# [ 39 ]



# SERMON III.

SAINTS compleat in GLORY.

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# I Cor. xiii. 10.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

HE Church of Rome distinguishing between mortal and venial Sin, that the one, to use their own Words, is remitted by hearty Contrition and Pe-

nance; the other by all the Sacraments, devout Prayer, and the like; afferts, That such as die in mortal Sin, go D 4

immediately to Hell, and are punished there, with everlasting Destruction; but such as die in venial, or not having fully satisfied for the Punishment due to their mortal Sins, go to Purgatory, till they have made full Satisfaction for them, and then to Heaven: This they suppose to be a middle Place, between Heaven and Hell; which, from the Imagination of the Soul's being farther cleanfed and purified in it, they call by the Name of Purgatory, in which they judge the greatest Part by far of the Saints are placed, and there continue, under some Degrees of Mifery and Punishment, till released by the Prayers of the Church, or the Devotions of furviving Friends.

Others have supposed, and particularly some of the ancient Fathers, together with the Jews, and some modern Writers, that the Souls of good Men, at Death, enter into Paradise, not to suffer, but to enjoy some Degree of Happiness, though not equal to that which they shall be possessed of when re-united to their Bodies; they shall, in the Day of Judgment, be received into the highest Heavens.

Others, especially the Socinian Writers, represent the Soul, upon its quitting the Tabernacle of the Body, as fleeping, or in a State of Inactivity, without Consciousness,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See the Abstract of the Downy Catechism, Page 51.

and insensible of Happiness or Misery. They allow, indeed, its Existence, and consent to the Doctrine of future Rewards and Punishments, only referring them to the Decision of the great Day. In Opposition to each of these Sentiments, it's the united Opinion of Protestants, and the reformed Churches, that there is one Place of Blifs and Glory. where the Spirits of just Men, being made perfect, dwell together completely happy, waiting, without Pain, for the full Redemption of the Body; and that there is one Place of Misery, called Hell, or the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone. where the fallen Angels are reserved in Chains under Darkness, to the coming of the great Day, and in which the Souls of the Wicked and Ungodly are tormented with that Worm which dies not, till the Judgment Day, when their Misery will be increased by the Union of Soul and Body. which will be the dreadful Objects of God's Wrath and Indignation for ever.

As to the former of these, I mean the Do-

ctrine of Purgatory, it is,

1. An unscriptural Notion, without the least Foundation in, or Warrant from the Word of God.

Some, indeed, of their Writers have mentioned a Passage or two in the Old Testament, as looking this Way; but the modern Disputants lay the whole Stress of the Argument

gument on two or three Places in the New Testament; the one is that of our Lord, Matt. xii. 32. where speaking of the Remission of Sins, he says, There is one which wil! not be forgiven in this World, nor in the World to come: Whence they conclude fome Sins are forgiven in the next World, and that this implies a Purgatory; for there only is Remission of Sins, and not in Hell or Heaven b. Another Passage they mention is, 1 Cor. iii. 15. where they suppose the Apoftle speaks of some under the Guilt of Sin, who shall be saved, yet so as by Fire; and the other, which they think fully proves it, is that of Peter, first Epistle, Ch. iii. 18, 19. where speaking of our Lord, he says, He was quicken'd by the Spirit, by which also be went and preached to the Spirits in Prison.

As to the former of these Scriptures, it is certain, that our Lord is speaking of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, as absolutely and eternally unpardonable; and the Hebrew Phrase, of not being forgiven in this World, nor in that which is to come only more strongly and vehemently asserts, that it shall be punished, not only as it was in the Destruction of the Yews, their City and

b See the above-mentioned Catechism, Ibid.

Notum est ex Hebrwis ustatissima peidoes, hujusmodi Negationes in contraria maxime affirmare: Itaque non remittetur idem fuerit, atque certo & absque ulla Venia punietur tum in presenti Vita tum in sutura. Vide Bece in loc.

We readily allow, that about the Time of our Lord's Incarnation, and somewhat before, it was the Opinion of many of the Jews, that every one of the Children of

d Hoc Verbo, Dominus & Salvator noster non aliqua Peccata in futuro seculo dimittenda, quæ in hoc seculo dimissa non sucrint, sed bene intelligentibus ostendit, non alia, sed illa tantum in suturo seculo dimittenda, quæ in hoc seculo, in una & vera Ecclesia Catholica sucrint unicuique dimissa. Fulgent. in Lib. de peccat. remiss. I. c. 24.

Abraham, after the Flesh, who continued in the Profession of Judaism, would, sooner or later, be faved; and when the greater Evils. or more abominable Practices of some of them were objected to this Opinion, the Account they gave of it was, that all Sins committed against the preceptive Part of the Law, were passed by upon a mere Repentance; all fuch as were committed against the Prohibitions of it, were forgiven, either in the great Day of Expiation, or by the Afflictions of this Life, especially if they ended in Death, or however, after Death, either more immediately, or after fome length of Time. Agreeable to which Notion some have thought our Lord to fpeak in this Place; not in the least patronizing the Opinion, which has no Foundation either in Reason or Revelation, but that he might be more easily understood, and more fully declare the divine Resentment against this Sort of Blasphemy. However, let the determinate Meaning of the Place be what it will, there is not the least Intimation given of Forgiveness obtain'd, either by the enduring of Punishment, or by the good Works and Prayer of the Devout in this World.

As to the fecond Scripture quoted by them, it is evident, to every unprejudiced

e Vid. Hierus. Sanhed. Fol. 37, 38.

Reader, that the Apostle is speaking of some Teachers, or Ministers of the Gospel, who, with the rest of the Saints, holding the Head, and adhering to Christ the great Foundation, might however be in Danger through Ignorance, or from the Temptation of Profit or Reputation, to build Wood. Hay and Stubble, or Doctrines foreign to. and, in some Measure, inconsistent with the Foundation; whose Works being contrary to the Will of God, should be burnt up, destroy'd, or come to nothing; though their Persons escaped with apparent Danger. much Hazard and Difficulty: In which, perhaps, he alludes to the Prophets Phrase, of a Brand plucked, or saved, out of the Burning f. As the whole Description is Figurative or Metaphorical, and he speaks of himself as the Master-Builder, as laying the Foundation, and mentions Gold, Silver, and precious Stone, Wood, Hay, and Stubble; which can have no literal Meaning: So the Fire, by which every Man's Works shall be tried and made manifest, must certainly be understood as descriptive either of those various Ways which Providence takes to convince Men of their Errors in this World, or that full Revelation which will be made of Truth in the great Day, when every Man will know how far his Sentiments or

Doctrines were agreeable or contrary to it: And that this cannot be the imaginary material Fire of Purgatory, is evident; because it will try the Works of all, whether good or evil; whereas the Papists confine its purifying Payments and Circumstances.

rifying Power to venial Sins.

As to the other Place mentioned by them in Peter, it is evident, that the Spirits, said to be in Prison, were the Spirits of those who, formerly, were disobedient, and who abused the Long-suffering of God in the Days of Noah; to these Christ once applied, by his Spirit, in the Ministry of that Preacher of Righteousness; and when they had grieved and affronted his Spirit, he determined he should no longer externally strive with them, and, in his Vengeance, swept them away by the Flood; Noah and his Family being miraculously delivered. And though many have formed a Notion of a Limbus Patrum, or a Place of Confinement, for the Old Testament Saints, as there is not the least Colour for it in other Parts of Scripture, so the Term Prison, seems to confine the Sense of this Text to the before-mention'd Disobedient; and whereas the Papists themselves are at a Loss to determine the Success of Christ's preaching to these Spirits in Prison, or how far it prevailed to their Deliverance; we may fafely conclude, that as this World, and the Time of Life is the only State of Probation, so as the Tree falls

Relatives, or the Prayers of the Church, bring a wicked Dives out of Misery, or procure him the least Drop of Water to cool his Tongue, any more than the Malice of Hell and Earth bring a holy Lazarus out of Abraham's Bosom. We never read but of two Places for departed Spirits; and our Lord tells us, that there is a great Gulf fixed between them; nor is there any passing from the one to the other.

And whereas the whole Foundation of this supposed Purgatory lies in the Distinction of mortal and venial Sins, it will be necessary to observe, Sins may be distinguished from each other, as more or less heinous in their Nature, and aggravating in their Guilt; yet all Sin confider'd objectively is infinitely evil; and the Apostle says expresly, that the Wages of Sin is Death; where he is not speaking of this or the other Iniquity, but of Sin abstractedly, as it is a Violation of the righteous Law of God, and an Injury to his manifestative Glory; and the Curse is equally directed against all, who continue not in all Things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them h. And the Apostle James declares, he that offends but in one Point is guilty of all i; and the Instance he mentions, is that of an unbecom-

g Luke xvi. 26. h Gal, iii, 10. i James ii, 10.

clares, that of every idle Word, which the Papists rank among the most venial Sins, Men shall give an Account in the Day of Judgment; and adds as a Reason, for by thy Words thou shalt be justified, and by thy Words thou shalt be condemned k. Nor is it disputed by Bellarmine himself, that many of the learned of their own Church are displeased with, and deny the Distinction. But the Absurdity of this Opinion will farther appear,

2. As it is a manifest Reflection on the Love, Merit, Power and Faithfulness of

our Lord Jesus Christ.

The strongest Instance of the Redeemer's Affection for his People, that we can possibly conceive of, is contained in that gracious Declaration, as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; that is, with an infinite and unchangeable Love. Now if the Father would not leave the Soul of his Son in a separate State, nor suffer his Body to see Corruption, can we think it consistent with the Redeemer's affectionate Regards to his People, that after all the Toil and Labour, the Trials and Afflictions, the Sorrows and Temptations they have met with in this World, he should suffer them to be confined in a Place of Darkness and Misery. If this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>k</sup> Matt. xii, 36, 37, <sup>1</sup> John xv. 9.

were the Case, it must surely arise from some Defect in their Title to the Inheritance prepared for them, and would be a standing Reproach on the Merit of Christ's Blood, and the Value of his Satisfaction. which is the Ground and Foundation of it; but we are affured they have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of their Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace; that they are justified from all Things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of *Moles*; that there is now no Condemnation to them, nor can any lay any Thing to their Charge; fince he has died, is risen again, and ever lives to make Intercession for them; he bore their Sins in his own Body on the Tree; died the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring them to God, that is, to the Vision and Injoyment of him, having purged away their Sins by the Sacrifice of himself; he hath by one Offering for ever perfected them who are fanctified; infomuch that God declares, he has blotted out their Transgressions, and their Sins and Iniquities will be remember no more. Now if the Blood of Christ cleanseth from all Sin, and they are washed from their Sins in the Blood of the Lamb, What Objection should remain against their immediate Admission into his glorious Presence? If it is faid, they are not thoroughly cleanfed from all Unrighteousness, it must be because he either cither would not, or could not make them clean; the former is highly injurious to his Love, the latter is little lefs than Blasphemy to his Power; he who made the World by his almighty Will, and upholds it by the Word of his Power, can, with ease create in us a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within us; he is stronger than the strong Man armed, and is as thoroughly furnished to be the Author, as he is to be the Finisher of our Faith.

Farther, it is equally inconsistent with his Truth and Faithfulness: It is the Glory of Christ that he is a faithful Witness, and he has expresly told his Disciples, 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 my self, that where I am, there ye may be also m. Now if the Report be either false or partial, it must be charged upon him as a Violation of that Integrity which is effential to him as the God of Truth, and will be always found with him as the great Prophet of the Church; nor can we conclude, that he who was fent to reveal the Will of the Father to us, and by whose Gospel Life and Immortality are brought more clearly to light, would have

been filent on this Head, had there been the least Foundation for it.

So that the Doctrine of Purgatory is not more unscriptural than inconsistent with the Love of the Redeemer's Heart, the Merit of his Sacrifice, the Power of his Arm, and his Faithfulness to his Promises.

3. It is a most mercenary, selfish, and carnal Notion, visibly calculated to impose on the Weak and Credulous, and inrich the Priesthood; for besides their exempting all who have enter'd into a Vow of Chastity and canonical Obedience, that is, the Priests, they leave out of this deplorable Case all who have enter'd into a Vow of Poverty, that is, fuch as have parted with their All to the Church, and by whom nothing farther is to be gained: Nor can it easily be conceived, how Men of tollerable Sense and Learning, should give into, and strenuously maintain fo ridiculous an Opinion; but from the daily Experience of the great Advantage arifing from it to themselves, who take Care to be well paid for every Mass and Prayer for the Dead. Our Lord has told us, that he hath the Keys of Hell and of Death; he opens, and no Man shutteth; but in this, as in other Respects, they have criminally attempted to wrest the Power out of his Hands, and divide it among themselves.

As to the Doctrine of Paradife, as distinct from Heaven, though countenanced by Philo

the Jew, Ireneus, Tertullian, and others among the Ancients, and borrowed from them by Dr. Whithy, of late, I can see no other Foundation for it, than the Mistake of the Word Paradife, as it is used in the New Testament; a Term manifestly used by the Jews to fignify the Injoyment of God in a State of Happiness; it is however to be observed, that the Account they give us of it, is vastly different from the Romish Purgatory, as they describe it to be a Place of Purity and Blifs, though not equal in Degree to what the Saints shall enjoy when they come to Heaven. As to the Phrase of being received into Abraham's Bosom, it is evidently taken from the Custom of the Eastern Countries, and the Manner of their fitting together at Entertainments, and intends no more than fitting down with Abrabam, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God. And when the Thief upon the Cross pray'd, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom, and had the Promise from a dying Saviour, this Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"; we cannot justly suppose, that he meant any other than the Kingdom of Heaven, and that our Lord's Reply affured to him an immediate Admission into it. When the Apostle says, that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable

Words, he explains it himself by being caught up to the third Heavens or; beyond which we are never told of any other Place, where God manifests his Glory, and where his People are to dwell. So that we dare not be wise above what is written, but conclude with the Apostle, that when the Soul is absent from the Body, it is present with the Lord.

Nor can we find any Reason from the Word of God, to think as many have done, that the Soul of the Believer, when separate from the Body, remains senseless, asleep, or unconscious, without Imployment or Entertainment: For, as it is highly probable that some Degree of Thought or Reflection, is an effential Property of the rational and immortal Part; so the Account we have of the Inhabitants of Heaven, is, that they are before the Throne of God, serving him Day and Night in his Temple. They fall down before him that fat on the Throne, and worship him, who liveth for ever and ever, casting their Crowns before his Throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, Honour and Power p. It is readily granted, that the Bodies of the Saints are, as it were, asleep, or resting in the Graves; they sleep in the Dust; and thus Man lieth down and rifeth not, till the Heavens be no more.

E 3 P Rev. iv. 10, 11. Chap. vii. 15.

thus when our Lord says, Lazarus sleepeth, he explains it by faying, Lazarus is dead 4; and this, very confistently with their entering into Peace, and walking in their Uprightness, according to the Prophet's Description of the Death of the Righteous, his Body rests as in a Bed, his Soul enters into Peace; which supposes a Capacity for the actual Possession of it: Whether the Apostle, when caught up into the third Heavens, was in or out of the Body, it's equally to our Purpose; for he beard unspeakable Words; so that whether he was in a Transe, or separated for a short Time, from the Body, it's certain his Soul was conscious and actively employ'd. And when our Lord says to the Thief, as before mention'd, This Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise, he could by no Means be understood by him, as referring to the Day of the Resurrection; but that, within the Space of that Day, he should be admitted to the Work of Heaven, and behold the Glories of the invisible State. And we must think the Apostle, when he fays, I am in a Strait betwixt two, having a Desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better; to be either criminally weary of his Work, and impatient of Suffering, or to affign a most weak and foolish Reason for this his Solicitude: Can it ever

be thought, a Man who had fo much Zeal for God, so much Love to the Redeemer, and Delight in being serviceable in his Hand to the Souls of Men, could speak of being in a Strait, or under the least Difficulty to determine which was most eligible to be preaching the Gospel, displaying the Glories of his Lord, promoting his Cause and Interest in the World; or in a State of absolute Insensibility, where he should neither do, nor enjoy any Thing. But he takes it for granted, when he quitted the Tabernacle of the Body, he should be with Christ; which he declares to be far better: What! better to be afleep, without Thought, in a State next to that of Annihilation, than to enjoy the Delights of Communion and Fellowship with Christ, in his secret Retirements and publick Ministrations! How unworthy would it be of him, for whom to live was Christ? Nor does he merely suppose for himself, as a peculiar Favourite of Heaven, that he might escape this horrid State of Neutrality and Indifference, and be admitted to the Presence of his Saviour; but speaks of it with an Air of Resolution and Certainty, as the common Assurance of God's People, We know that when the earthly House of this Tabernacle is dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens: What, a Building to lie empty! an House uninhabi-E 4 ted

ted till the last Day, Mansions in our Father's House unoccupied! Surely, had this been the Case, he had little Reason to add, We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord . To say that we are present with him only as the inanimate Parts of the Creation are under his Eye, and upheld by his Power, not to fay that this feems most contrary to the very Notion of Spirits, but must be conceived, if there is any Foundation for it, to be inflicted as a Degree of Punishment: Now Justice it self has no Demand: nor can the Holiness of God find the least Fault with the Soul of a Believer compleatly justified, and perfectly sanctified; nor can there be any Meaning in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, if we are not to think of the one as in a State of positive Happiness, as well as of the other in the Experience of Misery; and the very Request of the rich Man, that Lazarus might be fent to administer some Relief, is intirely inconsistent with the Notion of Soul fleeping. our Lord represents their Condition as unalterably fixed; nor does he give the least Intimation of any farther State of Service or Joy reserved for Lazarus, now supposed to be fleeping, and insensible.

We know that some Passages of Scripture speak of the Reward of the Saints, as referved for them to the Day of Judgment; and the Apostle particularly mentions his Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge should give him in that Day :: But this relates to the Completion, and not to the Introduction of their Felicity; every one who obtains the Victory, and overcomes by the Blood of the Lamb, has his Crown and his Palm given him upon his first Entrance into the new Jerusalem; but there may be some Reserves of Glory, some additional Beauties shed on him when he comes in the last Day to receive his Body, and make up a Part of the shining Retinue of his exalted Saviour and Judge.

If it be farther inquired, When the Soul is made thus perfect, since the Blessing is not to be found on Earth, and without it there is no Admission to Heaven? We answer, The same Stroke that breaks the Union between Soul and Body, removes at once all Desilement from the immortal Part, and the Work of Sanctification is then sinished in Righteousness. It will not be disputed, but this is easy with Omnipotence, and, from what Judgment we can form of departing Saints, as the greatest Part of them, by far, have made some Complaint of themselves to

the very last; and others have been under the violent Assaults of Satan, who has raged the more, because he saw his Time was short; we can hardly think that they were wholly free from Impersection whilst here: And the Scripture having positively assured us, that nothing that defiles shall ever enter into Heaven, it is most reasonable to conclude, that the Moment they are discharged from their Warsare, and when they come to the End of their Race, they are at once fully prepared for the Joys of an everlasting Triumph.

And as Angels are represented as so many ministring Spirits, sent forth to attend the Heirs of Salvation, and our Lord speaks of the Soul of Lazarus as convey'd by them into Abraham's Bosom; it has generally been assigned to them as their Province, to receive the Spirit when dislodged, and carrying it through the Territories of the Prince of the Power of the Air, to introduce it into the Presence of the King of Glory, and dispose of it among the Spirits of just Men made perfect, who are before the Throne of God, and of the Lamb, for ever and ever.

And from this Specimen we have now had of the Doctrine of Rome, we may form fome Judgment of the Errors of that Church, and the Mercy of a Deliverance from their Tyranny, Superstition, and Idolatry: Time was when England paid Thousands yearly

to that See for Indulgencies, Absolutions and Prayers for the Dead. And as stupid and ridiculous as the Doctrine of Purgatory may appear to us now, it was once the received Opinion of our Fore-fathers: And if God for our Iniquities, and Abuse of Privileges, should yet again give us up to Blindness of Eyes and Hardness of Heart, our Consciences and Purses may lie at the Mercy of those blind Guides, whose Religion is Pagentry, and whose Aim is Spoil. I cannot help here observing, that the Door at which Popery seems to be likely to enter among us, is not only the Profaneness and Impiety of the Multitude, but especially the Contempt with which all experimental Godliness is treated by professed Deists, who are bantering and ridiculing every Thing that is sacred, and exalting the Powers of human Nature, in direct Opposition to Scripture and Experience. And it is to be lamented, how far some who profess to be Preachers of the Gospel, as to the Doctrine of Merit, run into the Camp of the Adverfary, whilst it may easily be shown, that the best Antidote against the spreading Poison of Popish Errors, is a spiritual Knowledge of the Nature, Necessity, Reality and Perfection of Christ's Satisfaction; nor can I fee any Man fo likely to give into the Sacrifice of the Mass, as he who believes himself, and teaches others, that the Sacrifice of our Lord

Lord Jesus Christ was merely figurative and

metaphorical.

And how comfortable is the Reflection to a Believer, that when absent from the Body, a Body that he is sometimes loth to leave, he shall be immediately present with the Lord! This, though upon other Accounts, he might wish to stay, when in a right Frame, will make him fay with the Apofile, I am rather willing to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better than the best Situation in this World; here the Soul is at best incumber'd with the Body, which, as a dead Weight, keeps it down, and hinders it in its Desire after, Contemplation of, and Communion with God, and as a Snare and Burden often makes a Saint cry out, O wretched Man that I am! But when uncloathed, it shall ascend as a bright Flame of Zeal and Affection, to the Father of Spirits, its Original and Portion; no more any uneasy Sensations attending it from the acute Pain of bodily Distempers, no more Disorders from fainting Spirits, or languishing Nature, but for ever strong and vigorous in the Exercise of every heavenly Grace; its Attention shall no more be called off by the Returns of Hunger and Thirst, by the Cares of Life, or a Concern to maintain the tottering Tabernacle; who would not wish to die for fuch an Immortality?

And how dreadful is the Case of the Wicked, when the short Span of Life is meafured, and their sew remaining Sands run out, the Summons will come, Give an Account of thy Stewardship this Night, this Day, this Hour, or this Moment, thy Soul is required at thy Hands; no more any State of Trial, nor any possible Release from the Chains of everlasting Darkness; no Proyers of Friends are either required, or can reach their Case, no Drop of Water to cool their Tongue, or the least Abatement, or Cessation of Misery; but dying Christless, they drop into Hell, that Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone.

