

The Rest of the People of GOD.

A

Funeral Sermon

Occasion'd by the

DEATH

Of the Reverend

Mr. *JOHN PIGGOTT*,

Late Minister of the Gospel

Preach'd *March 29. 1713.*

By Joseph STENNETT.

HEBREWS IV. 9.

There remaineth therefore a Rest to the People of God.

'TIS to fulfil the Desire of a Dying Friend, that I am now to discourse on these Words. The Worthy Pastor of this Congregation having some months before his Decease made choice of this Passage, as proper Subject for his Funeral Sermon, importun'd me to undertake this Service. He had then, it seems, *the Sentence of Death in himself*, and perceiv'd its gradual Approaches, when we were willing to hope it was at a much greater distance from him, than what Time has since made appear.

As it was the Business of his Life to consult your Advantage, and to endeavour your Edification; so he was solicitous that his Death might be instructive to you too: for as the Apostle *Paul* says of *Timothy*, *He naturally cared for your State*,¹ and your Welfare constantly engag'd his Thoughts in the time of his Sickness, as well as that of his Health; so that He might well have express'd the Temper of his Mind toward you in the Terms of the Apostle *Peter*: *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, tho you know them, and be establish'd in the present Truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance. Knowing that shortly I must put of this my Tabernacle. — Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my Decease to have these things always in remembrance.*²

When the Distemper under which he labour'd had so far weaken'd his Constitution, that he suppos'd his *Departure was at hand*, he was willing to have hazarded the Remains of that Life, the Vigor of which he had spent in your Service, to have obtain'd an opportunity of preaching to you one Sermon more, and would gladly have been brought from his *Bed of Languishing to the House of Prayer*, to have giving you his dying Charge (if possible) from this Pulpit, whence you had so often heard him explain the Principles and enforce the Duties of our Holy Religion. But alas! tho his *Spirit was willing*, his *Flesh was then too weak* for this Service. However, what he could not perform himself, he was willing should in some sort be done by another. And tho his Lips are now clos'd in the silent Grave, yet (like *Abel*) *he being dead yet speaks*;³ speaks by the sacred Doctrine he so often inculcated on your Minds in his Sermons and Exhortations, and by the holy Example he gave you, when conversant among you; speaks by that Faith and Hope, that Patience and Meekness, that Humility and Resignation, that Charity and Kindness, which appear'd both in the Conduct of his Life, and in his Behaviour on a dying Bed: speaks to let you know how excellent and necessary a thing true Religion is, to make you happy in Life and Health, in Sickness and at Death: speaks by his own Sickness and Death, that *Righteous Men* (as well as others) *are taken away*,⁴ and *the Prophets do not live for ever*;⁵ and to put you all in mind *how frail you are*,⁶ that you may *so number your days as to apply your Hearts unto Wisdom*.⁷ Speaks to you particularly by the Words of our Text, whereby he after the most solemn manner recommends to you, as a matter worthy of your utmost Care, that you would secure to you selves an *Entrance into that Rest which remains to the People of God. Being dead* (I say) *he yet speaks*; but which is infinitely more awful, that GOD, whose *Word lives and abides for ever*, whose Word will be either *a Savor of Life unto Life, or a Savor of Death unto Death* to you,⁸ speaks, and that after the most obliging and importunate manner, to invite you to *enter into this Rest*, and to *take heed lest any of you fall short of it thro Unbelief*.⁹

1 Phil. 2.20.

2 2 Pet. 1. 12-15.

3 Heb. 11. 4.

4 Isa. 57. 1.

5 Zech. 1. 5.

6 Psal. 39. 4.

7 Psal. 90. 12.

8 2 Cor. 2. 16.

9 Heb. 3. 19. Ch. 4. 1.

The main Design of the Author of this Epistle, is to shew how much the Administration of the Gospel is to be prefer'd to that of the Law. This he makes appear by many Arguments, the chief of which are taken from the Dignity of the Mediator of the New Testament, and from the Excellency and Perfection of his Sacrifice.

When he had given a glorious Idea of this Mediator in the first and second Chapters, and had shewn in the beginning of the third, that he is as much superior to *Moses*, as a Son is to a Servant; at the seventh Verse he takes occasion to exhort the *Hebrews* to attend to the Doctrine of the Gospel, and to warn 'em of the Danger of an impious Contempt, and obstinate Refusal of the gracious Proposals it contains; which, as he shews, would certainly expose 'em to a much severer Sentence than that pronounc'd and executed on the *Israelites* for their Disobedience and Unbelief formerly in the Wilderness.

This Caution he thinks fit to give in the words of the Psalmist: *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts, as in the Provocation, in the day of Temptation in the Wilderness; when your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my Works forty Years: Wherefore I was grieved with that Generation, and said, they do always err in their Hearts, and they have not known my ways; so I sware in my Wrath, they shall not enter into my Rest.*¹⁰

To enforce this Admonition, he suggests that *David* in these words prophesy'd of the Time of the Gospel, when he says, *To day, if ye will hear his Voice, &c.* and that therefore 'tis reasonable to apply the Example he produces of the Punishment of the unbelieving Tribes, who provok'd God in the Desert, to those who should reject the Glad Tidings of the Gospel; to shew the Guilt and Danger of the latter above the former, and that with as much greater force, as the Light and Grace of the Gospel transcend whatever might seem most glorious in the Law. Therefore he insists, ver. 12. *Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is call'd to day, lest any of you be harden'd thro the Deceitfulness of Sin.*¹¹ And again, — *With whom was he griev'd forty Years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose Carcases fell in the Wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his Rest, but to them that believ'd not? So we see that they could not enter in because of Unbelief.*¹²

Immediately after he had repeated this sad instance of God's Judgment on rebellious *Israel*, he urges his former Caution, and adds in the beginning of the fourth Chapter; *Let us therefore fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it; for unto us was the Gospel preach'd as well as to them: but the Word preach'd did not profit them, not being mix'd with Faith in them that heard it. For we who have believ'd do enter into Rest; as he said, As I have sworn in my Wrath, if they shall enter into my Rest.*¹³

And to make it evident that the Psalmist, in mentioning the Oath of God against the *Israelites*, namely, *That they should not enter into his Rest*, insinuates, that there is now also, in the time of the Gospel, a Rest propos'd to us, which Infidels shall be precluded, and into which those who believe shall certainly enter; he considers the several kinds of Rest in which God is pleas'd to claim a Property, which are therefore call'd *his Rests*, and into which his People may be said to enter, that so it may appear what Rest that is which the Prophet *David* intimates in the forecited words.

10 Psal. 95. Heb. 3. 7-12.

11 Ver. 13 [Heb. 3. Ed.]

12 Ver. 17, 18, 19.

13 Chap. 4. Ver. 1, 2, 3.

He shews first that it could not be the Sabbath, that Day of Rest that ensu'd the Creation, and in which it is said, *God rested from all his Works*; since this Rest takes its Date from the Foundation of the World: whereas the Rest the Psalmist means, is spoken of as yet to come. — *If they shall enter into my Rest; altho the Works were finish'd from the Foundation of the World, for he spake in a certain Place of the seventh day on this wise: And God did rest the seventh day from all his Works; and in this Place again, if they shall enter into my Rest.*¹⁴ That is, they shall by no means enter into my Rest, according to the Import of the Particle [*if*] which in the *Hebrew* Idiom implies a strong Negation; and this is a Form of Speech espepecially us'd in Swearing. Thus when *Moses* puts the Tribes of *Israel* in mind of their Obstinacy and Unbelief, he adds, that *God was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely, there shall not one of these Men of this evil Generation see the Good Land, &c.* 'Tis in the Original, *If a Man among these Men shall see,*¹⁵ &c.

He farther observes, that the Rest, suggested by the Psalmist, could not be the Land of *Canaan*, tho this was also call'd God's Rest, because *Israel* had been possess'd of it long before the time of *David*. *Again he limiteth a certain day, saying, in David, To day after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts: For if Jesus [i.e. Joshua] had given them Rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.*¹⁶

The Sum of this Reasoning amounts to this: The Royal Psalmist, in warning Men to hear the Voice of God *To day*, and not to harden their Hearts against it as the *Israelites* formerly did, lest they should be punish'd like them; signifies, that by obeying this Call of God, in believing the Divine Word, they shall be admitted into God's Rest; which can't here mean the Sabbath, or the Land of *Canaan*, tho each of these is call'd his Rest; because Men enter'd into these long before the time of *David*, and therefore must be understood of a State of Rest propos'd by the Gospel, of which he prophesies: So that the Author of this Epistle justly concludes in the words of our Text, *There remaineth therefore a Rest to the People of God.*

The Method I shall take in treating these Words, will be;

- I. To give you a General Idea of them, by a brief Explication.
- II. To insist more particularly on the Principal Things contain'd in them.

1. I am to give a General View of the Text, by explaining the Terms of it: And am to shew,

- 1. What is signify'd by this *Rest*.
- 2. Who are design'd by this Character, [The People of God.]
- 3. What is meant by the *remaining* of this Rest to them.

1. As to the *Rest* here spoken of, 'tis evident it signifies the State of Happiness which the Righteous shall enjoy in the World to come: and this Term (like that of Peace) is us'd in the Holy Scripture in a very extensive Sense; and sometimes signifies,

(1.) That Ease and Repose which ensues a Cessation of Toil and Labour; for these were first introduc'd by Sin, and therefore 'tis a part of the Curse pronounc'd on fallen Man, that *in Sorrow* he should eat of the [Fruits of the] *Ground all the days of his Life;*¹⁷ and that *in the Sweat of his Face, he should eat the Bread.*¹⁸ And that Labour and Sorrow, that Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, of

14 Ver. 3, 4, 5.

15 אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

16 Ver. 7, 8.

17 Gen. 3. 17.

18 V. 19.

which the Wise-Man so often complains in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, may well be taken for a Comment on this righteous Sentence. The Misery of Men, on this account, appear'd to him so great, as to make him prefer the State of the *Dead* to that of the *Living*;¹⁹ and *the day of Death to the day of one's Birth*.²⁰ Indeed to be deliver'd from these Evils, is no inconsiderable Advantage: Tho we are not to imagine, that the Rest spoken of in our Text only regards that of the Body in the Grave; however, this is taken notice of in Scripture as a Benefit. When *Job* describes the Ease and Quiet of the Grave, he elegantly says, *There the Wicked cease from troubling, and there the Weary are at rest: There the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor: The Small and Great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master*.²¹ And the Prophet *Isaiah*, speaking of the Death of the righteous Man, says, *He shall enter into Peace; they shall rest in their Beds, each one walking in his Uprightness*.²² An Angel speaks to the same purpose to the Prophet *Daniel*, *Go thou thy way, till the End be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy Lot at the End of Days*.²³ And after the like manner the Apostle *John* is instructed by a Voice from Heaven, saying, *Write, Blessed are the Dead who die in the LORD, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them*.²⁴

But the Rest in the Text may be suppos'd, especially to regard that of the Souls of good Men, when separated from their Bodies; for while they are *absent from the Body*, they will be *present with the Lord*,²⁵ when they shall be free from all the Fatigue and Care that attend them in this Life. Above all, it may denote that perfect State of Rest that will follow the Resurrection of the Just, whose Bodies and Souls, when reunited, shall participate the same Blessing, and enjoy an everlasting Immunity from all Toil, Labour and Uneasiness.

This Sense of the Word is confirm'd, by the Allusion which the Author of this Epistle makes in the Context both to the Condition of the *Israelites*, who were deliver'd from a State of Slavery and Bondage, which they had long undergone in *Egypt*, and were promis'd a State of Liberty and Ease in the Land of *Canaan*; and also to the Rest of the Sabbath, in which God is said to have rested from all his Works, and which was design'd to give Men Rest from their ordinary Toil and Labour: and therefore the Words we are considering, run thus in the Original, *There remains therefore a Sabbatism for the People of God*, i.e. a Cessation from all Toil and Labour.

(2.) This Rest signifies a State of Settlement and Security, in opposition to the various Changes and Vicissitudes, the Hazards and Dangers that attend good Men in this Life. Thus when God promises the People of *Israel*, that *his Presence should go with them*, and that *he would give them Rest*;²⁶ 'tis plain, he hereby lets them know, that whereas they were now wandering in the Desert, he would bring them to a settled State, and that he would at length secure them from the Inconveniences and Dangers which attended them during their Pilgrimage. And when this People were freed from the Calamity of War, 'tis said their *Land had Rest from War*.²⁷ On the same account 'tis said of *David*, that *the LORD gave him Rest from all his Enemies round about*:²⁸ And it was prophesy'd of *Solomon*, that he should be *a Man of Rest*;²⁹ that is, that he should have a peaceful Reign. To the like purpose the *Jews* are said to have *had Rest from their Enemies*,³⁰ after the Defeat of *Haman's* Plot, to signify the Tranquillity and Safety they enjoy'd on that occasion.

19 Eccl. 4. 2.

20 Ch. 7. 1.

21 Job 3. 17, 18, 19.

22 Isa. 57. 2.

23 Dan. 12. 13.

24 Rev. 14. 13.

25 2 Cor. 5. 8.

26 Exod. 33. 14.

27 Josh. 14. 15. Judg. 5. 31.

28 2 Sam. 7. 1.

29 1 Chron. 22. 9.

30 Esth. 9. 16.

This well agrees with the Reference made in the Context to what was promis'd the *Israelites*; namely, that after all the Journeys and Toils of the Wilderness for forty years, and all the Wars that should attend them at their Entrance of the promis'd Land, they should at length attain a State of Settlement and Security. Thus good Men, tho in a State of Pilgrimage and Warfare, during their Abode in this World, shall at last arrive at Heaven, where there is perfect Safety and Tranquillity: Tho all things here are fluctuating and subject to change, that State of Glory is constant and permanent.

And as the Tribes of *Israel* were promis'd the Divine Protection, so long as they were stedfast in God's Covenant; so that they should have no occasion to fear any Invasion from their Enemies, nay that these should not so much as desire their Land, when all the Men were withdrawn from their Frontiers, which happen'd thrice a year, when they were oblig'd to go up to *Jerusalem* to worship: So this might adumbrate that perfect Security and uninterrupted Tranquillity the Righteous shall enjoy in the Heavenly State.

(3.) This Term frequently signifies Joy and Pleasure, and is oppos'd to a State of Grief and Pain; as appears by the account the Apostle *Paul* gives of the future Judgment, when he says to the *Thessalonians*, — *It is a righteous thing with God to recompense Tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, REST with us, when the LORD Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his Mighty Angels, &c.*³¹ And when the Apostle *John* describes the Misery of those who shall be condemn'd to Eternal Torments, he says, *They have no Rest, Day nor Night.*³²

The People of *Israel* were promis'd *Rest*, in this sense, in the Land of *Canaan*, in case they were obedient to the Divine Laws. They were not only to be protected from Calamities and Dangers, so that none should make them afraid; *but to sit down under their Vines and Fig-Trees,*³³ to enjoy Health and long Life, Peace and Plenty; in short, the Confluence of all Temporal Blessings, that might give them innocent Pleasure and Joy; or to use the Apostle's words on a like occasion, *To fill their Hearts with Food and Gladness.*³⁴

Lastly, *Rest* is often taken for Complacency, Content and Satisfaction. Thus 'tis said, on the occasion of *Noah's* Sacrifices, — *The LORD smell'd a sweet Savour*, or as it is in the Original, *a Savour of Rest;*³⁵ to shew his Offerings were very acceptable to God. And this Phrase is elsewhere us'd, to shew God's Complacency in the Oblations that were presented him, according to his own Institution.³⁶ And when the Psalmist would calm the Troubles of his Mind, he thus expresses himself, *Return to thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*³⁷ As if he had said, Return, O my Soul, to thy usual Refuge, to that Content and Satisfaction thou wert wont to enjoy in resigning thy self to the Divine Conduct, and in reflecting on God's past Favours. Again, *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him,*³⁸ says he; that is, rest satisfy'd with his wise Disposal of all Events. And when the Prophet *Zephaniah* would shew how great Complacency God takes in his People, he says, *The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will rejoice over thee with Joy, he will REST in his Love, he will joy over thee with Singing.*³⁹

Thus we have a General Idea of this Rest, which not only signifies a Cessation from Toil and

31 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7.

32 Rev. 14. 11.

33 Zech. 3. 10. Deut. 28. 2-14.

34 Acts 14. 17.

35 Gen. 8. 21.

36 Numb. 28. 2.

37 Psal. 116. 7.

38 Psal. 37. 7.

39 Zeph. 3. 17.

Labour, but a State of Settlement and Security, and of Joy and Pleasure, nay, that Fulness of Joy which Complacency and Satisfaction denote; so that 'tis a Term very fit to represent the Happiness of the Heavenly State.

2. We are now to consider who are the Persons that shall attain this Rest, design'd by this Character, [The People of God.]

'Tis well known that this Title was, in antient times, given the Tribes of *Israel*; and 'tis to be observ'd that the Author of this Epistle constantly alludes to such Things, and uses such Terms as that Nation was perfectly well acquainted with. They were call'd the *People of God*, because they were selected from the rest of Mankind to be, after a very particular manner, instructed in the Knowledg of the Divine Will, and were taken into Covenant with God.⁴⁰ They were form'd into a Political State, of which God himself was the King, who gave them Laws both Ecclesiastical and Civil; and by a long Series of Miracles deliver'd and protected them from their Enemies, so long as they remain'd stedfast in his Covenant. On this account they were call'd, *A Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People.*⁴¹

Indeed they *were not all Israel who were of Israel*, nor all *the Seed of Abraham*, in the sense of the Gospel, who descended from him *according to the Flesh*;⁴² yet were they Typical Representatives of that *Holy Notion*, that *Kingdom of Priests*, that *Peculiar People*, which God determin'd to collect for himself out of a degenerate World, during the State of the Gospel: which wonderfully alter'd the face of Religion, and brought in a lively Hope and a new account of Things, refining and raising the Minds of Men from carnal and earthly, to spiritual and heavenly Objects. Under this pure Dispensation, they only are counted *Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise*,⁴³ who imitate the *Father of the Faithful* in believing the Word of God, and prove themselves to be his Children by imitating his Example: They are reckon'd *Israelites* indeed, *in whom there is no Guile; who are born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*;⁴⁴ who are regenerated by the Efficacy of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ These are the People of God, in the sense of our Text, who truly believe in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ, and embrace his Gospel. And 'tis to these that this *Rest*, or State of Happiness, *remains*; 'tis only they who *believe*, that *enter into this Rest*.⁴⁶ On the contrary, *without Faith 'tis impossible to please God*.⁴⁷ And as the Infidelity of the *Israelites* hinder'd them from entring into *Canaan*, so those who disbelieve and reject the Gospel of Christ, will, without Repentance, fall short of Eternal Felicity, and be expos'd to the Sentence of Eternal Death and Misery.

3. The last thing to be explain'd, is the *Remaining* of this Rest: *There remaineth a Rest to the People of God*. And this may import,

(1.) That this State of Happiness is not to be expected in this present World. This is a State of Pilgrimage, where good Men find no rest for the Soles of their Feet: *I am a Stranger with thee* (says the Psalmist) *and a Sojourner, as all my Fathers were*.⁴⁸ And the Author of this Epistle, speaking of the Patriarchs, says, *They confess'd that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth*; and adds, that *They who say such things, declare plainly that they seek a Country, and that they desire a better Country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not asham'd to be call'd their God, for he hath*

40 Deu. 4. 31-35.

41 Exod. 19. 5, 6. 1 Pet. 2. 9.

42 Rom. 9. 6, 7, 8.

43 Gal. 3. 29.

44 John 1. 13.

45 John 3. 5-8.

46 Heb. 4. 3.

47 Heb. 11. 6.

48 Psal. 39. 12.

*prepar'd for them a City.*⁴⁹ This is not their Rest, but there remains a Rest for them in the future State.

(2.) It may also denote the Certainty of their Enjoyment of this Happiness; 'tis future, but 'tis real; the Mansions of Bliss are prepar'd for them. The Glory they *hope for, the Crown of Righteousness* they expect, is said *to be laid up for them in Heaven.*⁵⁰

(3.) It may signify the Duration of it. 'Tis not like the Pleasures of this World, which are momentary and fleeting, and which may be compar'd to the *crackling of Thorns under a Pot*, as the Wise-Man elegantly represents the *Laughter of a Fool*;⁵¹ for after a little Noise and short Blaze, these trifling Joys vanish and come to nothing, but often leave Bitterness and Remorse behind them. The things of this World perish in *the using*,⁵² and the *Fashion of it continually passes away*;⁵³ but the Saints have *in Heaven a better and an enduring Substance.*⁵⁴ Their Crowns of Glory never fade, their Rest is not interrupted there, but *remains* to Eternity.

Having explain'd the Terms of the Text, I am now,

II. More particularly to discourse on the principal things contain'd in it; and shall treat,

1. Of the Excellency of that future State of Happiness describ'd here by Rest.
2. Of the Character of the Persons who shall enjoy it, viz. the People of God.
3. Of the Certainty of this State.

1. The Excellency of this State of Happiness, represented by Rest, deserves our particular Consideration.

We all naturally and necessarily desire to be happy, and to be as happy as 'tis possible for us to be: And what can we desire more (as large and as importunate as our Desires are) than to be entirely free from Labour and Toil, Danger and Disappointment, Pain and Sorrow, Anxiety and Discontent; and to enjoy constant Ease and Repose, undisturb'd Safety, exquisite Joy and perfect Satisfaction? Yet no less Happiness than this is signify'd by that *Rest which remains to the People of God*, as you have heard before. 'Tis such indeed as *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man, the things which God hath prepar'd for them that Love him.*⁵⁵ 'Tis a considerable Advantage to be deliver'd from all the Toil and Vexation, Cares and Troubles, Fears and Hazards, that attend us in our present State; to have *Tears wiped from all Eyes*, when there shall be *no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain.*⁵⁶ But 'tis a much higher degree of Happiness, to have the Capacity of the Soul enlarg'd and refin'd, to receive and relish heavenly Joys, and then to have its Desires entirely satisfy'd, and *fill'd with all the Fulness of God.*⁵⁷ Safety and Tranquillity would make a moderate degree of the Accommodations of this Life very comfortable: but what words can express the Excellency of that State and Place, where the highest Pleasure is join'd with the utmost Security, and where there's not the least Fear of losing that Divine Favour, which gives the Soul the greatest Content and Satisfaction; where there is *Fulness of Joy, and Pleasures for evermore?*⁵⁸

49 Heb. 11. 13, 14, 15, 16.

50 Col. 1.5. 2 Tim. 4. 8.

51 Eccl. 7. 6.

52 Col. 2. 22.

53 1 Cor. 7. 21. [this should be 1 Cor. 7:31, Ed.]

54 Heb. 1. 34. [this should be Heb. 10:34, Ed.]

55 1 Cor. 2. 9.

56 Rev. 21. 4.

57 Eph. 3. 19.

58 Psal. 16. 11.

The many bright Images and elegant Figures, us'd in the Holy Scripture to describe this blessed State, fall infinitely short of its real Glory: But as the Objects of Sense easily and strongly affect us, the Word of God represents the Celestial Glory by every thing that Men chiefly admire and esteem in this World; that by striking their Imaginations, their Attention may be engag'd to consider the real Excellency of that Happiness, and how to secure to themselves the Enjoyment of it.

What a magnificent Description is given us of the *New Jerusalem* by the Apostle *John* in his *Revelation!*⁵⁹ What *glorious things are spoken of the City of God!* The Walls are great and high, the Building regular and noble; the Materials of the Wall are Jasper, and the Streets of the City pure Gold, like transparent Glass; the Foundations garnish'd with all manner of precious Stones, the twelve Gates twelve entire Pearls; 'tis adorn'd with the Throne of God, and favour'd with the continual Presence of his Glory, and that of our blessed Saviour, which illuminate this Holy City. A River of Water of Life, clear Crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God, and of the Lamb, flows thro the midst of it; on the Banks of which grows the Tree of Life, bearing great variety of Fruits every Month, and Leaves that have a healing Virtue.

The Inhabitants are dignify'd with the Titles of *Kings and Priests*, who shall live and reign for ever. The Crowns that are given them, the Robes they wear, and the Palms they carry in their Hands, the Places assign'd them on the Throne of Christ, to sit with him, as he sits on his Father's Throne, give us an Idea of the highest Glory to which Creatures can be advanc'd:⁶⁰ and their being fed with the Fruits of the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God, and with the hidden *Manna*, and led by the LAMB to Living Fountains of Water, and many like Expressions, shew the exquisite Pleasure that shall attend their being *ever with the LORD*.

It's reasonable to believe, that the Favours to be bestow'd in the heavenly State on those whom the King of Kings shall delight to honour, will be sutable to the Greatness both of his Power and of his Love; and that those to whom he disdains not at present to give the endearing Titles of his Children and his Friends, shall share those Honours and Delights, which are agreeable to the Dignity of such a Relation.

It may be also justly concluded, that a Felicity purchas'd for them at so vast a Price as that of the Blood of the Son of God, must bear some proportion to the Merit of this wonderful Sacrifice; and that the Effects of that Divine *Love, which passes Knowledge*, will appear as well in the Greatness of the Bliss our Saviour has procur'd for them, as in the Greatness of the Sufferings he endur'd to accomplish that glorious Design.

'Twas with this View, when he was ready to lay down his Life, that he pray'd so earnestly to his Father, that his Disciples might be with him in that State of Glory to which he was to be advanc'd, as a Reward of his Sufferings, that they might behold his Glory, and partake of it: and 'twas to encourage them to believe and aspire after so great a Privilege, he assures them of his Ascension, to take possession of Heaven as their Forerunner, and to provide Mansions of Glory for them.

But I confess this is a very general Account of a Matter, that well deserves to be more particularly discuss'd: I shall therefore consider this State of Happiness, with reference to the Faculties and Capacities of the Subjects of it.

(1.) If we consider Man as an intelligent Being, we can't suppose him capable of Happiness,

59 Chap. 21. & 22. [that is Revelation, Ch 21 & 22, Ed.]

60 Chap. 7. 17. [that is Rev. 7. 17, Ed.]

without the Gratification of his rational Powers. As his Perception, Reason and Judgment are Faculties, which shew the high Rank he has among the various Orders of Creatures, 'tis not to be conceiv'd that he can be truly happy, unless these be agreeably entertain'd with proper Objects, and secur'd from Errors and Mistakes. Mankind is so sensible of this, that those who have allow'd themselves the most time to think, and reflect on the Dignity and Capacity of their Being, have express'd the most importunate desire after Knowledg and Wisdom; being convinc'd that a rational Creature could not be happy without these. And when the Wise-Man, in the Book of *Proverbs*, so elegantly describes the Happiness of those who apply themselves to acquire Knowledg and Understanding; as he shews thereby the Excellency of Religion, which is founded on Principles of Eternal Truth and Prudence; so he proceeds on the Supposition, that 'tis impossible to be happy in a State of Error and Folly.

How many Great Minds have undergone a multitude of Inconveniences and Disadvantages, rather than they would want the Satisfaction of improving their intellectual Talents; and have with extraordinary Vigour and Application pursu'd such Studies, as others have accounted more dry than profitable! which however shews, that the Knowledg even of things less important is desirable; how much more the Knowledg of Truths of the highest Nature and Consequence?

And if, notwithstanding the small Advance the greatest Genius can make in the Knowledg of Truth in this World, because of the shortness of human Life; yet that degree of it that is attainable, has Charms enough to encourage great Attention and Industry, and to make the Inquirers after Truth easily overcome the Fatigue of close Study, and despise many temporal Inconveniences that attend it, so as sometimes to forget the Necessities of their frail Bodies: What Pleasure must the Soul find in Knowledg infinitely more extensive and important, and attain'd without Labour and Toil, such as the Saints shall enjoy in Heaven!

The great distinction we make between Men in our Esteem, with respect to the different Measures of Wisdom and Knowledg we imagine they possess, shews that Mankind are agreed that these greatly ennoble our Nature, and have a proper Tendency to make us happy. How great then must be the Felicity, how great the Glory of the future World, where the Righteous shall have those Divine Truths, which are of the highest Importance, clearly set before them; and their Minds enlarg'd to perceive them distinctly, and without difficulty apply'd to the Contemplation of them! With what Joy and Admiration will they be fill'd, when they *know as they are known*, and see not, *as in a Glass, darkly* or obscurely, but clearly, and *Face to Face*.⁶¹

Here we are at great Uncertainties; sometimes groping entirely in the Dark, and at best enjoying but some little Glimmerings of Light: How great will the Joy of the Soul be, when she comes to see Truth in its native Beauty, and is deliver'd both from the Fear of mistaking, and from the Uneasiness of doubting!

Some Persons are very imprudent in the choice they make of pursuing such Parts of Knowledg as are less valuable, and yet find no inconsiderable Pleasure in such Pursuits: How entertaining then must the intimate Knowledg of God, of his Nature, his Decrees, his Works and Laws, be to Souls qualify'd for the Intuition of these things, which are capable of engaging the Attention, and satisfying the Desires of Myriads of Angels and Men to Eternity!

Our Ignorance, our Proneness to give into Mistakes, our various Prejudices, and our Impatience in the research of Truth, often prompt us to embrace its Shadow and Appearance, instead of the Substance and Reality: But the Heavenly Perfection will remove from our Souls every false Biass,

61 1 Cor. 13. 12.

and entirely free us from all Prepossession and Illusion. There will be no want of Time for the Investigation of Truth, where Eternity will be spent in that happy Employment; and this without any of those Avocations, which, by reason of the Infirmities of our Nature, or the Necessities of our Fellow-Creatures, so often give us Interruption.

What a Transport of Joy has the Solution of a difficult Question given a Philosopher, who has before often made it the Subject of his Meditation without Success! And will not the Souls of the Righteous be surpriz'd with infinite Pleasure in succeeding constantly in the Discovery of those Truths, that were formerly involv'd in Obscurity and Darkness; so as to baffle the most penetrating Minds, ad to confound the Wise and Prudent?

If Men could attain much greater Degrees of Knowledg, than 'tis possible for them to do in this World, and could be sure of escaping those evil Occurrences, which so often cut them off in the Bloom of Youth, or in the full Vigour of their Days; yet Old Age soon overtakes them, and makes a wonderful Impression on the Mind as well as on the Body: So that 'tis no uncommon thing to see the Faculties of the Soul, that were once strong and lively, become very weak and languid; and what was acquir'd with much Diligence and Labour, is in a great measure lost during this Life; so that many a Man may be said to survive his Learning, and even outlive his Reason. But no such Declension will attend the Knowledg of the Blessed. None of the bright Ideas they have receiv'd shall be blotted from their Minds, but their Understandings eternally improve by the Divine Truths that shall be continually expos'd to their View, when they *shall be like God, and see him as he is.*⁶²

(2.) Let us farther consider Man as a free Agent, and capable of Morality; and we shall find, that to make him truly and perfectly blessed, he must have a Happiness suted to this part of his Character, which indeed dignifies him more than all other Advantages. The Holiness, Justice, Goodness, Mercy and Truth of God, which are term'd his moral Perfections, give us the most glorious Idea of him: and since a Creature is by so much the more excellent, by how much the more nearly it resembles the Creator; and since Men can resemble the Great God in nothing so much, as in these moral Properties, in being *holy as he is holy,*⁶³ *and merciful as he is merciful;*⁶⁴ the Felicity of the Saints in Heaven must chiefly consist in moral Perfection. It is especially, on this account, that Man is said to have been created *in the Image of GOD*; it was Sin that defac'd this glorious Likeness, and 'tis the design of Religion to renew it on the Soul, in order to render it happy for ever.

'Tis indeed impossible to be happy without it; not only because God has, by an irreversible Sentence, determin'd, that *without Holiness no Man shall see him;*⁶⁵ but because, in the nature of the thing, 'tis necessary, that the Powers of the Soul be turn'd and apply'd to their proper Objects, to render her compleatly happy. An unnatural Situation of the Mind will be attended with Uneasiness, which will frequently recur, notwithstanding all the Amusements Men can possibly invent to divert or allay it. And Creatures, capable of moral Agency, could not be happy, supposing they could be transported into Heaven, while their Souls are viciously inclin'd: For how could those, who are destitute of the Love of God, find pleasure in the View of his Perfections, the Beauty of whose Holiness would constantly reproach them for the Deformity of their Sin; and the Severity of whose Justice would strike such Terror on their guilty Minds, as would soon convince them, they could no more subsist in his Presence, than dry Stubble can dwell with devouring Fire? Since the Happiness of rational Creatures (as was just now observ'd) chiefly consists in their Likeness to their Creator, and in their Communion with him; where there is no Resemblance, but contrary Inclinations, what Communion can there be? *What Communion hath Light with Darkness? And what Concord hath*

62 1 John 3. 2.

63 1 Pet. 1. 16.

64 Luke 6. 36.

65 Heb. 12. 14.

*Christ with Belial?*⁶⁶ And for the same reason, the Company of Saints and Angels would render the Wicked very uneasy, if they were join'd to that blessed Society; in which they could find nothing to sooth and flatter their foolish Prejudices and corrupt Appetites, but sunch Sentiments and Dispositions as would directly oppose and contradict them, nay censure and condemn them.

The Bliss of Heaven is describ'd by a State of Rest and Tranquillity; while *the Wicked are like the raging Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*, as the Prophet speaks; and then solemnly repeats the same thing in other Terms, *There is no Peace, saith my GOD, to the Wicked.*⁶⁷ Their Souls are agitated with furious Storms, and they are so violently driven by impetuous Appetites, and so distracted with the Tumult of their contending Passions, that if they seek Rest, 'tis impossible they should find it, while they are possess'd with such a Legion of evil Spirits.

But as good Men aspire after nothing so much as a moral Resemblance of the Divine Being, and as nothing makes them so uneasy in this World as the want of Conformity to their Maker's Will, which often makes them *groan*, and *desire to be dissolv'd*, that they may put off the Body of Sin, and be divested of their earthly Tabernacle together;⁶⁸ and makes each of them cry out in the Language of the Psalmist, *O that I had Wings like a Dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest.*⁶⁹ So this View of the future Glory, as a State of Immunity from all Sin, and of a compleat Conformity to the Will of God, is, in their account, the most glorious and agreeable that can be given. As no Burden is so great to them as that of their Sins, and no Sorrow so pungent as that which is occasion'd by the consideration of their Folly and Deformity; so nothing so effectually revives their drooping Minds, and inspires them with so lively a Joy, and so ravishing a Pleasure, as the Hope of their Arrival at a State of perfect Holiness, which they know is the highest Glory of Creatures, and therefore will give them the greatest Joy and Satisfaction.

(3.) As Man is a Creature capable of various Appetites and Affections, his Happiness must be consider'd with reference to these, and must exclude those of them, which either suppose, or are the occasion of Imperfection, Misery and Uneasiness; and fix the rest on their proper Objects, giving them a sutable Intenseness, and a constant Pleasure, and that Satisfaction, which gives rest to the Soul.

Thus the Appetites of Hunger and Thirst will have no room in that blessed State, where the Bodies of the Saints shall not need those Reparations by Food and Drink, which their present Infirmities require. All Fear shall be excluded, where there shall be no possibility of Danger, and where there shall be *perfect Love*, which the Apostle says, *casts out Fear*. There will be no room for Anger, where there will be nothing to provoke and irritate, or give the least Uneasiness; no Sorrow, where there shall be no mournful Scenes to excite that Passion, and Hope it self shall be render'd useless by the Enjoyment of a compleat Felicity. There all Desires will be regular, and these will find their true and full Satisfaction; Love will be constantly and intensely employ'd in the View of Objects infinitely lovely, and unspeakable Joy result from the Fruition of substantial and eternal Good.

(4.) This Happiness will be accommodated to Mankind, as conscious of their own Thoughts and Actions. Now to render Creatures of such a Constitution happy, the Reflections they make upon their own Powers and Faculties, their Thoughts and Sensations, their Words and Actions, must give them no Trouble or Anxiety; but, on the contrary, great Delight and Contentment.

66 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15.

67 Isa. 57. 20, 21.

68 2 Cor. 5. 1, 2, &c.

69 Psal. 55. 6.

The Consciousness of the Dignity of our Nature, of the excellent Faculties, Talents and Endowments God has been pleas'd to give us, and the Abuse of these by what passes in our Minds, and in our Lives, by the Vanity of our Imaginations, the Temerity and Partiality of our Judgments, and the Irregularity of both our Passions and Actions, give us frequently a very just occasion of Shame and Remorse: Whereas the Reflections we make on the right use of the Powers God has given us, and on those Thoughts, Desires, Inclinations and Actions, which we have regulated by his Will, give us considerable Pleasure and Satisfaction in this World, tho attended with many Infirmities and Imperfections. How happy then must the Righteous be in the heavenly State, when their Minds shall be agreeably entertain'd with Reflections on the Powers and Faculties God has given them, when rais'd to the utmost pitch of Perfection of which they are capable! When they shall see the brightest Traces of the Divine Image on their own Hearts; when they shall feel no Reluctancy to the performance of their Duties, but attend them with Delight and Pleasure; when they shall be conscious of no vain Fancy or irregular Desire, much less of any disorderly Action; but find themselves continually in such a Condition, as infinite Wisdom and Holiness approve, always answering the End of their Being, always acting according to the Obligations that are upon them, and always finding the highest Pleasure and Satisfaction in so doing!

As we naturally and necessarily love our selves, it can't but give us extraordinary Pleasure to find all the Springs and Movements of our Souls in order; since this is what makes them truly lovely, and renders them the Objects of the Complacency of God, whose *Favour is Life*, and in whose *Presence there is Fulness of Joy*.

(5.) If we moreover take a View of Man, as a Creature compounded of two different kinds of Being, viz, a Soul and Body; we shall find this State of Rest and Happiness, assign'd to the Righteous, is adapted to both Parts of him. How happy the Souls of good Men shall be, has in part been shewn already; but they will not attain perfect Bliss, till the happy Day of the Resurrection, when their Bodies too shall participate the heavenly Glory.

The Body indeed is the less noble Part of Man; yet the Holy Scripture assures us, that the Bodies of the Saints shall be rais'd from the Dust, and cloth'd with Beauty and Immortality; that our blessed Saviour *will change our vile Body, that it may be fashion'd like to his Glorious Body, according to the Working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*:⁷⁰ That tho the Bodies of the Saints are sown in *Corruption*, they shall be rais'd in *Incorruption*; tho sown in *Dishonour*, they shall be rais'd in *Glory*; tho sown in *Weakness*, they shall be rais'd in *Power*; and that which is sown a *natural Body*, rais'd a *spiritual One*.⁷¹

How glorious did the Body of our Saviour appear, when transfigur'd, and when he shew'd himself to the Apostle *John*!⁷² If the Bodies of the Saints are to be fashion'd after this glorious Model, we may be sure the Matter of them will be greatly purg'd and refin'd, and the Form of them will be very beautiful and glorious. When this *Mortal shall have put on Immortality*, and *Death shall be swallow'd up in Victory*, those Bodies that shall be form'd for Eternity, and to be the Vehicles of such happy Souls, will be every way fitted and qualify'd for such an Office, and for such a Duration.

(6.) As Man is a sociable Creature, he ought to have agreeable Society, as well as other Advantages, to render him compleatly happy: For whatever Privileges some melancholy and superstitious Fancies have affix'd to perpetual Solitude and Retirement, we have reason to believe the Author of our Being, who soon after the Formation of the first Man, declar'd it was *not good that he should*

70 Phil. 3. 21.

71 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.

72 Rev. 1. 13, 14, &c.

*be alone.*⁷³ And that this Declaration may be extended farther than Conjugal Society, will appear from the Faculties bestow'd on Mankind, which render them capable of doing much Service to each other; nay, both of contributing to, and partaking of various Benefits only to be enjoy'd in a Community.

The Power of communicating Ideas, especially by the Faculty of Speech; the Capacity of being affected with each others Circumstances, and touch'd with each others Passions; sufficiently make appear, that Men were, in their Original Constitution, design'd for Society.

'Tis true, the Saints above in Glory stand not in need of divers of those Assistancess and Supports, which make Society so very necessary to us here below; yet this does not hinder but, even in their blessed State, the Company of their Fellow-Creatures, both of the same and of a superior Order, may contribute to the Advancement of their Glory and Bliss; as this will give occasion both to the Exercise of their Vertues, the Improvement of their Knowledg, and the Communication of their Joys. Therefore the Author of this Epistle describes the Celestial State, in Terms that give us the Idea of a most glorious and happy Society: *Ye are come (says he) to Mount Sion, and to the City of the Living GOD, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels; To the General Assembly, and Church of the First-born, who are written in Heaven, and to GOD the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New covenant, &c.*⁷⁴

And how blessed must that Society be, which shall remain for ever free from all Pride and Vanity, all irregular Self-Love, all Fraud and Treachery, all Envy and Malice, all Discord and Contention, all Suspicion and Jealousy; and where Humility and Charity, Sincerity and Kindness, Peace and Harmony, mutual Confidence and Friendship shall reign for ever!

The Terms of natural and civil Relation, such as those of Brethren and Friends, Co-Heirs and Fellow-Citizens, sufficiently indicate, that the Happiness of Heaven will be socially enjoy'd: and this well agrees with the natural Propension we have to Conversation with others, as we have before observ'd. Nor will the Enjoyment of Communion with God hinder the Society of perfect Creatures from being both delightful and profitable to each other, any more than our Communion with him, in this imperfect State, interferes with the good Offices we render each other, either in the Civil or Religious Communities to which we appertain, and with the Advantage and Pleasure we reap from thence.

Lastly, This Happiness is adapted to the Condition of Man, consider'd as capable of Immortality, and design'd by the Author of his Being to subsist forever: and therefore to render Men compleatly happy, they must be secur'd of the Continuance of the Happiness they enjoy; otherwise the greater it is in Degree, the greater will be their Sollicitude and Fear, lest they should be depriv'd of it, if it be precarious and uncertain. Mankind desire not only to be happy, but to be so for ever: and as it is the greatest Aggravation of the Misery of the Wicked in the future State, that they shall have no Rest, but be tormented for ever and ever; so 'tis a mighty Inhancement to the Felicity of the Righteous, that it shall continue in an uninterrupted Course to Eternity. No Night shall draw a Veil over that bright and glorious Day, no Cloud shall intercept its Lustre in the least degree.

Tho the People of *Israel* enjoy'd Rest and Peace in the Land of *Canaan* for a time, yet were they sometimes invaded, and at other times led Captive into foreign Countries by their Enemies: But *the Rest that remains to the People of God*, is perpetual in its Duration, being founded on an

⁷³ Gen. 2. 18.

⁷⁴ Heb. 12. 22, 23, 24.

*everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things, and sure.*⁷⁵

To Persons, who by their Guilt have deserv'd *everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power,*⁷⁶ a State of Indolence, or even freedom from great Pain and Torment, might be accounted a considerable Indulgence. What Words then can express the Divine Mercy and Bounty, which have provided such a State of Rest and Happiness, as we have been describing, for those who were once dead in Trespasses and Sins, tho now *risen to Newness of Life* by Jesus Christ; for those who once were *not his People*, tho now dignify'd with the Title of *the People of God!*⁷⁷ That they might be happy in every Capacity, to the utmost Extent, and to all Eternity! What Love and Gratitude, what Sacrifices of Thanksgiving, what Acclamations of Praise, what Obedience ought to be offer'd for this unspeakable Gift, both in Time and thro Eternity, by the Heirs of this Bliss and Partners of this Glory, to Him who has call'd them to Glory and Vertue, and made them *Kings and Priests, to reign with Himself for ever!*

2. 'Tis time we now particularly consider the Character of the Persons who shall enjoy this State of Eternal Rest and Happiness: They are *the People of God*. 'Tis for them, for them *only*, and for *all* of them, that this Glory is prepar'd and reserv'd.

Not all who assume this Appellation shall participate this Happiness; but those who approve themselves to be the People of God, by complying with the Terms of his Covenant: Those who truly believe *shall enter into this Rest*, while those who only make an empty Profession of the Truth, and *hold it in Unrighteousness*, shall fall short of it by their Unbelief; as the Carcases of those *Israelites*, who call'd themselves the People of God, and yet *dealt treacherously in his Covenant*, and provok'd him by their Unbelief, fell in the Wilderness. All the Judgments which *happen'd to them were for Examples*, and *are written for our Instruction, upon whom the Ends of the World are come.*⁷⁸ Not all that call our Saviour *LORD, LORD*, shall be admitted to the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb; the Answer he makes to some of them, is, *Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.*⁷⁹ With the Disobedient he thus expostulates, *Why call ye me LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?*⁸⁰ *But blessed are they who do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in thro the Gates into the City; for without are Dogs, and Sorcerers, and Whoremongers, and Murderers, and Idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a Lye.*⁸¹

We have before observ'd, that none but those, to whom the Title of the People of God justly belongs, are capable of this Happiness; none but they have a Temper of Soul, which *makes them meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light;*⁸² none but they can relish the refin'd and pure Joys of Paradise, which are admirably adapted to the Desires of their holy Souls, which have been so effectually attracted by the Grace of God, that (like the trembling Needle touch'd by the Loadstone) they can find no Rest, but in fixing on the beloved Object, that first gave them that powerful Impression.

And as none but the *People of God* shall enjoy this high Privilege, so not one of them shall be depriv'd of it; not one of the *Little Ones*, who believe in our blessed Saviour, will be neglected or overlook'd by him. He is the good Shepherd, who will lose none of the Sheep committed to his Charge: He can never *forget his People*, since *he has engraven them on the Palms of his Hands*, and

75 2 Sam. 23. 5.

76 2 Thess. 1. 9.

77 Rom. 9. 25.

78 1 Cor. 10. 11.

79 Mat. 25. 11, 12.

80 Luke 6. 46.

81 Rev. 22. 14, 15.

82 Col. 1. 12.

their *Walls are continually before him*.⁸³ He will not forget *their Work of Faith, and Labour of Love*;⁸⁴ not so much as a *Cup of cold Water*, given to any one of his Disciples, *in the name of a Disciple, shall lose its Reward*.⁸⁵

3. Let us now, in the last Place, consider the Certainty of this Rest, intimated by its *Remaining* to the People of God. Even Natural Religion gives some Light into this matter, and shews, that *verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, verily there is a God who judges in the Earth*.⁸⁶ But Divine Revelation gives a better Hope, a firmer Assurance, and a more explicit and particular Discovery of it. This glorious State of Rest is secur'd to the Righteous by the Divine Promise; by the Word, and by the Oath of that God, who is Truth it self, and for whom *'tis impossible to lye, that we might have strong Consolation, who have fled for Refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before us; which Hope we have as an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and stedfast, and which enters into that within the Veil; whither the Forerunner is for us enter'd; even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever, after the Order of Melchisedec*.⁸⁷ What greater Assurance can we have of any thing than the Divine Promise? Since the Word of God is more stable than the Heavens and the Earth; these may fail, but his *Word abides for ever*. The Time will come, when *the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, when the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up*.⁸⁸ Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, *look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwells Righteousness*. When the World shall be delug'd with Fire, as it was formerly with Water, the *New Jerusalem* shall receive and secure the People of God, as the Ark did then the Family of righteous *Noah*. Tho this *Earth and Heaven will be shaken*, there are things *that cannot be shaken, but must remain*;⁸⁹ there's a *Kingdom that cannot be mov'd*,⁹⁰ but will abide for ever.

Since a *new and living way is consecrated* for us, *thro the Veil* of our Saviour's *Flesh*, and himself is establish'd a *High Priest over the House of God*, we may *draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith* — And ought to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, seeing he is faithful who bath promis'd*.⁹¹ Those who believe have now Access by Faith to the Throne of Christ in Heaven, and derive those Graces and Favors thence, which are the Pledges of the future Glory they expect, when their Persons shall take possession of the Regions of Bliss. In the mean time He lives and reigns there as their Head and Representative, and will not fail to give them that Celestial Inheritance, which he purchas'd for them at the inestimable Price of his Blood, and by the Prospect of which he encourages them to persist in the ways of Truth and Holiness, till they *receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls*.⁹²

Add to this, that our blessed Redeemer ascended to this glorious Place in the View of his Disciples, and soon gave ample Proofs of the high Station he has there, and of his extensive Authority over the Universe, by the Distribution of extraordinary and miraculous Gifts, as the first Fruits of that Glory, the Harvest of which is hereafter to be expected; so that it would argue great Weakness and Ingratitude, so much as to doubt of the Certainty of this *Rest which remains to the People of God*.

Thus have I dispatch'd the several things I propos'd particularly to discourse on, and now shall make a few Reflections upon the whole.

83 Isa. 49. 16.

84 Heb. 6. 10.

85 Mat. 10. 42.

86 Psal. 58. 11.

87 Heb. 6. 18, 19, 20.

88 2 Pet. 3. 10, 11.

89 Heb. 12. 27.

90 Ver. 28.

91 Heb. 10. 20, 21, 22, 23.

92 1 Pet. 1. 9.

1. If such a State of Rest remains to the People of God, how much does it concern us to be of that happy Number, to be *written* [or enroll'd] *among the Living in Jerusalem*, as the Prophet speaks?⁹³ When the most haughty and pompous Titles, that distinguish some Men from their Fellow-Creatures in Civil Society, shall vanish and come to nothing; and when all Temporal Relation, with its Consequences, shall cease, and Men of high and low Degree, Kindred and Aliens, be reduc'd to one common Level; 'twill then be of the highest Consequence to be number'd among the People of God, to be own'd for his Friends and Favourites, and to be counted among his Children, whom our Saviour will not be *asham'd* to acknowledg for his *Brethren*.⁹⁴

How little soever this Title of *the People of God* is esteem'd at present by those who idolize the Honours of this World, an extraordinary Value will be put upon it by Men of all Degrees at the last Day: but a mere Pretence to this Character will not suffice at the General Judgment, as appears by our Saviour's Representation of the Process of that awful Day. *When once*, says he, *the Master of the House is risen up, and hath shut to the Door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the Door, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us; and he shall answer, and say to you, I know you not whence you are: Then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy Presence, and thou hast taught in our Streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence you are; depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity: There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you your selves thrust out, &c.*⁹⁵ 'Tis therefore of the utmost Consequence that we have a just Claim to this Title. Nor is it difficult to know whether we are of the number of the People of God, if we will seriously enquire into the Matter: For, as has been shewn before, none may truly be so call'd but those who believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when 'tis expos'd to them; nor is it sufficient to give Credit to it in a general and confus'd manner, but so as effectually to ingage us to embrace the Terms of Salvation propos'd in it. And a Faith of this kind will prove it self genuine, by *bringing forth the Fruits of Righteousness*; and will work by Love, which is *the Bond of Perfection*.⁹⁶ To examine our selves strictly on this Head, is necessary, lest we fatally deceive our selves with a *Name to live*, while we are *dead*;⁹⁷ and with a *Form of Godliness*, while we *deny the Power of it*.⁹⁸

2. How should this disengage the Affections of those who find themselves dignify'd with this Character, and with the Privileges belonging to it, from this World, and the things of it; and dispose them to *seek the things which are Above, where Christ sits at the right Hand of God!*⁹⁹ How just is it that their Hearts should be where their Treasure is!

What is there to be found in this World, but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit? as the Wise-man has long since observ'd. What wonder then, if good Men, in this State of Pilgrimage, like the Dove that wander'd from the Ark, can find no Rest for the Soles of their Feet?

If the same inquiry were made after Rest and Happiness, as is represented in the Book of *Job*, to be made after Wisdom and Understanding, the same Answer might be return'd: *Man knoweth not the Price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the Living. The Depth saith, It is not in me; and the Sea saith, It is not in me: It can't be gotten for Gold, neither shall Silver be weigh'd for the Price of it; it cannot be valu'd with the Gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx, or the Saphir, &c.*¹⁰⁰ But God

93 Isa. 4. 3.

94 Heb. 2. 11.

95 Luke 13. 25, 26, 27, 28.

96 Col. 3. 14.

97 Rev. 3. 1.

98 2. Tim. 3. 5.

99 Col. 3. 1, 2.

100 Job. 28. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

*understands the way thereof, and he knows the Place of it, &c.*¹⁰¹

Let us not then seek Happiness in this World, where it is not to be found; for why should we seek the Living among the Dead? But let us turn our Eyes towards that Celestial Country where our Saviour resides, and direct our Course towards that heavenly *Jerusalem*, of which we profess to be Citizens.

3. The Prospect of this State of eternal Rest and Happiness, may serve to comfort good Men under all the Afflictions and Sorrows that attend them in this World, and also to justify the Divine Government, in the unequal Distribution of Temporal Good and Evil in the present State of Things; which sometimes has been ready to shock wise and pious Men. *As for me*, says the Psalmist, *my Feet were almost gone, my Steps had well nigh slipt; for I was envious at the Foolish, when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked.*¹⁰² — *They are not in Trouble as other Men, neither are they plagu'd like other Men, &c.*¹⁰³ *Behold these are the Ungodly, who prosper in the World, they increase in Riches. Verily I have cleans'd my Heart in vain, and wash'd my Hands in Innocence: For all the day long have I been plagu'd, and chasten'd every morning.*¹⁰⁴

When 'tis consider'd, that the Joy and Pleasure of wicked Men are but for a moment, mix'd with Trouble and Remorse here, and will be follow'd with endless Torments in the future World; and that the many Troubles that sometimes befall the best of Men, shall serve to purify and refine their Souls, and to prepare them for eternal Life and Glory, and to enhance their Reward, they may well be reconcil'd to the most severe Discipline of Divine Providence: *Their light Affliction, which is but for a moment, works for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*¹⁰⁵ *Tho they now sow in Tears, they shall reap in Joy: He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious Seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his Sheaves with him.*¹⁰⁶

4. This should fortify the Minds of good Men against the Terrors of Death. That which renders Death so very terrible, is the Guilt of our Souls; therefore the Apostle says, *The Sting of Death is Sin.*¹⁰⁷ When 'tis consider'd as the Effect and Punishment of Sin, and that which leads Men to the Tribunal of the Almighty, to receive an irreversible Sentence according to their Works, it has a dreadful Aspect indeed. But if this Sting be taken away, if our Consciences are sprinkled with *the Blood of Christ, which cleanses from all Sin,*¹⁰⁸ and we are reconcil'd to God by the Cross of our Redeemer; if *being justify'd freely by his Grace, we have Peace with God*, we may look into the Valley of the Shadow of Death without fearing Evil, seeing 'tis to the Righteous the way to eternal Life and Glory. Death will deliver them from all the Fears and Dangers, the Cares and Troubles, the Sorrows and Pains to which they are liable at present, and give them an Entrance into that glorious Rest which has been describ'd to you; into those calm and bright Regions, which are never ruffled by Storms and Tempests, nor sully'd by Clouds and Darkness: Where Misery and Pain can have no place, because there's no room for Sin and Guilt; but where perfect Holiness and perfect Happiness shall keep equal pace to Eternity.

The View of this Rest has made many Christians, who, on other occasions, seem'd to have no great Courage or Presence of Mind, triumph over the Grave, when they have found themselves dropping into it.

101 Ver. 28.

102 Psal. 73. 2, 3.

103 Ver. 5.

104 Ver. 12, 13, 14.

105 2 Cor. 4. 17.

106 Psal 126. 5, 6.

107 1 Cor. 15. 56.

108 1 John 1. 7.

It was this glorious Prospect that supported the Soul of that Reverend Person, whose Death we so justly lament, and whose Life must needs render his Memory ever fragrant to us: It was this inspir'd him with Patience and Submission, Constancy and Joy, during a tedious Sickness, and at the very Article of Death.

And since there are divers things relating both to his Life and Death, that were very exemplary and edifying; I persuade my self it will be thought very seasonable for me, now to give a brief Account of some Passages worthy to be remark'd in both.

That might justly be said of him, which the Apostle says of his Son *Timothy*, that *from a Child he knew the Holy Scriptures*, and that these *made him wise to Salvation, thro Faith which is in Christ Jesus*.¹⁰⁹ The great Delight he then had in hearing the joyful Sound of the Gospel, made him frequent divers religious Assemblies, and that not without some hazard, at a time when they were often disturb'd and interrupted, and sometimes assaulted with Violence, while they were worshipping God according to the Dictates of their Consciences.

Some of the Sermons, which he heard in those Assemblies, made a deep and lasting Impression on his Mind; and his early Conversion to God was attended with an earnest Desire to be employ'd in the Work of the Ministry.

This Inclination grew so strong and urgent, that nothing could dissuade him from his Design, of serving God in this publick Capacity. To this purpose he apply'd himself to those Studies, which he thought most conducive to the End he had in View; and that with so much Diligence and Success, that in a little time his *Profiting apper'd to all*, and at length he approv'd himself *a Workman, that needed not to be asham'd, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*.¹¹⁰

God, who inclin'd his Heart to this Work, and call'd him to it, had endow'd him with divers considerable Talents to prepare him for it. He had a solid Judgment as well as a lively Fancy, and Quickness of Thought as well as Facility of Expression. His strong and musical Voice, together with that agreeable mixture of Gravity and Sweetness, which reign'd in his Countenance, tended to make way for the Truths and Reasons he deliver'd, by awakening the Attention, and engaging the Affections of his Auditors. He taught with Clearness, and argu'd with Strength; exhorted with Vehemence, and reprov'd with a becoming Authority; and found the Art, which so few who speak in Publick attain, of blending Reason and Eloquence so happily together, that they mutually assisted and embelish'd each other, and equally adorn'd his Discourses; which were adapted at once to improve the Mind, and touch the Heart, and had something in them that was entertaining both to the Learned and Illiterate, both to the Polite, and less cultivated part of Mankind.

Tho what I now speak, can give but a faint Idea of his excellent Gifts to some of this Audience; yet I doubt not that it raises in the Minds of those, who were wont to hear him, a lively remembrance of the manner of his Preaching, and must needs make them reflect on the great Loss the Publick has sustain'd by his Death, at an Age that seem'd to give room to hope, that the World might have reap'd yet much more Advantage by his Labours.

His great Improvement, next to the Divine Blessing on his assiduous Studies, was owing partly to the generous Ambition he had to excel, which induc'd him to apply himself to close Study and Meditation, lest he should produce any thing crude and undigested; partly to the prudent Choice he

109 2 Tim. 3.15.

110 2 Tim. 2.15.

made in his younger days, to converse with Men not only of Sense and Learning, but of a polite Genius too; and partly to his great Modesty, which gave him a continual Jealousy of his own Performances, and engag'd him frequently to submit what he had compos'd, to the censure of those Friends he thought capable of advising him; and to intreat them, with uncommon Importunity, not to suffer any Faults to escape their Remark, but to be free in advertising him of every thing that might seem to them either defective or redundant. And indeed he would be easily convinc'd of any Oversight or Mistake, and gratefully acknowledg the Kindness of any one that pointed it out to him. Which shew'd this did not arise from a vain Affectation of Modesty, but from his Humility, and the real Diffidence he had of himself. And indeed he deserv'd the critical Severity of his Friends, in knowing how to value that sort of Kindness, and in receiving the Hints and Intimations they gave him after so obliging a manner.

Nay, this humble and happy Temper adher'd to him even to the last; so that he could not be easy in publishing any thing to the World, without first consulting some of his particular Friends. Which I the rather take notice of, to recommend to such young Ministers, as are present in this Assembly, the imitation of so profitable an Example: for 'tis not to be doubted that they would find their Account in it, nay, that it would mightily contribute to their Improvement, to use the same Method; if they have but the good Sense to expose their Compositions to Persons capable of observing to them their Mistakes, and have Humility enough to hearken to the Advice of those who are able to inform them.

It was none of the least of this excellent Man's Qualifications for the Ministerial Work, that he knew how to *behave himself in the Church of GOD*, in regard of the Exercise of that Discipline which is so necessary to Christian Societies. Many here present know, with what Patience and Meekness, with what Gravity and Prudence, with what Impartiality and Faithfulness he demean'd himself in this Congregation, and with what Prudence and Conduct he manag'd its Affairs upon all occasions.

His good Will and Charity to Mankind in general, was conspicuous in the indefatigable Labours he sustain'd, in endeavouring to promote the Interest of their Souls. He often lamented the unreasonable Differences among Christians, and had a hearty Respect for all who held the Essentials of the Christian Religion, tho of different Sentiments in matters of lesser moment: And as he had a Mind too generous to be determin'd by the Opinion of others, without making a strict Inquiry into the Reasons of Things; so his Modesty and Charity were too great, not to give all due Deference to those who entertain'd Notions, which he could not see reason to embrace. And whereas he thought it his Duty frequently to expose the Errors of those of the *Romish* Communion, in Terms of some Force and Warmth, he desir'd it might be signify'd to the World, after his Decease, that the Zeal and Fervour he shew'd on those Occasions, did not arise from a Disaffection to any of their Persons, but from the deep Sense he had of the pernicious Tendency of their Errors, and from the ardent desire he had to reclaim them from those Delusions, as well as to prevent others from falling into them.

He was not only serviceable to this Congregation, but useful to many others; and tho his Labours were chiefly bestow'd on you, yet his *Praise was in the Gospel throughout many other Churches*,¹¹¹ to whom he occasionally preach'd, and whom he assisted with his Advice in many Exigencies.

That Piety and Charity which adorn'd his Conversation in the time of his Health, seem'd to increase their Strength and Lustre during his long Sickness; a Sickness which gradually weaken'd his Constitution, and at last grew strong enough to dissolve it. I can't forbear to think, that his

111 2 Cor. 8. 18.

extraordinary Labour in the Ministerial Work, laid the foundation of his Sickness; for such was the Fervency of his Spirit, that it often rais'd the Tone of his Voice to such a pitch, as could not but exhaust his Animal Spirits to a very great degree, and must needs, at length, bring great Weakness upon him. He was a *burning and a shining Light*, in which we rejoic'd for a Season;¹¹² but how soon is this Light extinguish'd! He was *glad to spend and be spent* for you,¹¹³ for the Service of your Faith, and for the Furtherance of your Joy.

I must not omit to take notice to you, how edifying his Conversation was in the time of his Sickness, and how difficult it was to restrain him from exhausting the little Strength he had left, in giving serious Exhortations to those who came to visit him. Not content with this, he desir'd many Persons to be sent for, whom either the Ties of Friendship and Acquaintance had endear'd to him, or whom he had observ'd to attend his Ministry, without knowing what Effect it had upon their Souls, or those with whom he knew God had intrusted considerable Talents, that he might earnestly recommend to them the Improvement of Time, in order to their eternal Felicity.

He observ'd to them, that Religion was a real thing, and of the greatest Importance of all others; that they might well believe him to be in earnest in what he said, since he was going to die, and to give up his Accounts to God. He assur'd them, he had not *follow'd cunningly devis'd Fables*,¹¹⁴ nor preach'd for *filthy Lucre*; but that his *Rejoicing was in the Testimony of his Conscience*, that in *Simplicity and Godly Sincerity* he had exercis'd his Ministerial Function:¹¹⁵ That he had taught the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, according to the best of his Judgment; and that he rely'd on the same Doctrine he had publish'd to others, for the Salvation of his own Soul. He press'd them with all the Earnestness imaginable to consult the Interest of their Souls, and to improve the several Advantages God had put into their hands for this purpose; and this in such pathetick Language, and in so affecting a manner, that it could not but make an Impression on all who were present, and drew abundance of Tears from their Eyes. I would fain hope, a lasting Impression is made on the Hearts, at least of divers Persons, to whom he particularly address'd his dying words. God grant, that a Death which has cost us so dear, and given us so acute a Sorrow, may be the occasion of the spiritual Life of many Souls, and cause Joy both in Heaven and on Earth.

During the time of his tedious Illness, God was pleas'd highly to favour him, in continuing to him the Exercise of his Reason, and in visiting him with the Light of his Countenance; so that it might be said of him, as of the blessed Man describ'd by the Psalmist, *The Lord strengthen'd him on the Bed of Languishing, and made all his Bed in his Sickness*.¹¹⁶ He was generally in a humble, patient and resign'd Posture of Mind, neither chusing Life nor Death; or to use his own Expression, *Neither ashamed to live, nor afraid to die*: For he knew, that *whether he liv'd, he liv'd unto the LORD; and whether he dy'd, he dy'd unto the LORD; and that whether he liv'd or dy'd, he was the LORD's*:¹¹⁷ That *Christ would be magnify'd in him, whether by Life or by Death*; and therefore *to him to live was Christ, and to die was Gain*.¹¹⁸

So far as I, who convers'd intimately with him, could perceive, or have learn'd from others who attended him, his Faith and Hope were vigorous and lively; he had great Peace and Tranquillity in his Conscience, and sometimes Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, especially towards the Close of his Days: for he seem'd to improve in the Heavenly Frame of his Mind, as he drew near the heavenly State; and a little before his Exit, declar'd that his Work in this World was finish'd; and

112 John 5. 35.

113 2 cor. 12. 15.

114 2 Pet. 1. 16.

115 2 Cor. 1. 12.

116 Psal. 41. 3.

117 Rom. 14. 8.

118 Phil. 1. 20, 21.

that now he had nothing more to do, but to resign his Soul into the Arms of his Redeemer; which he was heard to do just before he expir'd, saying, *Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!*

So liv'd and so dy'd this Eminent Servant of God, whose Memory is blessed, and will be precious in the account of all who knew the excellent Gifts and Abilities God was pleas'd to bestow on him.

The Remembrance of these, and of the Vertues and Graces that shone in him, justly aggravate our Sorrow; and it would argue Stupidity, not to mourn on such an occasion as this. The Loss of so well qualify'd a Minister, and of so faithful a Friend, may well afflict us deeply. Yet are we not to *mourn* as those *who have no hope*,¹¹⁹ because we have reason to conclude that he is enter'd into everlasting Rest, and has gain'd infinitely by dying. It will be well, if the Grief occasion'd by his Decease become a godly Sorrow, by a just Application of our Thoughts to the Voice of God's Providence, which speaks so loudly to us in this severe Affliction.

May you, who are Members of this Congregation, remember how he *watch'd over you in the Lord* for the space of about Twenty Years, and how *he ceas'd not to warn you night and day with Tears*;¹²⁰ may you *follow his Faith, considering the End of his Conversation*.¹²¹ Ask Counsel by your Prayers, of the great *Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls* in all your Difficulties;¹²² resign your selves to his Conduct, and beg earnestly that he would give you another *Pastor according to his own Heart*, who may *feed you with Knowledg and Understanding*.¹²³ Remember particularly, the pressing Exhortations your late Minister so often made you, to continue unanimous, and to cultivate Charity and brotherly Love among your selves; that God may still extend the Wing of his Protection over you, and provide for the Necessities of your Souls, that he may *blest the Provision of his House, and satisfy the Poor with Bread*.¹²⁴ And constantly regard the blessed Hope which is set before you, that *Rest which remains to the People of God. So run that ye may obtain*;¹²⁵ so labour that ye may *enter into this Rest*; that you may rejoice together with your Pastor in the Day of the Lord, when the many Souls converted and edify'd by his Ministry, shall be his *Crown*,¹²⁶ his *Glory*, and *Joy*;¹²⁷ when he shall surrender his Charge to the Great Shepherd, saying, LORD here am I, *and the Children thou hast given me*.

All who knew the Value of this Great and Good Man, must needs partake of the common Sorrow which his Death has occasion'd: But what words can express the piercing Grief of one, who is left in the solitary State of Widowhood by so tender a Husband! and with what Compassion should we address our Prayers to *the Father of Mercies, and God of all Consolation*, to support her under this heavy Stroke, and to teach her a becoming Submission to his Will in so trying a Case? A Case that calls loudly for our Commiseration, and may well make her cry out with the saddest Accent of Sorrow, *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my Friends! for the Hand of God hath touch'd me*.¹²⁸ Yet let not her sorrowful Soul utterly refuse to be comforted, since it ought to be accounted a Favour of Divine Providence, to have been related to so valuable a Person; and since it has pleas'd God, for the mitigation of her Trouble, to give her the Satisfaction of observing his Christian Behaviour during his long Sickness, and of hearing so often the gracious Words that proceeded from him; so as to give her just reason to believe, his righteous Soul is now in a happy State, waiting for the Resurrection of his Body, while she has good Hope, thro Grace, in a little time, to

119 1 Thess. 4. 13.

120 Acts 20. 31.

121 Heb. 13. 7.

122 1 Pet. 2. 25.

123 Jer. 3. 15.

124 Psal 132. 15.

125 1 Cor. 9.24.

126 Phil. 4. 1.

127 1 Thess. 2. 20.

128 Job 19. 21.

enter by the same Steps, into that Rest which he has already attain'd.

To conclude; Let us all account our selves Pilgrims and Strangers here, as the Patriarchs did; and as such, let us *abstain from worldly Lusts, which war against the Soul.*¹²⁹ Let us make it appear that we are in quest of a *better Country*, by withdrawing our Affections from this World, and fixing 'em on *the things above*. Let us keep the Eye of our Faith intent on that *Kingdom which can't be remov'd*; and let us be constantly doing our Lord's Will, that whenever he shall call us hence, being found so doing, we may enter into this State of Joy and Rest, which *remains to the People of God, whither Christ, our Fore-runner, is already enter'd*, and into which he will receive all those who *love and wait for his Appearance*.

FINIS.

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Note: In the original text, there were a number of marginal references (mainly Scripture references). These have been rendered as footnotes in this text. The position of these footnotes were assigned by the transcriber and any inaccuracy in their positioning is his alone.

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129 1 Pet. 2. 11.