, *Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.* Gen. xv, ver. 15. Here is an easy admission into heaven, and a free dismissal from his body; and also a grave and burial in it promised him. He was to die in peace—in the enjoyment of that peace of God which passeth all understanding. He was to go to heaven; his body was to be buried, in full expectation of its resurrection from the grave, when it would be clothed with immortality.—A most blessed prospect! Surely he could not, when he and death met as friends together, be afraid of it!—He was not. So far from

it, that it is recorded of him, *He gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full, and was gathered to his people.* Gen. xxv, ver. 8. I have left out the supplementary words *of years*;—he was full. Mr. *Romaine* says, “*Abraham* was fully satisfied with the goodness of the Lord to him.” *Abraham* died fully satisfied with the Father’s everlasting love to him in Christ; he died fully satisfied with Christ, and his salvation; he fell asleep in his arms of death, fully satisfied with the testimony and witness of the Holy Ghost, concerning the Father’s love and the Son’s salvation; he could have nothing beyond this to satisfy his mind out of heaven; he was therefore gathered to his people, *Abel, Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem,* and other saints, gone to heaven before him.

I have placed *Abel* before *Adam*, because he was the first saint of human race who ever entered into heaven; which place, though prepared before the foundation of the world for the habitation of the just, was but slowly filled from *Adam*’s time down to the flood. *Abel*, who was a martyr for Christ, went thither first; and *Enoch* was the first who entered in body and soul. This was to the Church of God, then existing in our world, a pledge to their faith of a glorious life of immortality in the body, as well as in the soul.

Let me turn this whole subject, as it respects the substance of it, into a soliloquy to my own

mind, and close the same with prayer; for why should I not aim to gain advantage from it?

Thou art, O my soul! fully persuaded, art thou not, of what death is? that thy own body is under the sentence of it, which cannot be repealed? As to thine own existence, it cannot cease, but thy body must die: it will soon cease its union with thee.—What are thy thoughts concerning this? Surely I conceive there is no need to live in any fear concerning death. Whilst it will be to thee what it is to all beside, what cause hast thou to fear it? seeing thou hast had evidence upon evidence, that the Lord hath been with his saints in their dying moments, and turned all their sorrows into joy, when they have clearly discerned the close approach of death. Surely, O my soul! it may encourage thee to consider this is the very passage from the state of grace to the state of glory. What hast thou to do with death? Surely nothing. It will have to do with thee; but thou needest not to look at it, or have any dealings with it; the Lord Jesus Christ knows all contained in death, what is felt, *when the silver cord is loosed, when the golden bowl is broken, when the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel is broken at the cistern. As he was made in all things like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being*

tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. Surely he will feel for me when death invades me. It may be, I may not know when death is upon me; I may die in my bed; I may fall into the arms of death suddenly. Let it be so; I will give myself no concern about it. I must quit the body, or I cannot see Christ, nor be with him, and live with him, in his kingdom of glory. I will not, therefore, look on death as my enemy, but as my real friend. I will expect that the Lord will be to me all he hath been to those who died in him before me. I will address his Majesty on a throne of grace on this important subject.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I am thine, and all that I have and am is at thine own disposal! My life, my breath, my time, my death, are all before thee. I most certainly feel, very sensibly, that I must die; I would be content that it must be so. I would praise thee, it will soon be so; and I would triumph in thee, in the prospect thereof! Lord, create in my mind such proper views and ideas hereof, as may realize the subject: in the full apprehensions of it, let me rejoice and be exceeding glad in thee, the Lord. Let me be kept looking at thy death, and my complete salvation. Let me find thy love heaven. Let me clearly understand thy person to be life everlasting. Let me be looking unto thee, and looking on thee, as my perfection, my conqueror, my blessedness, my

glory, my all ! O that thou wouldst so enlarge and enlighten my spiritual faculties, to take in and comprehend what is revealed in the written word concerning thy conquest of death, and the whole contained in it, that I may live in thee cheerfully, believe in thee confidently, and die in thee triumphantly. I beseech thee to grant unto me so clear and true a knowledge of thee from thy holy gospel, as will produce in me, living or dying, all this ! Amen.

Lord Jesus, Amen, and Amen.

CHAPTER II.

The Consolations of the Gospel suited to Believers, to save them from all Concern and Fears respecting Death and Dying.

IT seems to be an idea which exists in the minds of all God's called people, that they shall need much of Christ's presence, and strong consolations in the article of death; they look on it as their last enemy—as the greatest they ever had, or were ever called to encounter; and, some how, they expect some remarkable support in the season when they expect nature will entirely fail with them. Yet so it is, they neglect to receive into their minds those precious cordials, which are already provided for them in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

As it respects the greatest evil the Lord's people ever were, and will ever be the subjects of, it is sin. It is not death is the greatest evil in them. No; it is sin. Nothing can heal the wounds which sin hath given us but the blood of Christ; nothing can cleanse our minds from the guilt and stains which we have contracted, but the wounds and stripes, the agony, and bloody sweat of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel, which is the revelation of Christ in

all the perfection of his blood and righteousness, and sacrifice, contains an infallible antidote and cure for the whole disease of sin. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to make us inwardly acquainted with Christ Jesus; when we have, therefore, an inward, spiritual, and intellectual knowledge of the person and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, received from the glorious gospel, and God is pleased to shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, then we have an inward and experimental knowledge of life, righteousness, health, and cure, in the person, blood, and righteousness, of our most precious Lord Jesus. Faith is a real apprehension and spiritual perception of the everlasting virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. When our minds centre in Christ, and he is the one object of our faith and hope, and we receive the Father's record and testimony concerning him, then *we set to our seals that God is true; then we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

It is absolutely necessary for us to be well acquainted with, and rightly influenced by gospel truths and principles, to the intent that we may *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* If sin be removed in its guilt and condemnation from our minds, then we have nothing to fear from death and judgment; for, where the blood

of Christ is truly known, there the peace of God is enjoyed, which always makes way for our communion with God, in the real enjoyment of his love.

The gospel is suited to all believers, to save them from all fears and suspicions concerning Christ's love to them, his care of them, his concern for them, his friendship and attachment unto them: it reaches their cases even in death, and when dying; so that, if they are troubled and cast down, it must be owing to themselves. It cannot arise from any thing Christ hath spoken in the gospel; it must proceed from their ignorance of it, their non-attention to it, not from any thing concerning Christ recorded therein.

I would set forth the consolations of the gospel, as they belong to all believers; as also what there is contained in the same, to save them from all concern and fears respecting death and dying.

A man cannot know Christ, as set forth in the gospel, but from the word, and by the Spirit: he cannot know him, but he is a believer on him; he cannot believe on him, but he hath communion with him. Such an one cannot want greater evidence of his interest in him. Our Lord says, *He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life; he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* Thus one truth hangs upon another, and in the true knowledge of them the fruits and effects of each are produced.

The covenant of the Eternal Three is the believer's security for all the blessings of this life, and of that which is to come. The word, oath, and promise of the Three in Jehovah, are the believer's foundation for faith and hope in God; and the promises, which God is pleased to speak to his people by, are all yea and amen in Christ; they are all as immutable as God's will; they are all the expressions of the good pleasure of his will in Christ Jesus concerning us: the believer in Christ is therefore secure; he is well provided for; he is in Christ in life, he is in Christ in death. We may consider the following particulars as containing consolations suited to saints, in the views of immediate death and dying.

1. What is recorded concerning the death of Old Testament saints.

2. The death of Christ, the head of all the saints. In consequence of which it may be well said, *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*; and what Christ says, and what is said concerning his saints in the New Testament, regarding their union with Christ, their state in him and their blessedness in their deaths, and dying.

1. As to what is recorded concerning Old Testament believers, the apostle expressly says, of *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were stran-*

gers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say, such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. Heb. xi, ver. 13, 14, 15, 16.

In the Old Testament we read, *Abraham was gathered to his people. Of Isaac, that he gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people. Of Jacob, that he yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. Of the Lord's command to Moses: Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to mount Hor. And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there. Numbers xx, ver. 25, 26. Of the Lord's speaking thus unto Moses: Get thee up into this mount Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; As Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people. Deuteronomy xxxii, ver. 49, 50. The people they were gathered to, were the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven. The consolation suited to us, under*

the immediate apprehensions of death, may well be derived from viewing how easy their deaths were; how the Lord so sustained them, that they did not so much as sigh; and also, that they were no sooner out of the body but they were in the house eternal in the heavens. As soon as they were absent from their bodies, they joined their fathers in the state of glory. Whoso readeth and understandeth this, will find strong consolation arising therefrom.

2. The death of Christ, the head of all the saints, contains everlasting consolation. There is every thing in it to carry believers in him, above and beyond all their concern and fears about death and dying. It is a consecrated path, sanctified by our Lord himself. When the Israelites were to enter Canaan, the river Jordan fled before the ark, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ gave death its commission to separate his soul and body, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost*; and at that very instant swallowed up death in victory, and went immediately by it into his kingdom of glory. Death, believers in Jesus, can do us no more harm than it did Christ: it could do him none—he was sin proof and death proof; so are we in him. We have no more to fear from it than the saints in glory. It is as natural for us to fear it, as it is in our very natures to be sinful. But Christ's righteousness imputed

to our persons delivers us from the imputation of all sin, both inherent and actual; his blood cleanseth us from all sin; his righteousness delivereth from death; in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. When our Lord offered up his commendatory prayer, and with it yielded up his soul to his divine Father, he at the same time commended and committed all the souls of his people, together with his own, to his Father's care and trust. A right apprehension of this affords everlasting consolation against the fears, and all concern about dying. All Christ's acts for his church will redound to their everlasting benefit. This was our Lord's last act, when he finished the work of salvation, and yielded up his soul in the same breath. It is not sufficiently considered by believers, for in it and by it, we are everlastingly secured. He hath commended, and committed our souls with his own, which is of infinitely more worth than the souls of all the election of grace put together, into his Father's hands, so that we are safe and properly provided with for a dying moment. We need not, therefore, give ourselves any concern about a dying moment; we shall die as truly interested in Christ's prayer, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, as he did himself. I think this may be to us, present, as it will be found to contain everlasting consolation!

3. What Christ says, and what is said concerning his saints in the New Testament, regarding their union with Christ, their state in Christ, and their blessedness in their deaths and dying; as it proves, that *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*, so it contains consolations suited to such of them as have immediate views of death and dying.

Our Lord says, *Fear not ; I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.* Rev. i, ver. 17, 18. *Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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 xiv, ver. 1, 2, 3. The prophet saith, *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth ; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them,* Rev. xiv, ver. 13. Such as are *in the Lord*, they are the Lord's in life and death. They die in the Lord ; they sleep in the Lord ; they are the Lord's dead. The apostle says, *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we*

live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. Romans xiv, ver. 7, 8, 9. The elect were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world: they are in him as members in a head; they are one with him; they are united in their whole persons to his person; their souls and bodies are united to the soul and body of the God-Man, and nothing can dissolve this union; therefore they need not fear death and dying. They are interested in the person, undertakings, incarnation, holiness, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, so that they are in the sight of God what Jesus their head is. Their state before Jehovah the Father, is the same with the state of Christ. God hath made Christ to be unto them, *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*, so that there can be no cause why they should fear death, or dying. They are blessed in their deaths and dying moments, because they are in Christ, and are blessed in him; and they are even then, whether they feel and perceive it or not, blessed by him, for he remembers them with everlasting kindness. Surely this is well suited to the cases of dying believers. What is recorded in the New Testament concerning the death of Stephen is very supporting and consolatory: he was stoned, *calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he fell asleep.* This is what death

is to the saints. Some such persons, says the apostle, *are fallen asleep. Such as sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

Now, beloved in the Lord, here are very suitable subjects and consolations for such as are about to fetch their last breath;—are there not? Many a saint died before us; before you, who have now the immediate views of death and dying. Many of them, in the examples of those fetched from the Old Testament, died without sigh or groan; yea, they died cheerfully: their minds were kept in perfect peace, whilst the change which death made in their countenance passed on them, and the disunion of body and soul took place. All their safety and blessedness were in Christ: so are ours. Why should we not then be as perfectly resigned to the stroke as they were?

The last act of Christ, which preceded his expiring on the cross, may well yield us very suited consolation in the very article of death, and in the very moment of dying. We shall die in union with him; we shall die interested in his life and death—in his last words, and dying act. What can we have, therefore, to fear? Nothing. If we are fearful of death, and afraid of the act of dying, it is because we look off Jesus, and are not exercising our minds on him.

So the consolations of the gospel, suited to relieve us from all fears regarding death, are all-

sufficient cordials to support and sustain us in the immediate views of death and dying. It would be well to make use of them beforehand; it becomes us to use them now, for the mind truly acquainted with them, and exercising faith continually in the remembrance of these, will thereby be lifted up above, and beyond all doubt and dismay.

I would, O my soul! address thee, and ask, are these things so? Dost thou know the truth? and hast thou been brought by the power of the Holy Ghost under the influence of the same? Then bless the Lord the Spirit for it; give him his glory. Art thou enlightened in thy mind, and led clearly to see that there is no more in death and in the act of dying, for thee to feel and experience, than all those have felt who have gone before thee? Then learn to be perfectly resigned to it, let it come when, where, and how it may. Thou hast the same Christ to support thee that all the Old Testament saints had; thou hast the same Christ to look on thee who looked on *Stephen*. It is true *he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*. This will not be granted thee, nor dost thou need it; but the same Jesus will actually keep his eye on thee all the while death is doing its office on thee; and thou wilt then have the benefit contained in Christ's commendatory prayer; therefore, fear not. It is to

disparage Christ to be afraid of death. O my soul ! pray for such a personal knowledge of Christ as may carry thee wholly out of and off thyself, and fix thee so intently on him, as that the feelings of death, when it shall come on thee, may not for a single moment divert thy thoughts from Christ. I know in the very act of death there will be an entire suspension of every spiritual faculty from the act and exercise of the same. Yet that will be soon over, and then it will be all act, and in full activity for evermore. It would, O my soul ! be the way to glorify God in the article of death and dying, to lie wholly passive in his hands, to leave all with him. I will now express my own breathings concerning it.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, the Incomprehensible and Essential Three, in the one Essential and Incomprehensible Jehovah, shine upon me in the person of Christ! Enlighten my mind to apprehend what is recorded in the holy word of inspiration—what is recorded concerning the death and dying of saints, who were one with Christ, and who died in the faith of him. I long, Holy Father, to honour thee, by believing in the election of grace!—that covenant relation can never cease, nor everlasting love ever abate—that thou wilt never cease to be the God of thy people. I pray that I may constantly live in the belief of this truth, and actually die in the faith of it; and I

request my mind may be so filled with the knowledge of it, as may make way for an increasing enjoyment in life and in the very article of death. O Lord Jesus Christ, thou knowest what death and dying are! I am shortly to experience them. Thou hast abolished death. Thou art upon thy throne in heaven, the prince of life. Wilt thou be pleased to shine upon me, so as that I may be receiving into my mind such views of thy death, of thy last words, and of the words which thou has spoken since thy coronation in heaven, as may remove from me all fears concerning the dissolution of my body? O that I might die, in the very act of looking unto thee! in a passive resignation to thy will; in calling on thee, saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!* Holy Spirit, I beseech thee to fortify my mind for this, by enlarging it, so as to comprehend the truth as it is in Jesus, and Him the truth, that I may be so continually and mentally engaged in taking in such views and gospel apprehensions of him and his death, and his victories over it, as that I may in my own soul now, as well as in the article of death, experience the efficacy of his most blessed words: *I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* Grant this, O Holy Ghost, to the honour of the Father, and the Son; to thine

own honour also ; that I may ascribe now, in the article of death and dying, blessing, honour, glory, and thanksgiving, for salvation from sin, Satan, death, and over all fear and concern about it to the holy ones in the one Godhead ?
Amen.

CHAPTER III.

*Of the Act of Dying. What we may conceive of it.
With Gospel Relief suited thereunto.*

I CONCEIVE death, the progress of it over the human frame, with the act of dying, to be distinct. Death is inherent in our bodies and constitutions. It is nothing but the mortality of our bodies, which cannot take place without such and such giving way: it may be instantly, but it is produced by certain physical causes. Hence I apprehend it is that some, from a good sound understanding of the human frame, have expressed most exactly the precise time of their dissolution. In our bodies we are the subjects of a sensitive, animal, and rational life. This the soul, by its indwelling in the body, hath its enjoyments of. Yet these lives are not in the soul, but in the body: the soul is the subject of intellectual and rational life. This does not expire and cease with the body. At death, we lose no other life than what alone belongs to the body; which consists in that sense, motion, feeling, and perception, which belong to it; all which is vegetive, sensitive, and animal. With respect to which, the death of it comes on all the nerves, and parts of it, so as to affect the whole frame, to deprive it of

all the senses, feelings, and motion thereof, whereby the soul is forced to leave it. Now death is first, as it respects its seizure of the body, which in its progress stops the circulation of the blood throughout the whole frame; then seals up every sense, and thus the *breath of man goeth forth, and he returns to the earth: in that very day his thoughts, formed in the mind by the mean of the bodily nerves, blood, and senses, perish.*

Now, the act of dying, I conceive, consists in all the senses, faculties, and members of the animal frame entirely ceasing, so as for the breath wholly to depart out of the body.

I conceive that it is very easy, when it comes to this. The soul is now unclothed of all mortality; it is out of its sheath: it is just what an angel is, as it respects its essence and faculties. It has no materiality belonging to it; the essence and faculties of it are such as can by no means be destroyed by death. Its medium of knowledge and communication is wholly different from what it was before: it is now wholly intellectual. Its faculties are will and understanding; its affections of memory and suitableness to the objects and subjects before it, are essential to its existence. I think these two things make death so terrible to our view: we see the body is wholly laid aside—it is put off. In its putting off, we perceive it is greatly agitated; when it came to its last gasp all was over. The mind was then wholly dis-

engaged from it. Now this we feel ourselves concerned in: to know where it is; how it acts; what we are to conceive thereof; what those objects and subjects are which engage it. Indeed, here we must stop, unless we submit to the word and light of inspiration; for what our souls, minds, thoughts are; what our thinking faculty is, we know not now, nor shall we, it may be, in a future state. We shall exist for ever, but our existence being in him who gave it, and continues it. I should conceive it will never fall under our knowledge, even in eternity. All we shall know of it, may be, will be only this: we know we live, and are in such a state, and are so and so exercised, but what our souls or existences are, will, I conceive, be beyond our knowledge, even in the invisible state.

We are to be disembodied by death. What light do the scriptures of truth give us concerning this? For it will not do for us to give way to conjecture. Indeed, it will not. The apostle tells us, *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This appearance must be in our souls. He says, *We being absent from the body, are present with the Lord.* He tells us, *he knew a man in Christ, whether in the body or out of it, he could not say. Yet such an one was caught up to the third heaven,* 2 Cor. xii, ver. 2. It fully appears from

hence, that we shall have no need of our bodies in heaven for a season. Our Lord said to the thief, *Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Luke xxiii, ver. 43. He is without his body to the present moment, yet he is in the immediate presence of Christ. The prophet John says, he saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held. *And white robes were given unto every one of them.* Rev. vi, ver. 9, 11. This was expressive of the garment of immortality; from whence we may clearly perceive, that the disembodied soul of the saint is, immediately at its leaving the body, with the spirits of just men made perfect. It is this which may well afford relief to the minds of saints, when they are in the very act of dying: that as soon as the body expires, they will be freed that very instant from all sin; the whole body of it will drop off for ever; not a stain will be found in them to eternity. They will instantaneously be clothed with the garments of immortality; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, mortality will be swallowed up of life; they will be all life and light; they will be clothed with eternal glory. In these garments of immortality and eternal glory they will be fitted for their disembodied state; to converse with God, the Father of spirits—to converse with angels and disembodied spirits; so that they will hereby be as fit for the world of glory and of spirits, as they

were fitted for the world which they left when their bodies expired, all the time they were permitted to live in it in their bodies. This is a very comfortable consideration, and I think it must be allowed to be a very just one. The soul will be the subject on whom this change of immortality and glory will pass, the very moment death hath disunited it from the body ; so that death will not be death to the saint, but only its passage way to eternal glory.

It deserves our most attentive consideration, that in all the acts of God within us, and upon us, we are altogether passive. We were when born again, and brought into the kingdom of God's dear son ; we shall be so in the article of death, and in our translation into the world of glory ; we shall be as completely fitted for the unseen state, as ever any of the saints before us were. It requires faith in the word of God, and much light from the Holy Spirit, to apprehend this ; yet all the saints are equally wrought upon in regeneration, to fit them to enter into, and live in the kingdom of grace. And they are, at their dismissal from their bodies, all and each of them, wrought upon to enter the invisible state, to fit them to converse with such as they are to live with for evermore. I conceive the garments of immortality and eternal glory will be fit mediums for disembodied saints, to conceive, apprehend,

and converse with those objects and subjects which will then be before them.

Mortality being swallowed up of life, and the garments of immortality and glory being wrought in the mind of the saint by the Holy Ghost, which will be the perfection of his work on the soul, an entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When these divine, most glorious, and supernatural truths are attended unto, all consideration of death, its progress, and what change will pass on the body in the article of dissolution, is not worth a thought; nor all which may be felt in the body, worth a one single sigh; nor the change of place, state, and circumstance either. We are then going from earth to heaven; from the church on earth, to the church in heaven. We are going to depart from our bodies to be with Christ; we are going from the state of grace to the state of glory; we are going to have our circumstances so changed, that we shall never have sin in us to eternity. We are going to our friends, and our Lord's friends, whose minds are perfectly pure; whose souls are in perfect harmony, who will be happy in our company, and love us next to Christ himself. We are going to enjoy our Lord, even as they do. These are the views the gospel gives us concerning the glory which is to be revealed in us, and will be revealed

to us as soon as we are dismissed from these bodies of ours, believers in Jesus. And it may afford us matter of support to consider this which follows: it is this, that when the cold clammy sweat of death is upon us, when you and I are actually departing, we shall need Christ, so as we never needed him yet. He knows this well; he will therefore be unto us very near and present. I do not mean by the manifestations of his gracious presence—I have no warrant from the word for so saying; not but that many a time it is so; but be this as it may, he, most assuredly, is very near us, because he is about to receive us. What he will do for us, as it respects our minds, we shall know nothing of; we shall perceive it when it hath taken place, but not whilst it is taking place. Let us learn, then, to leave ourselves wholly with him, and say for ourselves, as *Stephen* did, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*. The apostle had blessed views of these subjects, when he said, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i, ver. 12. And again: *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them which love his appearing*, chap. iv, ver. 6, 7, 8.

And again : *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* ver. 18. Our best preparations for dying and apprehensions of future glory, must consist in having these most glorious and divine realities realized in our souls by the Holy Ghost. Not one of the Lord's beloved ones is more interested in them than another. No ; many a saint has no views of these important things, yet there is not a single individual child of God but shall enjoy, in the invisible state, all the blessedness contained in them. The apostle *Peter* includes all believers in Christ Jesus with himself in the word *us*, and says, *The God of all grace hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.* 1 Pet. v, ver. 10. The holy apostle *Jude* tells us, *Our Lord Jesus is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.* Surely, in what hath been delivered, we have had such gospel reliefs suited to us, when we shall come into dying circumstances, as are all sufficient to sustain us *when heart and flesh shall fail.* Any saint entering into the subject which hath been proposed, or rather, every saint into whose mind these divine truths enter, and is engaged in the real apprehension and belief of them, may in death sing and say, *My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Psalm lxxiii, ver. 26. May the Lord look down

from heaven, his holy dwelling-place, on all his dying saints, and shine away from them all their fears of death, and fill them with prospects of a blessed immortality. There is not a moment but one saint or other is dying; and others, who are just entered into heaven. It is a very necessary act, and is a part of the communion of saints to pray on the behalf of sick and dying saints. It is also all the communion we can at present have with our friends in Christ just departed, to bless the Lord for taking them to himself; for his love to them now in glory with him. He loved them whilst they were here, as truly as he doth now: but he could not express it to them whilst they were here, as he doth now. He loved them to the end of their lives, to the very moment when they drew their last breath; he will love them in heaven for ever, and will express it in the following way: *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*, Rev. vii, ver. 17. Our Lord Jesus Christ is in the possession of the key of all the treasures of his Father's grace and glory; and he can unlock them, and shew us all contained therein, so that we need not be unwilling to leave this world and body at any given moment when the Lord shall call for us: but when he shall say, *Come up hither*; we may well reply,—*Amen*. Come Lord Jesus, come and receive us to thy heavenly

glory. Let me, O my soul! take all this subject into close and deep meditation, and may the Lord bless the same unto thee! Amen.

I must for once be in dying circumstances; I must for once feel the real death of the body; my heart-strings must break; my eyes must fail; my pulse cease; I must, in my body, undergo a dissolution of it; my breath must cease, and go out of it, so as for me to be forced thereby into a world I have never seen yet. I shall be wholly passive in death; so I shall be in my entrance into the unseen state. All thou needest is, to apprehend how safe thou art in the hands of Jesus Christ, and to be perfectly persuaded that he is all sufficient for thee, and all thy concerns then as truly as he is now, and to give thyself no concern about what shall then take place in thee, and the change of state into which thou wilt be removed. It will, O my soul! be real blessedness to have thine understanding well informed into the apprehension of those divine realities which the scriptures set before thee, as suitable supports for thy mind now; for if thou shouldest be supported ever so blessedly in the article of death and dying, yet thou canst not be kept up by the change which will pass on thy mind of glory and immortality; whereby, as I may say, thou wilt be immortalized, because this will not, it cannot take place, but either as thou art just in the moment of departing, or art actually departed

out of thy body. Thou mayest rejoice in the views of it, but thou canst not rejoice that so it is with thee before it hath taken place. I want, O my soul! that thou shouldest clearly apprehend that thou wilt not know when this change passes on thee; when it has passed thou wilt perceive it; but though thou art the subject on whom this will take place, yet thou wilt not feel any thing when it does. Thou wilt by it be swallowed up of life, and be changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If it be given thee to receive right conceptions of this subject, it will save thee from false expectations in thy dying moments, and much enthusiasm. Thou wilt not look for any more from the Lord than he is pleased to promise. O my soul! Jesus says, *I the Lord will hold thy right-hand, saying, Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm,* Isaiah xli, ver. 13, 14. Is not this enough? Mayest thou not find enough in this, to keep up thy faith and hope in him, when thou art actually dying? most assuredly. Then, O my soul! rest here. Seek nothing beyond this. *Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* I will, the Lord being my helper; I will express my mind before the Lord in the following manner:

O Lord Jesus Christ, I must shortly leave my soul, when it is disengaged from its body by

death, to thee. I cannot express myself then, if permitted so to do, but by saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. It may be I may not be in a capacity of saying, or even thinking so in my dying moments. I would not be concerned about the foreviews of this. No. I shall be then wholly passive, for thy Majesty to do in me, and for me, as seemeth good in thy sight. I would rejoice in the views thou hast given me of this. I would pray thee to improve my mind in the true knowledge of the same; that I may now live, and then die, in a right understanding of this most important verity; that those whom the Father did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. I am to be conformed in soul and body to thee, who art my grace and glory head. I have received a life from thee which death cannot touch. I am to die in thee; I am in my dying moment to be thy special care and charge. My death, and passage by it out of this world, is to be a part of my conformity to thee. I can do nothing, I can act nothing in my death. Thou hast saved me in thyself with an everlasting salvation, without any act of mine. Thou wilt be with me in my dying moments, whether I perceive it or not, and wilt take me to thy presence-chamber in glory, and fill my soul with eternal glory, without any act

of mine. O that it might please thee, to give me such clear apprehensions of the same as may give me perfect satisfaction ; so that living, and if it please thee, when dying, the knowledge of this may be my great consolation, and the praise thereof shall be thine for ever ! Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

Of what may be conceived concerning the Invisible State; with suitable supports for the Mind, derived from the Gospel, all sustaining and refreshing to Believers.

THE state we enter upon at death is invisible: we see nothing of it; we can form no ideas of it but from the word of inspiration. In this present embodied state we receive all our ideas through the medium of our nerves and bodily senses. We are beset with surrounding objects suited to our present senses. How it will be with us when unclothed of our material part, we cannot say; and I conceive this makes the thoughts of death so distressing to the minds of some of the faithful in Christ Jesus. Some of them say, We are not afraid so much of death, as what may befall us in the article of death; that is, of the pain and agony which may attend dissolution. What this may be, and whether we may feel and experience it or not, need give us no concern, for the Lord will be with us. He says, I will never, never, never leave thee; I will never, never forsake thee; which ought to be enough for us. The pains of death can be but bodily: they must be short—they

will soon be over; for death, when it comes, will soon do its office, which having done, it will never more return. In some instances it performs its work so gently, that the person seems to have felt little of it: the soul being fled, and the body dropt, almost in a moment. Some say, what they fear is, what they conceive must be felt at the separation of soul and body. Why, if death be but sleep, as the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament call it, then it is very evident nothing is felt at the instant when the soul departs from the body. This, I think, may receive some confirmation from what frequently occurs. The dying person is talking one moment, and unexpectedly, to those who are present, gone ere they were aware.

I do conceive, whether it be confessed or not, that we are more afraid of death, because we are to be unclothed by it, and enter into an unseen state, than we apprehend. We commonly say, None who are gone before us ever returned to inform others what they felt when death did its office on them—what they saw, when they were out of their bodies; and that we may well therefore shrink at the thought. Is it true, we have had saints who were actually dead in their bodies, and their souls, in the invisible state, restored to their bodies, and conversed in them with their former friends in this our world:—As the son of the widow woman of Zerephath, who was re-

stored from death to life by *Elijah*; and the son of the Shunamite, who was raised to life at the prayer of *Elisha*; the widow's son of Nain; the daughter of *Jairus*, and *Lazarus*; all of whom had died, and their souls had been in the invisible state, yet Christ brought them out of it; so that they lived in their bodies as before, and conversed with their friends. They, however, made no communication of what they saw and conversed with in the invisible state. We must say they *could* not; we can say they *did* not. Many of the saints, whose bodies had slept the sleep of death, *came out of their graves after Christ's resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many*, Matthew xxvii, ver. 53. Yet we do not find it recorded that they gave any account of the state which separates between saints on earth and saints in heaven: and were they asked, why? wherefore did they not? The answer would be, it was impossible they should. Paul says, *He was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it was not possible for a man to utter.* 2 Cor. xii, ver. 4. He could not imprint them upon any man's understanding. We are in this present world confined wholly to the medium of our senses, acted on by the objects surrounding us and by what we hear from others, for all our present knowledge of the present world and of ourselves. Yet there are subjects and things we converse with which are invisible; so

our souls are invisible; we see them not; what our intellectual minds, thoughts, words, and spirits are, never came under our view. The air which we breathe, and without which we cannot live one single moment, is invisible to us; so is light: we see all objects by it, yet we see it not. So fire: we see its flame; we perceive how it wastes and consumes what is cast into it; yet we see not the fire, which thus operates and produces such and such effects. What we call fire is melted air; we see this, but we see not the agent which produces this; yet we are not concerned, because we see not the agents in nature. It does not distress us, because we know not all things in the world. We shall all of us die as unacquainted with some things in our present world, as though we had never been on it, or lived in it.

It is from the word of inspiration that we receive into our renewed minds ideas of spiritual and eternal things, in that the invisible state is set before us, so far as it concerns us in our present and embodied state to know. What is apprehended of the same in the minds of saints, through the light of the word and spirit, led the apostle and others to long to be clothed with immortality and eternal glory. *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that*

hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the spirit, 2 Cor. v, ver. 4, 5.

When I was of the age of twenty-two, being impressed with fears concerning an invisible state, I said to my parent, "Mother, I wish there was any other way of going to God than by death; I am afraid of what we shall see and converse with after we are out of the body." She replied, "I wonder you are so fearful; I should not be afraid to be in hell, if Christ were with me."

I conceived for many years that it was *Paul's* desire, if it might have been granted, to be changed in his body, as the saints will at the last day, and have been thus excused dying. I now, from the scriptures of truth, clearly perceive there are but two men in the invisible state who passed into it without death, all beside died, and were buried in their bodies in the grave. Even our Lord Jesus Christ died, and was buried. The saints, who rose to grace the triumphs of his resurrection, died in their bodies, and had been buried in them; yet now they shine in their glorified bodies, as *Enoch*, *Elijah*, and *Moses* also do; therefore I do not long to be excused dying; as it is the one consecrated passage for all the family and household of faith, (*Enoch* and *Elijah* only excepted) with those of the Lord's family also, who shall remain in their bodies until the coming of the Lord.

Whilst the state we are to enter upon at death is at present invisible, yet we shall be as suited to it as if we had been born in it. This will be as truly the case as we are born for it. In this state we shall have to converse with God, the Father of lights, who is invisible; with Christ, in whom, as in a mirror, all the glory of God's Being, Persons, and Perfections, will be reflected and shine forth: with elect angels in their glorious forms; with elect saints in their disembodied forms; with Enoch, Elijah, Moses, and the risen saints, whom Christ raised up when he arose, the first fruits of all that sleep in him. Now all these are at present invisible unto us, yet they are not wholly unknown to us. We know God, Father, Son, and Spirit in Christ. We read, and by faith we apprehend, that *Jehovah is King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality dwelling in the light, which no man hath seen or can see. To whom we cannot but ascribe honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

Christ is invisible unto us, yet by faith we see him now, who is invisible, and have present communion with him. The elect angels, we do not now see them in their distinct and glorious forms, yet we do conceive of them as servants of the Lord Jesus, and as sent forth by him to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. As to the spirits of just men made perfect, some of them we knew in the flesh; others of them, whom

we knew not in our world, yet some of us have reaped much benefit by their writings left behind them; so that, in a sense, they are peculiarly dear unto us; and as it respects the state, it will most exactly suit us. We shall find every thing in it quite suited to us, so that our minds, under these considerations, may be well reconciled respecting leaving this world, and entering the invisible state: because, whilst we acknowledge it to be invisible, we dare not call it an unknown state. The word of God gives us some real conceptions of it. Saints in all ages have longed to enter on it; Christ himself, as our forerunner, is gone before us, and has taken possession of it; and when we shall be called upon to enter it, he will take us by the hand and introduce us unto it.

Into this invisible state we enter once for all: we shall never after be fit for any other. In it we shall have such conceptions and enjoyments as we cannot have in this; they will be suitable to it, and the objects and subjects of it. These will be in vast variety, all suited to the spiritual mind, to expand it, to enjoy, and be freely and fully exercised on, whilst it will be by the same spiritual faculty with which we apprehend God in all his persons and perfections, in the God-Man, Christ Jesus, as set before us in the everlasting gospel; yet, as the apostle says, now we see and apprehend all this, through a glass, darkly; but then we shall see all this so completely and

clearly, that it will be like seeing face to face. He says, *Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

It is a very suitable support to the mind, when about to enter the invisible state, that we shall not be surprised into company and subjects we were wholly unacquainted with. The element which saints breathe in now is grace; the element they will then breathe in will be glory. The state they are now in is grace; the state they will be then in will be glory; the ordinances they are now under are suited to their present state; the ordinances they will be under then, will suit the glory to which they will be advanced. Christ, the Lamb of God, in the glories of his mediatorial person, love, work, offices, and honours, will shine forth, in open sight and view, before all his angels and redeemed, and will be the ordinance of glory. Saints will see him; the redeemed will worship him; not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit, but to the glory of the Father and the Spirit, who ordained him to be salvation to the whole election of grace, as constituted of Adam's posterity.

When we enter into the invisible state, we shall not be introduced into, and swallowed up in views and apprehensions of God, as he is in his Essence. This would be confounding and tremendous: it would overwhelm and entirely absorb our very existence. No; this will not, this cannot be. We shall be admitted to a sight, and into the immediate presence of Christ. We shall

be shone upon in him, with all the manifestative love of the essential Three. We shall enjoy such immediate communion with the Three in Jehovah in the Man Christ Jesus, as will fill us with all the fulness of God; but we shall never be admitted further—no, not when we see Christ in his own personal glory; we shall not even then be raised up to apprehend God in his own essential glory. This may yield some suitable support to our minds. It is Christ, the *Man in God*; or, if you like it better, it is Christ, God-Man, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head, into whose presence we shall be immediately introduced by death, and before whom we shall appear. We shall never see Father, Son, and Spirit, the Three in Jehovah, by any formal or distinct appearance, yet we shall have true and distinct apprehensions of them in their distinct persons; we shall love them, bless them, worship them, and have distinct communion with them in Christ, beyond all our present and uttermost conceptions of the subject. It is through the God-Man that all their love will flow into our souls; and it is in him everlasting praises will ascend, from all saints, to the Eternal Three, the one Incomprehensible Jehovah, who liveth for ever and ever, to whom be honour and glory everlasting. Amen.

The gospel opens the invisible state to us, so far as it can be opened to our faith; for, when opened to us, we can only apprehend the same by faith. It is said of Moses, *By faith when he was*

come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Heb. xi, ver. 24, 25, 26, 27.

It may be observed, we shall leave nothing in entering the invisible state, but, for a season, we shall be better without. Our bodies would for a season be of no use to us, therefore it is best they should be put off, and put in their graves. Christ will raise them up at the last day. Our friends cannot any longer be of use to us; we are going to have new ones, some of whom we never knew in the body, and it will be a blessing for us and them to meet together in the temple above, and go no more out. Our leaving the church on earth need not to be lamented, because it is only that we may enjoy the society and worship of the church in heaven, where everlasting union and harmony prevails. We at death put off all, and leave all, that we may enjoy all; where we have all friends and no enemies; where we shall be most cordially embraced, most highly esteemed. We shall be welcomed by all, and not have any enemy. There we shall appear like ourselves; there we shall walk with Christ in white raiment;

he will there shine upon us; he will open his whole heart unto us; he will there be the tree of life, the bread of life, the crown of life, the fountain of life, the water of life; he will be all in all unto us, so that we shall need nothing beyond Christ. When we enter into what hath been delivered, it appears that the invisible state is a most truly desirable one. The gospel opens this state unto us; it actually sets it before us; our Jesus is in it; he is the head of it; he is the glory of it; he receives and will admit all his members into it; nothing keeps out of it any of the heirs of glory but their old crazy lives. As soon as these drop, they enter without delay. The apostle says, *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* Rom. viii, ver. 17. 1 Cor. iii, ver. 21, 22, 23. All these things are, most assuredly, very sustaining and refreshing to the minds of spiritual believers. Let me now make use of all this for my own profit and use.

O my soul! thou art shortly to enter the invisible state. Art thou in any measure so acquainted with it, as not to be at a loss whither thou art going, when thy present body falls by death? I most assuredly feel that it is tottering. I am not sorry for it, but yet I would have a due and proper consideration of whither I am going. Thou

knowest nothing of it but by revelation and anticipation. And what thinkest thou, O my soul! Is it suited to thee? Canst thou be happy to be, where the place and state are heavenly? where the inhabitants are all taken with pleasures wholly intellectual and spiritual? Will it be acceptable to thee to be wholly swallowed up in eternal and intellectual delights? Thou wilt in the separate state be destitute of the medium whereby thou apprehendest subjects and things now. The intellect will be unclothed: it will be in a state it never yet was. Thou wilt see and converse with beings and things which are wholly unknown to thy present senses.—What thinkest thou of this? Hast thou surveyed what hath been declared concerning the invisible state, with the supports and consolations held forth in the everlasting gospel? If thou hast, thou wilt most assuredly grant there is a sufficiency contained in the same, to carry thee beyond all care and fears concerning that invisible state which thou wilt most assuredly enter on. Let me, therefore, put the substance of my views and thoughts concerning it into prayer, and express myself on the subject thus:

O Lord Jesus Christ, thou hast given me solemn warning that I must, very shortly, quit this my tabernacle, and put off this body by death! I say Amen to it. O Lord, I am to enter in my soul alone into the invisible world and state: I pray I

may without the least reluctance. Thou wentest out of the world as I must. Blessed be thy name, thou hast consecrated the passage. O let me follow thee cheerfully, singing thy high praises, because thou hast conquered death. Save me, O Lord, from every uneasy thought ! Let me expect to be fully prepared for the invisible state, and for those objects and subjects I am then to see and converse with, by that change of immortality and glory which will pass on my mind, immediately on my being disembodied. O thou blessed Christ, as every day, hour, and moment, fly fast to bring me unto, and to bring on my last change, grant, for thy great name's sake, I may be receiving from thee fresh intuitive views of the blessed state which awaits me. All I expect is but a change from grace to glory : the one is the preparation for the other. The former was an instantaneous change—it was wrought in a moment, so will be the latter. Blessed be thy name, I have some ideas of it, although faint. Lord, increase the same in my mind ! Realize them more and more. Let me live in the clear apprehensions of the same ; and O that when death comes, I may fall so sweetly composed into thine arms, that I may sleep in thee without the least reluctance. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

On Eternity. What we should conceive concerning it. How it differs from God's Eternity. Some Gospel Truths proposed to sustain the Mind in the contemplations of it.

WHAT is written and expressed in the following words, *If God set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.* Job xxxiv, ver. 14, 15, is realized in our bodies in our dying moments. It is in the Lord's gathering unto himself the spirit and the breath from us, that the body drops, and becomes lifeless. The spirit is removed first, then the breathing stops, and the body becomes a corpse; it is then eternity begins with each and every disembodied spirit. All the while believers in Christ remain in the body, it may be written over their heads, *The saved of the Lord.* When they are about to die in Christ, they may then be well entitled, *the preserved in Christ Jesus.* When they are actually dead in their bodies, it may then be said of them, *they sleep in Jesus.* It is by it they enter an eternal world, and on an eternal state. Some style *Death* crossing the gulf which separates

time and eternity. When the bodies of saints are in their graves, they are *the dead in Christ*.

To many persons, the thought of entering eternity on the very moment of leaving the body, is solemn, confounding, and awful. When we consider eternity, we are to conceive of it as it concerns us: as such, it is a continual flux of time, or the continuation of a creature's existence, a stop to which is not to be. It is a procrastination of our existence: it is *in God we live, and move, and have our being*; it is so now, whilst we are in our bodies in a time state; it is in God we shall have the continuation of our beings in the eternal state; it is by his will and power that our faculties will be kept up to all eternity. When we have proper ideas of it, I conceive there is nothing to cause the believer in Jesus to tremble in the prospect of it; he may consider it so as to afford relief to his mind, and real consolation to his heart; yet it is too often the case, that persons cry out, *O eternity! eternity! how tremendous the thought!* I would ask why? Wherefore is it so? Surely it is sweet to consider that we shall never cease to be. It would damp our prospect of joy and life everlasting, to conceive any end put to the same; it must serve to animate our minds, to consider that the state we enter on at the dissolution of our bodies, is fixed, permanent, and everlasting. It well becomes us to receive all our ideas from the

revelation the Lord hath made of these subjects, in his most holy, written, and blessed word. We understand from it that time is the measure of a creature's being, existence, and continuation in this present evil world; and eternity, as it respects us, is the prolongation of being and existence in an eternal and invisible state. As it respects the saints of the Most High, God's will is, to uphold them in being for ever, in the state of glory, that he may display in them, and on them, the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards them in Christ Jesus; and this is all we are to conceive and apprehend concerning it: there is, therefore, nothing in the subject, as thus stated, to be in the least distressing to real believers, when they are about to enter on their commencement of it.

God's eternity, and our eternity, are vastly different subjects; yet I conceive we so confound them, as not to have proper and distinct apprehensions formed in our minds from the scriptures of truths respecting them. Jehovah's eternity is an everlasting now; he is his own eternity; he is being without beginning, succession, or end of duration; all which is contained in his *self-existence*. Jehovah comprehends the knowledge of all things in his infinite understanding, and all time in his own eternity. God's eternity is expressed in his being *from everlasting to everlasting*. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst*

formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Psalm xc, ver. 1. He, speaking of himself, says, *I am that I am.* He proclaims himself to be *the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.* He saith, *I am the first, and I am the last.* He is *the Eternity of Israel:* he is so entitled, 1 Sam. xv, ver. 29. Look into the margin. When the scriptures ascribe the terms of *Eternal, Everlasting, and Eternity,* to God, they denote his being, without beginning, succession, or end of duration; for he who is self-existent can admit of no supposable period in which he is not the same. But the manner of the divine duration, and of Jehovah's co-existence with time, is no more comprehensible than the co-existence of his infinity with particular places. *He liveth for ever and ever.* God's eternity is essential to himself; our eternity entirely depends on his will. We shall be continued every moment in eternity, or in an eternal state, by his power alone, not by any act of our's. God's eternity may afford us matter of comfort; it did the Prophet. He, when contemplating his own frailty and mortality, says, *My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance throughout all generations.* Psalm cii. ver. 11, 12. God says, *I am Jehovah, I change not.* We may well consider what follows, as all-sufficient to sustain our minds whilst we are either

in living or dying circumstances, in the contemplations of God's eternity, and our duration in being to, what we style, eternity. It may well be styled gospel consolation.

The love of the Three in Jehovah is everlasting. His mercy unto us is from everlasting to everlasting. The covenant of the Three in Jehovah is an everlasting one. The Lord embraces his people, and lays underneath them his everlasting arms; he remembers them with everlasting kindness; he is their everlasting life; he gives them everlasting consolation. He, the eternal God, is their refuge; he receives them at death into everlasting habitations. The kingdom they are received into, when they enter eternity, is styled *the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; heaven is entitled, *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. When an account is given of the final sentence pronounced by Christ on all flesh, it is added, *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*. The gospel is styled the everlasting gospel. Christ hath brought in everlasting righteousness; his sacrifice is of everlasting virtue and perfection; he is yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever. In all these substantial realities there is a great and glorious all-sufficiency to bear up, and sustain the minds of the Lord's believing people, under the views of an immediate entrance

into eternity, both as it respects the state we then enter upon, and the duration thereof.

In the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, eternity, as it concerns us, is set forth by the following terms: *Ever, evermore, daily, always, to eternity.* Thus, *The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar ; it shall never go out.* Lev. vi, ver. 13. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Eph. iii, ver. 20, 21. *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* 1 Thess. iv, ver. 17. *I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.* Rev. i, ver. 18.

As the soul disunited from the body, being clothed with immortality and eternal glory, enters on eternity, which is an endless flux of time, and hath no period ; so the very apprehension of it is, as spiritually looked at, very comfortable and relieving. It is no more nor less than our entrance on our state of glory, which is permanent and fixed. It is not that it will never alter, so as that we shall not have farther and farther revelations and manifestations of the divine goodness unto us. We shall have such. Our souls

will be without their bodies for a season, whilst their happiness will be complete, so far as suited to the separate state; yet joys will more fully and abundantly abound at the resurrection of the body, on the soul's entrance into it, and re-union with it. The glories of the resurrection state will exceed the glory which the saints are partakers of now in heaven: it will be then eternity, yet this will be an increase of happiness unto them. And even this will be put down by the ultimate state, when God shall be all in all; and in sights and views of the personal glory of Christ, saints will be so swallowed up as to forget all past discoveries of what they have enjoyed. These are so many gradations in the state of glory, in which the elect of God will be perfectly conformed to Christ. He was in his state of humiliation whilst he dwelt here below: his last and lowest state of humiliation was death and the grave. He went to heaven in his soul first, in a private way and manner, as we also must; he rose again from death to life immortal, by the reunion and entrance of his soul into his body; he lived in his resurrection state a certain period on our earth; he then ascended body and soul into heaven, and is now in his state of glory. So with respect to us, who are his; we die in our bodies, and go privately to heaven in our souls, and enjoy what is most exactly suited to our disembodied state. We are, and live, with Christ. When the resurrection shall

take place, he will descend from heaven, and we shall descend with him. He will raise our bodies, and make them like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself; we shall then live in our bodies with him in the resurrection state, and have most intimate communion with him. The apostle John, speaking of saints in the new Jerusalem state, says: *And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.* Rev. xxii, ver. 3, 4, 5. All this will be in eternity; after which will follow the ultimate glory, which will consist in the open vision of Christ in his personal glory: so that, whilst we enter on our fixed and durable state of glory by death, yet there are successions and fresh glories which belong to that state; which, when we have scriptural views and apprehensions of, must remove all fears and concerns from us about what we style *eternity*.

To be absent for a season from the body, and present with the Lord, will be very advantageous to us. A duration of being will be a blessing to us; to be continued in a state of immortality and eternal glory, must be most truly desirable; to be

for ever with the Lord, must give us endless satisfaction: so that these truths, properly received into our minds, and digested in our thoughts, must make *eternity*, the term, and what we understand by it, very comfortable to our view. *Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's—we shall live together with him, we shall reign with him, we shall reign for ever and ever.* Here, then, is support for us, and consolation, derived from the glorious gospel of the blessed God; in that eternal state and world into which we, as the Lord's, are about to enter, we shall be present with the Lord. This very consideration is all-sufficient to take away all our cares and fears concerning entering on our eternal state. *The Lord Christ was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was.* We are entering on that state in which we shall have some blessed knowledge of the life he lived, as our head, before the foundation of the world. We shall lay aside our bodies, and all the animality, sense, and reason, which belong to them; we shall be as truly fitted in our minds, for the sight, worship, and enjoyment of Christ, as we can be. We shall find the disembodied state well suited to us. All our intellectual faculties will be fixed and properly exercised on Christ, when we are admitted to see him as he is, therefore we need no concern or fear about eternity. In due time, our bodies will be as truly fitted to live with Christ, and enjoy him, as our minds will be

in heaven before the resurrection. We shall be all life, all activity, no darkness in our minds; we shall be like unto the angels; we shall be their companions, and they will be ours; we and they shall worship together, in the utmost perfection of love and delight, our Lord Jesus Christ for ever and ever.

O my soul! let me speak to thee, and turn this subject on eternity into sweet meditation. Of the eternity of God, who can conceive! It is the very essence and perfection of Deity. Jehovah lives in the everlasting enjoyment of his essential blessedness, in his persons and perfections. Christ lived an eternity before time, in exercising his delights in his bride and church: he now lives after the power of an endless life. His eternity is thy security. O my soul! thou art shortly to enter on an eternal state, and into eternal glory. Thou hast nothing in the prospect hereof, but what is most truly divine and encouraging. There will be no sin nor sorrow in thy mind, notwithstanding thy continuance to an eternal duration; and thy views of Christ, thy delight in Christ, thy communion with Christ, will increase with thy continuation in being and existence. This, O my soul, will be eternity to thee! this will be thy blessedness. O what support is there in these gospel apprehensions of the subject! I really find my mind fed and encouraged by them. In the presence of the Holy Three in the one incompre-

hensible Jehovah, and as they reflect their everlasting love upon my mind, in the person of Christ on me, I shall have fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. It is the immutability of their love to my person in Christ, and the continuation of it for ever, which will be the perfection of my felicity. I may well long for this; the gospel gives me ground and warrant to expect life, immortality, and glory, to break in upon my soul, with inconceivable brightness, as soon as I enter eternity. Blessed be the Lord, I have, though in a very small measure and degree, experienced at times what is contained in these words of the apostle, who, speaking to saints concerning *the appearing of Jesus Christ*, saith, *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory* 1 Pet. i, ver. 8. I have eternal life in my soul; I have at seasons had some real apprehensions and foretastes thereof. Blessed be the Lord for it. I will now, having in the gospel every thing to support my faith on views of eternity, turn the substance of my meditation and soliloquy into prayer.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I am thine; save me. Thou hast saved me in thyself with an everlasting salvation: I am in thine eye; I am on thy heart; it is before thee, when and where thou wilt call me hence, and what shall be my personal circumstances in the article of death.

Thou art pleased to save me from all fears concerning the same. Blessed be thy name, it is all of grace. I would request thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, to increase my views and prospects of eternity, so as that I may be favoured with most blessed scriptural apprehensions of the same. Lord Jesus Christ, bestow on me afresh the spirit of glory and of God, that by the inward teachings of the Holy Spirit, I may have an increasing knowledge of the glory which awaits me, and which will be revealed in me immediately on my entrance into eternity. *Holy Father, holy Son, Holy Spirit, which art, and wast, and art to come, who liveth for ever and ever, help me to rejoice in views of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which will be bestowed on me, and all the elect in Christ, and be continued for ever and ever. Exercise my mind very expressly and particularly thereon, to the glory of your grace, as displayed in each of the offices you engaged in before all time. This is what I would particularly request, as I must soon enter eternity. Grant it me, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who liveth for ever and ever, to the praise of the glory of free, sovereign, and reigning grace, and for the honour of Christ, to whom be glory throughout all ages world without end. Amen.*

CHAPTER VI.

Of our actual Entrance into Heaven, and how we shall be received there. An Account of which is given from the Scriptures of Truth.

IT is conceivable, that the moment we expire in the body, the soul of the believer enters into glory, by which I mean heaven, which is rather the seat or place where we are glorified, than the glory with which we are in our souls invested. Our Lord is pleased thus to speak to us concerning this subject in the word: *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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 xiv, ver. 1, 2, 3. These are the gracious words of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he spake in his incarnate state, and are upon record for our consolation. Death is an instantaneous act on the body; by it the soul leaves it, and departs out of this world. An eternal change passes on the mind, by which it is clothed with immortality and eternal glory; it goes to the Father, and is received

by Christ, and admitted into heaven. It is said of our Lord, *when he knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father ; having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.* John xiii, ver. 1. Our Jesus loved his people from everlasting ; he loved them all the while he was in his incarnate state ; he loved them to the end of his own life ; he loves them now that he is in heaven ; he loves them all the while they remain in this world ; he loves them when heart and flesh fail ; he loves them in their dying moments ; he has then such an opportunity of exercising his love as he never had before. Our Lord is pleased to support some of his dying saints very remarkably ; but it is not always his pleasure so to do ; yet, be this as it may, our Lord is very particularly present with all his saints whilst their bodies are dissolving. This is for the most part concealed from us. We know he hath said, *I will never, never, never leave you ; I will not ; no, I will never, never forsake you ;* therefore he must be present with his saints at death : he being at that season, when all the springs of natural life fail and expire, about to open to them the springs of eternal life, glory, and immortality. The apostle *Jude* closes his epistle with the following doxology : *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be*

glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. From which we learn what the Lord Christ hath yet to do, and of what he will do for all his saints immediately on their departure from their bodies. He will, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, deliver them from the whole inbeing of sin; he will receive them to himself; he will introduce them into heaven. His first act there will be to present them faultless. Their souls will be as pure as the light; their minds perfectly cleansed from every spot and stain. He will keep up their minds, so as that under immediate views of his righteousness, sacrifice, and presentation of them, they shall be sustained in his immediate sight, and under their immediate views of him in his glorious person and majesty;—he will present them faultless. This is a most blessed subject for consideration: this he will do before the presence of his glory; this he will do with exceeding joy. We here see what awaits us, on our actual entrance into heaven. We shall not die alone; we cannot die out of Christ; we cannot die without him. It is he must set us at liberty from our bodies; it is he must open heaven to us; it is he must admit us; it is he must receive us; it is he must present us before our heavenly Father;—this he will do with exceeding joy. All which yields strong consolation to the mind, which is enlightened with clear scriptural apprehensions hereof. With respect to heaven

and eternal glory, and the hope of a blessed immortality, the apostle Paul thus expresses himself: *For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; which is very expressive, that as soon as our bodies drop by death, we have a house ready to receive us, and we shall be received immediately into it. The same apostle, speaking of heaven, entitles us citizens thereof. *We have our conversation or citizenship in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,* Phil. iii, ver. 20. Heaven is the very place where all saints are to be admitted: it was prepared for us before the foundation of the world. Hence our Lord says: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,* Matt. xxv, ver. 34. It is there the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, are to meet; and in the issue, all to live and unite together in one glorious and perpetual act of worship to God and the Lamb. It is a place fitted for bodies and minds both. There are Enoch and Elijah, Moses, Christ, and the saints, who were raised up from the grave, after his resurrection, in their bodies of glory; there are an innumerable company of angels and disembodied saints. These converse with Christ, and saints who are glorified in their bodies, and there is the most perfect communion

with them. Without all doubt, the admission of every saint into glory increases the joy of all the glorified. Our Lord expresses his love to every particular heir of glory on their entrance into heaven, in a way beyond what he ever did before. It is, indeed, a day of the gladness of his heart; he is more pleased to receive each of his to the everlasting embraces of his love, than can ever enter into our minds. Were we truly sensible of this from the scriptures of truth, it would make our hearts dance for joy. I confess, I should tremble to enter heaven, and the state of glory, were it not for Christ. He is to have the presenting me; I am only safe, blessed, holy, and happy in him *now*; I shall only be safe, blessed, holy, and happy in him, *then*. From eternity he loved me, and undertook for me; he engaged to save me from all my sins; he came down from his Father's bosom to accomplish this. *He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* This is now a subject for faith to contemplate. When we are first admitted into heaven, it will then be the subject of sense, and for us to enjoy in our minds to all eternity. We shall see Christ visibly with the eyes of our minds; he will receive us into his presence with

all the love of his heart; he will behold us with joy and complete satisfaction; he will view us as he did in the everlasting settlements of his Father's gracious will towards us; he will view and review us; he will present us before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. As righteous in him, who is the Lord our righteousness; as pure in him, without all spot or wrinkle; yea, glorious as though we had never been the subject of the least defilement. We shall be received into heaven by Christ himself; he will rejoice in us; he will rejoice over us; he will present us before the three in Jehovah with exceeding joy. Thus we have some blessed supports from the word of revelation, and from it may learn what we may expect when we enter into heaven. We shall be present with the Lord; Christ will receive us to the glory of God; all the love of the Eternal Three will be afresh displayed before us, and manifested unto us in such a way as we can at present have no conceptions of. Our Lord's ascension into heaven, and glorification there, may give us some faint ideas and apprehensions of the subject. He was received up into glory; he entered with the utmost pomp and majesty within the vail; he sat on the right-hand of God. All heaven was illumined with his presence and glory; an everlasting triumph was ascribed unto him; and all the saints, both angels and men, who saw him enter, fell down

and worshipped him. Christ entered as the head, surety, saviour, and representative of all his saints. He entered heaven in his own right; we enter in his right. He is *the first-born among many brethren*; we, as children of God, are *heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ*; and we are to be conformed to Christ in glory, in such a measure and degree as will suit us, as members in him our glorified head.

The apostle says, speaking of God in the person of the divine Father: *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* Rom. viii, ver. 29, 30. As Christ entered into heaven as our forerunner, we shall enter by him as the medium of our access, and with boldness and liberty through him into heaven, and enjoy the immediate presence of God. As Christ entered triumphantly, we shall also; as Christ, when he entered heaven, took possession of it, and sanctified it by his living there, so he will admit us to our respective mansions, and give us the most perfect happiness and contentment in them. We shall no sooner be admitted, and blessed with the shine of Christ on our immortal and glorified minds, but the place will be as natural and as well suited to our spiritual senses and

faculties as if we had been there for a thousand years. We shall be before the throne of God; we shall serve him day and night in his temple; we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and shall lead us to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. No doubt, but as all the hosts of saints and angels rejoiced at the entrance of our Lord into heaven, so there will be universal joy when the elect are individually admitted into glory. It is the coronation of saints: their crowns are eternal glory, for which they praise God and the Lamb. The everlasting love of the Father, the person and glories, and salvation of Christ, the eternal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the mind, constitute the feast in glory. Heaven will consist in the perpetual shine of God's favour upon us, so as for the mind to have an unspeakable enjoyment of the same; we shall there be filled with all the fulness of God. This must consist in having our understandings so enlarged, to comprehend God in Christ, as to be wholly satisfied with him, and in the enjoyment of him. Our wills will then be perfectly satisfied with the will of God; we shall rejoice in his essential blessedness; we shall have a clear and proper idea of the essence and persons in Jehovah, so as to give glorious praise to Father, Son, and

Spirit, for all their love to us, and vast and eternal designs towards us in the person of Christ. In heaven we shall be for ever clothed with immutable holiness; we shall be blessed with immediate communion with God; we shall shine in Christ; we shall be as so many jewels in his mediatorial crown. He will shine on us and within us, and we shall reflect his shine back again on him. He will be our everlasting heaven of light and glory, of perfection and bliss. We shall be swallowed up in him, so as for him to dwell supremely, transcendently, and inexpressibly in all the faculties of our minds. It is hereby we shall be transformed into his glorious image, and be made completely happy and blessed in our souls. It is good to have right, clear, and scriptural apprehensions of these sublime verities: it is only as we truly apprehend them, that we can have any holy longing and desire after the enjoyment of them. It would be well to have our minds properly impressed with the blessed thought, that heaven is prepared for us, and we are prepared for it; that it is open to receive us; and that we shall enter it the moment we leave the body. We shall find every thing there suited to our spiritual taste: we shall have free admittance, a joyful entrance, a most blessed acceptance. Our Lord will shine on us as he never yet did; he will present us to the whole company of saints, to unite with them in their worship of him; he will open

the glories of heaven to our view; he will place us where we are to be, and shine with such splendour on us as will fill our minds with immortal bliss and satisfaction. He will say: *Come, ye blessed, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.* It is not to be wondered at that saints are described by the apostle as earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with glory and immortality; to be swallowed up of life; to be in heaven; to enjoy eternal glory. He knew these subjects well: they had their existence in his mind; they were in him, and to him, eternal realities; he therefore prays thus on the behalf of the saints at Ephesus, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. He would they should know as much of glory and heaven, before they entered it, as possible. He requests the Lord on their behalf, that they might know the grounds of their calling; what they were called unto; and what they were to expect. God himself is the inheritance of his people; they are also his inheritance. His riches of grace and glory are in the saints; they are all to shine forth in them; they are all to be displayed on them; they are all to be made known unto them; they are all to be enjoyed by them.

God himself will be their glory. If God can make them happy, they shall be as completely happy as he can make them.

I would now, O my soul! turn this subject into meditation and prayer. I expect and believe that I shall soon be in heaven. How art thou, O my soul, affected with this? Dost thou, from the scriptures and the light of the Holy Spirit, apprehend spiritually and intellectually what heaven is? It is a supernatural world; a state of blessedness and glory. There are no joys and pleasures there but such as are suited to a heaven-born soul, to a holy and spiritual mind. Saints there live wholly on Christ; he is their immediate life of glory. Art thou, O my soul! fitted for this place and state? Will it suit thee to be wholly swallowed up in Christ? to have him for thy immediate object, and perpetual subject? Hast thou an inward spiritual conception of its being real blessedness, to be wholly living out of thyself, and off thyself, in continual sights of Christ, so as never to reflect on thyself for ever? The happiness of saints in heaven does not arise within, or from themselves: it is wholly without them; it flows from God and the Lamb into them, through the indwelling of the Lord the Spirit. They are not admitted to think one moment of themselves; all their thoughts flow into their immortal minds, as glorified, from Christ their head, and are formed in them by the Lord

the Spirit, who fully possesses them as his true and proper temples. Will such a state, such a place, such a life, so continued a dependance on Christ for glory everlasting, as this amounts to, suit thee? If so, think much on it. Let it be the constant subject of thy mind. If the Holy Spirit makes it plain and clear to thee, thou wilt not be unwilling to die in thy body, that thou mayest live with Christ in glory. I will turn this, O my soul, into prayer.

O thou, who art the God of glory, the Father of glory, the God of all grace, who hast called thy people unto eternal glory by Christ Jesus, I beseech thee to give me some supernatural views of it. Create in my mind such conceptions of heaven, glory, and immortal life, as may cause me to desire to depart out of this body and world, and be with Christ, which is far better than to be in it. I pray thee to grant me to be looking out for heaven; to be expecting a city which hath foundations, which thou hast built and art the maker of; into which thou dost admit thy saints immediately on their leaving their bodies. Thou, O God, art not ashamed to be called their God, for whom thou hast prepared this city. Grant, holy Father, that my mind may be so enlightened from thy word, and by thy Spirit, into a knowledge of what is revealed in thy holy gospel concerning the inheritance of the saints in light, that my views and prospects of it may abound. O that it

may please thee, so to let down from thy blessed self such supernatural views of heaven and heavenly glory into my mind, as may increase my longings and desires after it! O Lord Jesus, there I am to see thee face to face! there I am to live as thou dost. There I am to live in thee, and to thee, thou living in me for ever. O blessed Spirit, do thou, as the Spirit of glory and of God, rest upon me, and reveal a real sense of this glory in me. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

On the Vision of Christ. What our Life, Glory, and Blessedness will be, in consequence thereof. This will be declared from the written Word.

IT is the very blessedness of faith to behold Christ. Looking unto Jesus is the very perfection of it. Hence the apostle says, *We see Jesus*. Our whole salvation is in the object of our faith. We receive the knowledge of Christ into our minds; we have communion with him in our hearts; we have real intercourse with him, and receive real communications from him, by faith, through faith, and in the exercise of faith. This is the faculty by which we know and enjoy Christ now. The gospel is the glass in which we behold the glory of the Lord. This is well suited for us in our present embodied state. The Holy Ghost by it reveals Christ to our renewed minds. We received hereby such an intuitive apprehension of Christ, as will continue in our souls for ever. Yet this is to be still more perfected—not in the nature of it, but in the degree of it. Our knowledge of Christ is as real as it will be in heaven; but it is not now so complete and comprehensive as it will be in glory. The church of

Christ on the earth is the school in which we begin the knowledge of Christ, and heaven is the university in which we are advanced to further degrees in the knowledge of him. Accordingly, there are two different mediums whereby we receive the apprehension of him into our minds. The gospel is the medium now: from it the Holy Ghost makes known Christ unto us. We enjoy him, and live on him by faith. In heaven, we receive an increasing knowledge of him, and know him, in a different way. It is there wholly intuitively; it is by sense and vision. The apostle says, *Now we see through a glass, darkley; but then, face to face.* 1 Cor. xiii, ver. 12. As the knowledge of Christ, which will be let in upon our minds by being admitted into the open vision of his person in glory, will be altogether of a higher degree than we can at present comprehend, so it will put down all we ever knew of him on earth. The weakest saint on earth, taken up into heaven, and favoured with a sight of Christ by the open vision of him, will receive such intellectual and intuitive knowledge of him, as will perfect his mind for ever. All the knowledge of Christ we have here is but as the ground-work for a fresh edition of the knowledge of Christ, by open vision, sight, and sense in glory. Our life, glory, and blessedness in heaven, will be the result thereof. This I shall aim to shew, as declared in the written word.

I would here say, that like as a real sight of Christ by faith lifts the mind up above, and far above and beyond all its own acts and exercises, and leads to a fixation on Christ—even so, a sight of Christ by vision will lift off the minds of the glorified from all consideration of the life, glory, and blessedness which they enjoy, and that so as for them to be swallowed up in the views they have of Christ. He is in his church on earth the ordinance of salvation ; he is to his church in heaven the ordinance of glory. He once shone forth upon earth as he now does in heaven. This was when he was transfigured on the holy mount. He was then so seen, that those who saw him declared his glory was *the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. Peter says, *We were eye-witnesses of his majesty*. Now it is in the same glory and majesty, only in a greater measure and degree, that our Lord shines forth before all his saints in heaven. They being clothed with immortality and eternal glory, are capacitated to behold him thus. In this vision of him, their perfection is contained ; in the sight of him, they live for ever. The person of Christ is the glory of heaven ; he, the man in God, the glory of whose soul, the perfection of whose body, are beyond all conception : the mirror and perfection of all the works of God, in which, as inhabited by personal union with the essential and only begotten Son of the living God, dwelleth all the fulness of the God-

head. He is the wonder of heaven. The full blaze of the complete shining forth of Christ in his personal glory, is the essence of everlasting bliss. Now, on the entrance of the disembodied souls of believers, they are admitted to a sight of Christ; to be with Christ; to see him as he is; to see him visibly. Stephen saw Christ in heaven. He cried out, *and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right-hand of God.* Acts vii, ver. 56. Paul saw Christ in a vision; he was going to Damascus, and Christ looked out of heaven upon him. He saw him also when he was praying in the temple, and was bidden to get quickly out of Jerusalem. Acts xxii, ver. 18. Christ appeared in a vision to John in the isle of Patmos. What is visible is to be seen with our bodily eyes; what is invisible, is only to be seen with the eyes of our minds; when, therefore, we speak of the glories of Christ, and of his shining forth in the invisible state, and of what saints there see and enjoy, we give the term vision to these. We cannot behold the sun without an eye; we must have an eye suited to it, or we could not behold it; nor can we see it but in its own light. So Christ in heaven can only be seen by the glory reflected from him. He, as God-man, *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,*

to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

1 Tim. vi, ver. 15, 16. I conceive Christ is so seen by open vision, as for all his saints to be alike illumined, and so as for the glory and majesty of his person to be reflected on them, by means of which their whole minds are swallowed up in views and intuitive apprehensions of his glory, being swallowed up in him, and fixed immutably on him. From hence, I conceive, all the life, blessedness, and glory of saints spring; it is from the views they have of him, and the intuitive knowledge which they receive into their own minds of his person and of his glory. I conceive the vision of Christ makes way for the knowledge of him, which the saints have in glory. Their knowledge of him in his person and glory, makes way for their life of immortal blessedness, which is fed and maintained as Christ shines, and reflects his glory within, and upon their minds. This is their life in Christ, the very life which they live in the immediate presence of Christ, in glory everlasting. And this is life indeed! Yet even then and there the foundation and essence of all this life will consist in Christ's living in us. Our living in Christ now is the fruit of his living in us. Christ liveth in me, says the apostle; and it will be the same in heaven. It is Christ's living in us, and possessing our every faculty, which will be our life. Our living in the enjoyment of all bliss and glory in a communicated way and

manner, is the glorious fruit and effect of it. Where I asked how I would define this life, enjoyed by saints in their own minds, I should say it consisted in such intuitive views and conceptions of the Lord Jesus Christ, as led continually into those apprehensions of him which made him the very centre and circumference of all the thoughts and exercise of the whole mind. The glory which saints will receive from this knowledge, will fill them with inward glory and outward splendour. Surely, if Moses, when he was in the mount forty days and forty nights, had the glory of the Lord so reflected on him, as to come down from the mount with rays of light, bright and luminous, conveying outward evidence what immediate converse with God is;—and this was also the case with Christ, when he came down from the mount of transfiguration;—it must then be easily conceivable, that saints, who are in the very presence-chamber with Christ, and behold his glory, and have communion with him in his glory, that they must be so glorified thereby as to be filled with glory, and to be so full of it as to cast the reflection thereof. It is Christ, the glory of heaven, who will shine as the sun of glory on all his saints in heaven: he will be their glory, and they will shine as they are shone upon by him; and they will reflect glory, as he reflects his own on them; and their blessedness will consist in the communion they shall be admitted to have

with him. It will all proceed from the knowledge they have of him in his glory. The mind will be perpetual activity; the Lord of glory will be the spring and fountain of it: it will be perpetually swallowed up in views of him. This will produce glory, which will last for ever, and be in perpetual vigour; this will issue into, and promote such immediate communion with Christ and saints, as the tongues of men and angels can never express. When believers are exercising their thoughts on heavenly and eternal glory, let them think on these things, for they are divine truths: they are most important realities. It is the true knowledge of them in our own souls, from the word, and by the Spirit, which only can cause us to long to see Christ—to be with Christ, to live with Christ for ever and ever. Where our minds really exercised on these most sublime subjects, we should have most blessed conceptions of what will be our blessedness when we see Christ in his kingdom of glory. Our most adorable Lord says on the behalf of his people, to his divine Father, *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may now that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 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, for thou*

lovedst me before the foundation of the world. John xvii, ver. 22, 23, 24. The union glory between Christ and his saints cannot be accomplished but by their being raised up to be where he is, and to see him in his glory. It is expressly declared, *When Christ our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.* The apostle says, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* 1 John iii, ver. 1, 2.

I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen. Rev. vii, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12. The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, will admit all his saints in his own time and way, to a real possession of the

same. We, who are the called according to God's purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, *are heirs of eternal life; we are partakers of the glory that shall be revealed; we are entitled to the kingdom of glory.* Our all is there; Christ is there; our whole inheritance is there; we must be there, *that in the ages to come, God may shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ.* O that the true knowledge of these glorious mysteries might lift up the mind to the Lord! I would now turn the subject and substance of all this into meditation.

O my soul! thou shalt not die, but live. The death of thy body, which is but a sheath in which thou art at present enclosed, will be the means of setting thee free from every evil; therefore, instead of fearing it, thou mayest well rejoice at the prospect of it. Thou wilt by it be delivered from the whole body of sin—from every evil. This will be for ever; all sorrowing and sighing will be done away. This is not all. No; but being unclothed of thy mortal flesh, and clothed in thy mind, so as for mortality to be swallowed up of life, thou wilt be received into the kingdom of glory, to see Christ, and to enjoy communion with him for ever. This will be blessedness: it is impossible to desire beyond what is contained in it. O my soul, how art thou affected with this? Art thou looking out, and saying, *Come, Lord*

Jesus, come quickly? It is now a long season since thou wast first brought into an acquaintance with the holy and immaculate Lamb. More than fifty years are passed since he first looked on thee in a manifestative way. He hath often favoured thee with his presence; he hath blessed thee with his company; he hath outshone thy sin; he hath many a time exceeded all thy misery. Thou art now nearer heaven than ever thou wast. Thy salvation is much nearer than when thou wast brought first to believe. The day of glory will soon break forth upon thee; thou wilt soon be admitted to see Christ in person; to see him on his throne. How is it thou art not more desirous of this? How is it thou art so seldom elevated with real apprehension hereof? Surely it must be for want of exercising thy mind on the person and glories of Christ. O, to think on being for ever with the Lord! to enjoy life, blessedness, and glory flowing into the mind, from immediate sights of him, and beholding his glory, there is something vastly glorious, solemn, and divine in such contemplations as these. I will put my thoughts into prayer, and thus address my Lord.

O thou glorious Christ, who art heaven's glory, the mirror of everlasting love, perfection, and blessedness, I would pray thee to shine forth afresh upon me, and enlighten my mind with some blessed inward conceptions of thy person and glory. I want to have some scriptural concep-

tions, formed in my mind from thy holy word, of what is contained in the vision of thee. I confess, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, that I do apprehend that all life, glory, and blessedness, must be contained therein. I want such apprehensions of the glory in which thou shinest forth within the veil, before thy saints and glorified ones, and that fills their minds with wonder, and feeds them with eternal delight and joy; that my soul may rejoice and be exceeding glad in the prospect and view of the same. Thou hast at times favoured me with some special thoughts on thy life and glory in heaven; of the life thou thyself livest; of the glory thou art invested with; and of thy personal blessedness. I have conceived, I do conceive, from hence must flow forth all the life, glory and blessedness, thy saints enjoy in heaven. It must all originate from the vision of thee, from their sight and view of thee. I must confess before thee, when I have been thus favoured with real contemplation of thee, I have conceived more of eternal life, glory, blessedness, and heaven, than by any other thoughts whatsoever. I am fully persuaded, that were these apprehension fully and powerfully to prevail in and on the mind, I could not but long to depart and to be with thee. Lord Jesus, I am fully persuaded it is spiritual and supernatural views of thee, formed in the mind by thy holy Spirit, from the word of revelation, which only can raise up my heart to thee, and fix it eternally on

thee. I conceive thus of it, that my mind, which is now enlightened by thee into a real apprehension of thy person, love, blood and righteousness, mercy and salvation, will, when it is disengaged from the body, be raised up to see thee in heaven; and in the real sight of thee, by sense and vision, enjoy all contained in eternal life, immutable glory, and endless blessedness. I would therefore pray, O thou blessed Christ, that thou wouldest so enlighten my mind, and establish my views and prospects of the same, as I may live in the constant belief of these eternal verities, and die in the real apprehensions of all thus expressed. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

Concerning our Employment in the State of Glory, until our Lord shall descend from thence, at his Second Coming.

As at death mortality will be swallowed up of life, and saints hereby will be immortal, so they will be fitted for perpetual exercise and employment in that state of eternal glory they will then enter upon. The state the saints of God are now in we style the state of grace; because, as it is altogether of grace that they should be called out of darkness into God's marvellous light, so whilst in this state, and to the very close of it, there is a most glorious display of the grace of the Eternal Three towards them. They are sinners, and sinful in themselves to the very moment they quit the body to enter heaven; therefore they are *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*. But when they are changed in their bodies by death, they enter on the state of glory. We call it by that term, because it is the state in which their souls are with Christ, and glorified together with him. It is difficult with us to apprehend what it is for the soul to be glorified; nor can we form any ideas of it, but from the word of revelation. The soul, or mind, or

thought, or thinking faculty, is wholly intellectual. This will be without the body by death; when it is, it will be all life and activity—it will be immortalized and raised up by the omnipotent power of Christ, so as to be immediately exercised in beholding Christ, in converse with him: and this is to be *glorified together with him*, as the mind will be so enlightened by Christ, and he will so possess and dwell in it, as to be the object of blessedness and centre of rest to the soul for ever. Like as, whilst in the body, saints in views of Christ receive that concerning him into their minds which sanctifies their affections, makes him glorious in their affections, and high in their esteem; so in heaven, saints having a sight of Christ by the open vision of his Person, receive the same into their immortal minds, and all their actual worship of him in heaven is the fruit thereof. It is a sight of Christ which glorifies the mind of the saint on his entrance into the state of glory, in which the glory of Christ is so displayed that it gives the title to it, and we say of it, such an one is removed to the state of glory.

Now, to speak of the employment of the glorified, it seems necessary to attend to the following particulars. What those objects are which saints in heaven will see and converse with; what those subjects are which will engage their minds; what that glory is which will be put upon them; and how long the present state of the

glorified will continue : whilst the state of the glorified will never be discontinued, yet the state or degree they are now in will be succeeded by a far more glorious one. The present state of the glorified will be succeeded by a glorious resurrection of their bodies to life immortal ; therefore, it is the employment of saints in the state of glory, until our Lord shall descend from heaven at his second coming, which is our subject.

To speak of the employment of the glorified saints. Life is a perpetual activity. The spirits of just men made perfect are constantly engaged and employed in the state of glory ; their minds have incorporeal objects and subjects before them, most exactly suited to their disembodied spirits ; they have the person of Christ, as the Man in God, the God-Man ; they see him ; they behold all the glory of the essential majesty in him. The Three in Jehovah are not seen, but all their love is reflected on the saints in heaven, in the person of Christ, so as for all the love wherewith the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have loved the elect in Christ from everlasting, is enjoyed by them, and they have real fellowship with the Three in the Incomprehensible Essence, in the vision of Christ. This is one of the great objects and subjects then in which their minds are employed, the person of Christ, whom they see face to face ; they see him *as he is* ; and in him they worship Father, Son, and Spirit, and give them

glorious praise for all the acts of their eternal good-will towards them in Christ Jesus. Saints in heaven will have friends and companions to converse with; they will have fellow-saints and fellow-worshippers; they will see each other in their own glorious disembodied forms. This will realize each to other, and make them familiar with each other; they will see elect angels in their glorious forms, and join them in worshipping God and the Lamb. Heaven, as a place, is the seat of worship for the glorified church. Christ, in person, is their immediate object of worship; it is in him they worship the Father and the Spirit. It is the vision of Christ which is their ordinance of worship, whom at present they see and behold, not so much in his essential and personal glory as in his mediatorial glories. They see him as the Lamb that was slain, and worship him as such. John says, *The four beasts, and four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was*

ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of thousands ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Rev. v, ver. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. This seems to denote that Christ, as Mediator, is most peculiarly honoured in heaven by elect angels and saints : they unite to praise him for his most precious bloodshedding and death ; they view him as the Lamb that was slain ; they worship him as such ; they ascribe their whole redemption to him ; they worship God and the Lamb with equal worship. Hence, then, the Prophet adds, *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* He adds, *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.* Ver. 13, 14. It appears, that in worshipping Christ as Mediator, the Eternal Three in the one Incomprehensible Essence are included ; and also, that at present the worship of heaven, or the worshippers in heaven, are most peculiarly engaged in extolling the Lamb of God, in triumphing in his complete salvation, in singing to the honour of his majesty, and in making his praise glorious for his conquest and victory over death ; and also

for his righteous government of this present evil world, and his providential acts respecting his church in it. We have Gabriel, who standeth in the presence of God, sent to inform Daniel what should befall the Jews in the latter time. See Daniel x, ver. 10. And why may it not be conceivable, that what is done on earth is recited in heaven? especially as in the visionary scenes of the Revelation we have the repeated acclamation of saints pronounced: *We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast judged thus. I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, ALLELUIA, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* Rev. xi, ver. 17. chap. xii, ver. 10. chap. xv, ver. 3, 4. chap. xix, ver. 6. Now the taking all this into consideration, in its lowest

degree, that it means only what is transacted in the church on earth ; yet, as saints in heaven have still an interest in the saints on earth, it may be a part of their employment in glory to praise the Lord for what he doth for his church below, and for his fulfilment of his vast purposes and designs respecting his church, the world, and every creature in it. Some conceive concerning the intellect of angels, that they see all things in their causes and effects : not as God doth ; at once, and in one point of view, but under and by the knowledge and comprehension which he is pleased to impart to their created minds. I should think the intellect of angels and of saints in heaven are equal ; why then, seeing in Christ the whole volume of inspiration is contained, and the whole volume of grace, nature, providence, and every act and circumstance connected with it is unfolded ; may it not be the pleasure of our Lord to admit his beloved in heaven, into such views of what he is doing on earth, as may be entertaining to their minds, and engage the same to him in fresh acts of worship and praise ? The vision of Christ ; what he is to his church in heaven and earth ; the glory he hath put on his saints, who are in his immediate presence ; the grace he exercises on his saints in this our world ; his constant translation of saints from earth to heaven ; the personal and particular presentation of each saint on its arrival in heaven. Surely we may safely conclude these are the subjects on which

the minds of glorified saints are perpetually exercised. And great and vast these are, such as none but the glorified can have any tolerable ideas of.

With respect to the glory which is enjoyed by the glorified, I should conceive it to be inward and outward.

The first sight of Christ, and the first shine of his glory on the soul when it first enters heaven, must be when he receives it, and *presents it faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy*. This will transcend all that Christ ever yet did for us believers: he will look on us; he will shine within us. This will fill our minds with glory. We shall be fit for no other state but that of glory for ever; we shall by this sight of Christ, by his own act upon us, and within us, be immortal, impeccable, and glorious in our souls. This will be reflected by our minds, so as that rays of light and lustre will be apparent; but the shine of Christ on all this, and the vision of him in his glory, will lift up beyond all description; so that the glory of all the glorified, both saints and angels, will be no glory, in compare with Christ's glory. When Christ shone first on us, it was a shine so glorious, that *Peter* styles it *light, yea, marvellous light; yea, Christ's marvellous light. Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* 1 Pet. ii, ver. 9. When Christ shines on the soul, immediately on its entrance into his immediate presence in heaven, it is a glorious shine, such

as fits the intellectual faculties of the mind for such views of Christ, with which it is to be favoured. It is this which puts an inward and outward glory on the disembodied mind ; it prepares it for an everlasting sight and converse with Christ for evermore: like as the revelation of Christ is the grace which fits us to live on Christ in the real exercise of faith on him, and communion with him ; and notwithstanding we are born again before this revelation of Christ is made in us, yet we did not, we could not live Christ in our minds, until he was revealed in us, from the word, and by the Spirit ; so we cannot be glorified, and live with Christ in heaven, until he receives our spirits, and shines in his own glory on them, and presents them before the presence of his glory, which he will do with exceeding joy. This will take place on our immediate entrance into heaven ; and by it we shall be fitted for the heavenly state, for the vision of Christ, and immediate communion with him in glory, and for living in his immediate presence for ever and ever. How our minds will be elevated, raised and glorified, with Christ's shining immediately within us, and upon us, we can have no correct conception of. What glory we shall behold in Christ, we shall never be able fully to comprehend. What the intuitive knowledge we shall receive of Christ into our minds, when we see him in his glory, and are filled immediately and fully with the in-

dwelling of the Holy Ghost, who will then fill us with actual and personal knowledge of the Father's everlasting love to us in the person of Christ; what, I say, we shall then be the subjects of, and what we shall then know of Christ, never yet entered into any mind out of heaven. We shall not only be glorious, and glorified, by Christ looking upon us in his glory, and shining within us, and thereby making us inherently glorious, and by shining on us, and thus making us in our souls inwardly and outwardly glorious; but he will reflect his own glory in which he is seen, also upon us, which shall be the consummation of our souls in everlasting blessedness. All the saints of God will be thus blessed, thus engaged, and thus employed. until our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ being raised, and the living saints being changed, *then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* But of this I shall say nothing; but having finished the subjects proposed, concerning the employment of saints in the state of glory, until our Lord shall descend from thence at his second coming, I will turn the substance of it into meditation and prayer.

O my soul! it is good for thee, who must shortly be removed to the house eternal in the heavens, to consider what thy entertainment will

there be; what the sights and objects are which thou wilt there see and converse with; what those subjects are which thy mind will there be exercised on; what thine employment will be. There are millions of saints got to heaven. There are more saints in heaven than there are now on earth; they were all alike received; they were all freely admitted; they all see Christ in his glory; they have alike the same vision of him; their glory and their glorification arise therefrom. O my soul! it is an apprehension of what thy glorification will consist in, which will confirm thee in the true views of heavenly blessedness. As soon as thou hast left thy body, thou wilt be received by Christ into his kingdom of glory. He will shine on thee; he will present thee before the presence of his glory faultless. There will be no sin in thee; thy Lord will present thee in his own perfection as pure as if thou hadst never sinned. Keep this, O my soul, in thy remembrance. Jesus hath loved thee, and washed thee from thy sins in his own blood. His righteousness hides all thy transgressions; it adorns and covers thy whole person. Thou art made the righteousness of God therein, and thus thou art in Christ; then it must be very acceptable to thee to be where he is, to behold his glory. Thou wilt have company sufficient: holy saints, and holy angels. Thou art to worship with them. Thy employment will be very suitable, even to the present state of thy

mind. Thou art well pleased to give Christ the entire glory of thy salvation ; to praise him for this will be a great part of thine employment there. It is the highest act of worship now on earth, to trust wholly in the blood and righteousness of the Lamb for everlasting life. It will be the constant act of all saints in glory to bless the Lamb for his most precious blood and death. Let me ponder on all this, and turn it into prayer.

O thou most glorious Lord Jesus Christ, thou hast said, *Because I live, ye shall live also.* Thou livest as the head of thy church and people, a life of glory and immortality. It is thy pleasure to introduce all thy beloved, one and another of them, as seemeth good unto thee, into thy immediate presence within the veil. Thou wilt, in thine own appointed time, take me to thyself. I pray thee to help me, so to hold communion with thee in thy glory, that as I am a partaker of the glory which is to be revealed, I may live and die as an heir of glory ; by having such conceptions of it kept up in my own mind, from thy word, and by the Spirit, that I may most joyfully look forward to the season when my bodily frame shall be dissolved, and I shall quit it, be absent from it, and present with thee, the Lord of glory. May it please thee to realize eternal life, glory, and blessedness in my mind, so that I may know as much of it as I can before the enjoyment of it ; then shall I be wholly out of myself, and be living

in the perpetual activity of my mind on thee, without the least variation from thee for ever. Lord Jesus Christ, thou hast as fully realized in my intellectual capacity, what may be conceived concerning absence from the body, and being present with thee, as in my present embodied state I can apprehend. All that remains is, for death to do its office, and for thyself to receive me into thy kingdom of glory. Be it according to thy word. Amen.

THE END.