

THE  
**THEOLOGICAL WORKS**

OF THE  
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CONTAINING  
THE FORCE OF TRUTH,—TREATISE ON REPENTANCE,—GROWTH IN GRACE,  
SERMON ON ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE,—SERMONS ON SELECT  
SUBJECTS,—ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELIGION, AND  
THE NATURE AND WARRANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

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## CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGMENT.

### 1 CORINTHIANS IV. 5.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.

THE reception which the zealous, unwearied, and disinterested labours of the apostle Paul met with from mankind, forms the most conclusive proof of human depravity; next to that arising from the contradiction, contempt, and cruelty, which his divine Master had experienced. Not only was this distinguished servant of God “everywhere spoken against,” and treated as “the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things,” by unconverted Jews and Gentiles: the whole body of Jewish converts also were exceedingly prejudiced against him; many of the churches he had planted were alienated from him, and his Corinthian converts had been so perverted by false teachers, as to entertain the most injurious suspicions, as to the motives of his ministerial conduct. But fervent zeal for the honour of Christ, and affectionate longing after the salvation of souls, kept him from fainting, and rendered him “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;” and he even submitted, with the most evident reluctance, to vindicate his character, and magnify his ministry to the disaffected Corinthians; that, by re-establishing his apostolical authority, he might recover them from the delusions into which they had been seduced. In attempting this, he warned them against exalting some and despising others, of those who had laboured among them. “Let a man,” says he, “so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” All Christians are servants of Christ, and the word rendered *ministers*, denotes those servants who wait on any person, as ready at all times to execute his orders with unreserved assiduity.—But ministers are also stewards of the mysteries of God: they are not mere teachers of morality, as some men imagine; but they are intrusted with the great mysteries of revealed truth, that they may declare them to mankind, as they have received them of the Lord. “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” It is not necessary for ministers to be orators, courtiers, philosophers, or even men of distinguished genius or learning; but integrity and faithfulness are indispensable. Any person of common prudence would prefer a downright honest steward, though but moderately qualified, to the most accomplished man in the world, who, he was aware, would oppress his tenants and embezzle his property. Thus faithfulness is the grand requisite in a minister; without which, talents may recommend him to the applause of men, but will not procure him deliverance from the wrath of God. “But,” says the apostle, “with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of

man's judgment; yea I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."—It must not be expected, that everyone who aims to be faithful, should thus decidedly rise superior to the opinion of men, especially those within the church. At the call of duty, a minister may be enabled to venture giving offence; yet do it reluctantly, and be drawn into many reserves, under the notion of prudence, which may greatly impede his usefulness. Christians should therefore take heed, that they do not inadvertently tempt ministers to unfaithfulness, or render faithfulness uneasy to them. The apostle no doubt did examine his own motives and conduct; but he knew that an appeal lay from his decision to that of his heart-searching Judge; and that reflection gave rise to the caution and warning of the text; —“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.” Let us then,

I. Meditate on the coming of the Lord, and the solemnities of that awful event.

II. Consider the discoveries which will then be made.

III. Advert to the consequences of those discoveries.

I. I would call on you to contemplate with me, the coming of the Lord, and the solemnities of that awful event.

The sacred Scriptures continually lead our thoughts to this great crisis, when the important and eternal interests of the whole human species will be finally determined. The servants of God from the beginning of the world looked forward to it: even “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things: saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’ Jude 14, 15. That profession which Job ardently wished might be “graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever,” seems to have had as much respect to the second coming of the Lord, as to his first appearance in our nature; “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” Job xix. 23-27.

Omitting various passages from the prophets, that call our attention to this grand event, we may properly make a quotation from the fiftieth psalm, which is a most sublime, prophetic description of a future judgment, “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from

above, and to the earth that he may judge his people. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness, *for God is judge himself.* Selah.” Psalm 1. 3-6. The words of Solomon shall close these citations from the Old Testament. “Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the way of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will call thee into judgment.”—“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Eccles. xi. 9. xii. 14.

In the New Testament the same subject continually demands our attention. Christians are said to “wait for the Lord from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come,” to “look for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” and “to love his appearing.” Thus the language of the Old Testament relative to the coming of Jehovah, and our preparing to meet God, who is judge himself, is applied to Christ, by his apostles, without the least hesitation. And with a conscious dignity, he spake of himself, in his lowest abasement, as the judge of the world, and the arbiter of men’s eternal state, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations.” Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

The coming of the Lord signifies, therefore, the appearance of Christ in human nature to judge the world: when he shall exercise omnipotence, omniscience, and every divine perfection; and so “come in his own glory” as Mediator, “and in the glory of the Father,” as sovereign Lord of all. This revelation of Jesus Christ will be visible to the whole world, “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.” “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and *every eye* shall see him, and they that have pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: even so. Amen.” Acts i. 11. Rev. i. 7. The man Jesus, in his glorified body, even that body which was crowned with thorns, scourged, spitted on, and nailed to the cross; will then be made visible to all men, to those who thus abused him, and to such as have in every age consented to this deed by despising him and his salvation. He will be seen by “all who have crucified him,” as it were, again and again; as well as by them, for whom “he once suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring them unto God.”

But how immensely will his appearance, as judge of the world, differ from that of the man of sorrows!—The mount of transfiguration, when “his countenance shone as the sun, and his raiment was like lightning;” yea, the vision of his glory, which caused his beloved disciple, who had once reclined on his bosom, in the familiarity of endeared friendship, to “fall down at his feet as dead;” can give us but a faint idea of that divine light and majesty, with which he will be arrayed, when he shall ascend his awful tribunal. “He shall then be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels:” *the angels of his power* and

authority; the ministers of his vengeance and his love.—“At the end of the world, the Son of man shall send forth his angels; and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect.” Matt. xiii. 41-43. xxiv. 30, 31. Hence it is evident that all the angels are the creatures and servants, as well as the worshippers, of the incarnate Son of God.

His coming will be announced by a summons august and tremendous beyond description; and immediately followed by the resurrection of the dead. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” “Behold I show you a mystery! We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”—“The hour cometh, when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.” 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. John v. 28, 29. Believers will rise first, and then such of the saints as shall be alive on the earth at that time, will be changed; that “death may be swallowed up in victory.” Afterwards the multitudes of the wicked will “awake to shame and everlasting contempt.”—The bodies of the unnumbered millions, who through succeeding ages have inhabited the globe, wherever laid, or however consumed, will be restored to life, and reunited to their immortal souls, that they may participate their happiness or misery. “Then the dead, small and great, shall stand before God. The sea shall give up the dead that were in it; and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which were in them.” Rev. xx. 13-15.

At this important crisis, the earth and all its works, yea, the visible heavens also, shall become one general conflagration: “the heavens and earth which now are, by the same word, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works which are therein shall be burnt up.” 2 Peter iii. 10-22. Yea, “heaven and earth shall flee away, and there shall be found no place for them.”

In vain should we attempt a description of this sublime and awful scene: our faculties labour, and our tongues as it were falter, when we would think or speak of such subjects!—What then will be the feelings of the immense multitudes assembled on this occasion! What the astonishment, terror, and despair of the impenitent! of such as have idolized those things, which are the prey of

all devouring flames: of those who have blasphemed that Saviour, who appears to be their Judge, or ridiculed the divine testimony concerning the place of torment, and those evil spirits which are ready to seize upon them? Let us then recollect, that *we* shall be present, not as mere spectators, but as cited “to give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” “For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Cor. v. 10. Our present conduct is voluntary; we choose whether we will serve the Lord, or no: but we shall not be allowed to choose, whether we will stand before his tribunal, or decline the awful decision.

It is extremely frivolous to start objections against the doctrines of revelation, taken from our low apprehensions, or levelled against the misinterpretations of injudicious believers. “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” He hath declared these things in his authenticated word: “his testimony is sure and giveth wisdom unto the simple:” and he “that believeth not hath made him a liar.”

Will any man presume to say, that it is impossible for God to raise the dead? That human nature should be capable of such daring absurdity, ought to cover us with shame, and cause us to tremble.—Let us, my friends, imitate the old patriarch, who “by faith being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear and prepared an ark.” Let us prepare to meet our God, and seriously inquire “who may abide the day of his coming? or who may stand when he appeareth?”

Neither ought we to regard those “scoffers,” who according to the prediction of the apostle, are “come in these last days, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” We know not indeed the precise time when the Lord shall come; but we should not be ignorant that, “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day:” and we are assured that “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.” 1 Thess. v. 2, 3. Death is very near, and judgment follows. In this sense “The Judge standeth at the door:” and “the end of all things is at hand.” “Be ye therefore ready; for ye know not the time when the Son of man cometh.” The intervening space will soon elapse: let us “then account his long-suffering to be salvation:” and “seeing we look for such things, let us be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless.”—We proceed therefore,

II. To consider the discoveries which will then be made.—“The Lord shall come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.”

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats:”—that is, with perfect ease, and infallible certainty. Then shall he be seated on the great white throne, the emblem of his awful justice and spotless purity, “and the books shall be opened.”—This expression, referring to the affairs of men, leads our thoughts to the discoveries of that solemn season. *The book of the divine law* shall be opened, as the perfect standard of good and evil; *the book of providence*, stating the talents committed to the stewardship of each individual, with the advantages or disadvantages of his situation; *the book of omniscience*, developing all the particulars of every man’s conduct, and all the motives and thoughts of his heart; and the *book of conscience* or memory,” answering to every charge or discovery, however before buried in oblivion. But *another book* shall also be opened, or no flesh could be saved; even *the book of life*, in which all the elect of God, all true believers, are registered, with the evidences of their repentance, faith, and love. Then, all “men will be judged out of those things, which are written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever shall not be found written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire.” Rev. xx. 12-15.

We know but little of the real characters even of those with whom we are most intimately acquainted; and far less of other mens. A vast proportion of their outward conduct is concealed from us: what strangers then must we be to the dispositions and counsels of their hearts! Perhaps a tenth part of the actions of our nearest relatives or friends, do not come under our notice: we must therefore judge as well as we can; and though caution be necessary, a measure of suspicion adequate to our uncertainty, would mar all our earthly enjoyments. David seems not to have suspected Ahithopel, nor the Apostles Judas: yet they were both plausible hypocrites. Many of you, my friends, may perhaps be conscious, that if your neighbours, or relations, knew certain things in your conduct, which you carefully and successfully conceal; your characters would be injured, and yourselves covered with confusion. “But when the Lord shall come, he will bring to light all these hidden things of darkness.” Then the dishonesty and extortion which have here escaped detection, and even suspicion; or which have been pleaded for with specious fallacy, will appear in all their deformity before men and angels. The oppression, rapine, and cruelty, which have been gilded over with the splendour of great talents and renowned achievements, will be viewed in another light: when “the earth shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain.” Nor will that degrading licentiousness and sensuality, which are often covertly practiced by persons of decent or

respectable character, any longer be concealed; though it be now a shame “to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

But to relieve our minds from such painful reflections, let us take a view of the contrast. The Lord will also bring to light the good works of his believing people: “he saw them in secret, and he will reward them openly.” Those fruits of faith and love, which the world perhaps vilified and called by some opprobrious name; and those, in which they scarcely “let the left hand know what the right hand did,” will then be disclosed and approved by the righteous Judge. The self-denial of his despised disciples, in sparing from every article of expence and indulgence, to raise a little fund for the relief of the needy, and even of their calumniators and persecutors: their secret prayers, and compassionate tears over the very persons, who counted them harsh and uncharitable, because they would not “speak peace when there was no peace;” Jer. xiii. 17. their scrupulous care to avoid every degree of injustice, when no blame was likely to be cast upon them for it; their earnestness in secret devotion, with deep humiliation and enlarged benevolence: all these will be discovered when the Lord shall come, and greatly tend to illustrate and distinguish the characters of men. The blemishes and misconduct of pious persons are too often visible to their neighbours, and give occasion to their scoffs and impiety: but it will then appear, that these things were lamented before God with many groans and tears; that they condemned themselves more severely than others could condemn them; that they prayed without ceasing not to be left to repeat their sin and folly; and that they spared no pains, and vigilantly used every means of crucifying their evil propensities, and bridling their appetites and passions.

The discoveries of that solemn day will likewise relate to men’s words. “Every idle word that men shall speak, shall be given an account of at the day of judgment: for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matt. xii. 3t-37. Our words must indeed be known in some measure to others: but men are commonly very careful to whom they declare their unreserved sentiments; and would often be extremely disconcerted, if their discourse in private circles, among the select companions of their vices, should be disclosed to those, with whom they desire to maintain another kind of character. But the profane, blasphemous, atheistical, infidel, abominable speeches, which men vent in their secret cabals; with all the falsehoods, slanders, boastings, bitterness, imprecations, and horrid language, which on some occasions they utter, during the whole course of their lives, will be produced against them before the assembled world. “For the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison; it sets on fire the whole course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.” James iii. 5-10. The secret influence of evil conversation, corrupts men’s principles and morals, and wounds their reputations; it ruins domestic and relative comfort, and disseminates impiety, infidelity, heresy, profligacy, enmity, discord, and

confusion, through neighbourhoods, cities, and nations. Yet no discovery can be made of such private mischiefs, except by the omnipresent and omniscient Judge. It would be tedious to insist particularly, on the flatteries, deceptions, false colourings, seductions, and other artifices, by which wicked men carry on their base designs. These, however, are hidden things of darkness, which will be brought to light when the Lord shall come. If, then, all our words without exception, whether spoken openly, or among our select companions, shall be thus made known at the great decisive day, could nothing else be produced against us, we must surely feel that this alone would overwhelm us with confusion. The story is well known, of the person who invited a company of his friends, that were accustomed to take the Lord's name in vain, and contrived to have all their discourse taken down and read to them. Now if *they* could not endure to hear the words repeated, which they had spoken during a few hours; how shall we bear to have *all* that we have uttered, through a long course of years, brought forth as evidence against us at the tribunal of God?—but the hour is coming when this will actually be the case: when not a single irreverent mention of the Creator's sacred name; not one objection to his law, government, or gospel; not one sarcasm or jest upon his cause or worshippers, shall be overlooked! when every word “spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed on the house tops!” Where then will the wicked and ungodly appear? How shall any of us endure that scrutiny; unless we have fled for refuge to the hope of the gospel, and all our sins have been buried in the depths of the sea?

But words of another kind shall be made known when the Lord shall come. The servants of God love to associate together, and many censure them for it: but what saith the Scripture? “They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name; and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.” Mal. iii. 16-18. When the “books shall be opened,” the social piety, gratitude, and charity of true Christians will be brought to light. Their discourse about the perfections, ways, and works of God; the best methods of promoting his glory, the peace of the church, and the benefit of mankind: their mutual warnings, exhortations, counsels, and encouragements; their spiritual, affectionate, and animating conversation; and all the words which the Lord delighted to hear, will be made known before men and angels. And when these shall be contrasted with the filthy, impious, and frivolous speeches of the wicked; it may easily be conceived, how men's real characters will be discriminated, and in what sense “by their words they will be justified or condemned.”

The thoughts also of every heart shall be disclosed. Men generally imagine, that these at least, are free and subject to no control; so that they allow their memory and imagination, to excite and feed corrupt affections; representing to themselves, with all the ingenuity of invention, scenes that accord to their predominant propensities: and by these speculative indulgences they try to make themselves amends for those restrictions, which regard to reputation, interest, or health may impose.—But God especially requires purity of heart, and truth in the inward parts, by which real religion is distinguished from hypocrisy. “Ye fools,” says our Lord to some of these whited sepulchres, “did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? Thou blind Pharisee, first cleanse that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside may be clean also.” Matt. xxiii. 25-29. Luke xi. 39, 40. How would it astonish us, if we could see all that passes in the thoughts of many very *virtuous* persons, during a single day! And as to the imaginations of the profligate; they are the very residence of evil spirits, in which they forge all manner of abominable crimes, previous to the actual commission of them. Instead therefore of men’s hearts being better than their lives, as self-flattery often suggests, they are uniformly far worse: for every sinful word and action was at first an evil thought and desire; but ten thousand evil thoughts and desires, conceived and cherished in the heart, proceed no further; because men have not opportunity, courage, or ability to realize them in practice.

Every man, however, must judge for himself in this matter: but let us ask ourselves, whether we should feel comfortable, at the idea of *all* our secret thoughts being disclosed, I do not say to the whole world, but to our intimate friends and acquaintance?—Yet they must all be disclosed to men and angels, at the great day of righteous retribution!—“Let then the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*.” for unless evil thoughts are excluded or opposed, every apparent reformation must be hypocritical. “O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?” Peter seems even to intimate a doubt, whether the thought of Simon Magus’s heart did not constitute the unpardonable sin; “pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” Jer. iv. 14. Acts viii. 20-21. This is therefore a matter of the greatest importance: and the discovery of those secret thoughts, which no human eye could reach, and which were scarcely ever suspected, will exceedingly help to discriminate characters at the great day. Nay, the countless multitude of vile imaginations and desires, which are the spontaneous production of our depraved nature, will greatly illustrate the truth and justice of God, in all his declarations and decisions, concerning the workers of iniquity.

On the other hand, the thoughts of believers also will be made known, when the Lord shall come. Then it will appear, that they abhorred, watched against, and laboured to exclude every evil imagination, and to repress all

sinful desires: that they humbly mourned over the vain-glorious, envious, impatient, and peevish emotions of their hearts; and that they endeavoured to employ their minds, during their retired hours, in holy contemplations.—It will then be known how much their thoughts were occupied, in considering by what means they might best glorify God, and serve their generation; and how many desires they felt, and plans they formed, which they could not accomplish. Their affectionate longings after the salvation of their relatives, neighbours, and persecutors: and the anguish of heart they felt on their account, even when censured as severe and harsh in reproving and warning them, will be brought to light; with all other pious, holy, and benevolent thoughts and desires: and these discoveries will evidence them to have been the genuine followers of the holy Jesus.

We must even go further still in this matter: the state of every man's heart, and the motives of his actions will then be fully disclosed. The admired morality of numbers will then be demonstrated to have been only a modification of self-love; without any real regard to the authority or glory of God. The Pharisee's prayers, fasting, and almsgiving will be shown to have resulted solely from pride and ostentation. Many will be proved to have preached the gospel from envy and strife, from avarice or ambition; and to have professed it, as a step to emolument or distinction.—In short every mask will then be taken off; many admired characters will appear completely odious and contemptible; and "the things which have been highly esteemed among men" will appear to have been "abomination in the sight of God." Need I say, how tremendous this must be to dissemblers of every description, who now act a plausible part, and exhibit on the stage of the world in an assumed character?

But on the other hand, the humility, gratitude, zealous love, and holy affections of true believers will be made manifest to the universe. The pure motives of those actions, which were censured or calumniated, will be demonstrated: every accusation will be silenced, all misapprehensions removed; and it will be undeniably evident, that from the time when they made an explicit profession of the gospel, their repentance, faith, love, and habitual conduct were answerable to that profession.—We proceed therefore,

### III. To advert to the consequences of these discoveries.

By them the immense difference of character between the righteous and the wicked, will be undeniably manifested. In this world, numbers find it convenient to varnish over their crimes, to palliate or excuse many parts of their conduct, and to cast others, as it were, into the back ground, where they are little observed; while, regardless of their hearts, they have leisure to place their counterfeit virtues in a conspicuous light, and to make them appear immensely better than they really are.—On the contrary, the believer has many infirmities, and is engaged in a sharp conflict with "the sin that dwelleth in him," and with

the temptations of Satan. The world rigorously scrutinizes his conduct; and the Lord tries his faith and grace, as silver is tried in the furnace. He is so afraid of hypocrisy and ostentation, that he carefully conceals many things which might exalt his character, and scrupulously shuns the appearance of good before men, when he but suspects that there is not the reality of it in the sight of God. 2 Cor. xii. 6. On these and other accounts, the apparent difference betwixt true Christians, and specious hypocrites or moralists, bears no proportion to the degree in which their characters do really differ. But the discoveries of the great day will perfectly distinguish them, and all the world will “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.”

When the Lord shall thus “bring to light the hidden things of darkness,” every mouth will be “stopped, and all the world will become guilty before God; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.” Rom. iii. 19, 20. The discoveries of the great decisive day will completely elucidate this fundamental doctrine of Christianity, which is now so generally misunderstood or opposed: for the whole of men’s thoughts, words, and works, will appear so contrary to the holy precepts of God, or so far short of their spiritual perfection, that all must then feel the force of David’s words, “If thou, Lord, shalt mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?” As therefore “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” all must fall under condemnation, who are not interested in the salvation of the gospel.

But it may be asked, in what sense then will every man be judged according to his works? This shall be reserved for the subject of a separate discourse: and it may suffice to answer at present, that all avowed unbelievers, however distinguished, will be judged and condemned for the sins they have committed; and all professed believers will be judged according to their works, as proving, or disproving the sincerity of their profession.

The discoveries of this awful day will likewise silence all the blasphemies which are continually uttered against the justice of God in the condemnation of the wicked. It is on this account called “the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” While men conceal or palliate by far the greatest and worst part of their conduct, they may argue plausibly against the denunciations of Scripture; but when the whole of their character and conduct shall be openly exhibited, and all the world shall know everything respecting them which is now seen by the heart-searching Judge alone; then the justice of the tremendous sentence will be universally acknowledged; the friends of God will perceive and adore his glory in this part of his moral government; and the wicked shall be silent in darkness and despair, when bid to “depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Far be it from us to suppose, that the merciful Saviour, who is TRUTH itself, would use such language on this occasion, if not really applicable to the

case! He does not allow us to speak deceitfully for him; and will he utter fal-lacious words himself?—Yet we cannot hear of eternal punishment, un- quenched fire, outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, a worm that never dieth, and the place prepared for the devil and his angels, without feeling our hearts tremble, and revolt against the description.—How unspeakably dreadful then will be the accomplishment? when the Lord, to stop the sinner’s mouth, by a discovery of his crimes, shall say, with stern indignation, “these things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes!—Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Psal. 1. 21, 22. Cease then, poor sinner, to object and dispute; and make haste to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek refuge in the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A more pleasing subject, however, is before us, while we contemplate the redeemed of the Lord, saved by his grace, washed from their sins in the Sav- iour’s atoning blood, completely justified, absolved from every charge, and “presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Then death will be swallowed up in victory; and raptures inexpressible will com- mence a felicity, still to be increased, with the enlargement of their capacities, through the countless ages of eternity. But I must leave it to your own minds, brethren, to form some conception of the opposite sensations which will de- light or agonize every heart, when the wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.”

“And then shall every man have praise of God.” Then every humble be- liever, according to his measure of faith and grace, will be honoured with the commendation of his condescending Lord, for those services which the world condemned, and which perhaps his brethren undervalued or censured. To be accosted by the Judge of the world, in these most gracious terms, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” will form an adequate gratification to the noblest ambition of which the rational nature is capable. Seeking for this glory, honour, and immortality, let us here be indif- ferent to all human applauses or contemptuous reproaches. This is the honour that cometh from God only, and is reserved for all his saints; when no more danger shall remain of their being exalted above measure, or sacrilegiously ascribing anything to themselves: but when, on the contrary, they will cast their crowns before the throne, and return all to the bounteous Giver, in endless songs of adoring praise. Let us not faint then, on account of our trials and difficulties; for “our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Let us also remember the caution, “judge nothing before the time.” Our duty often requires us to form some judgment of men’s characters and actions: but in all other respects, our business is with ourselves and the Lord, and not

with our fellow-servants. And the more diligent we are to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless, the less time and thought we shall have to spare, for censuring and condemning the conduct, or suspecting the motives of other men.

But do you, my friends, really believe these things? and are you preparing to meet your Judge? I fear, the actions, conversation, and spirit of numbers awfully prove the contrary. Still, however, the Lord waits to be gracious: flee then to him as a Saviour, without longer delay, who will speedily come to be your Judge. You who profess the gospel, be advised and persuaded to examine yourselves whether you be in the faith: look well to it that your evidences of conversion are clear and decisive; for that day, of which we speak, will detect multitudes of self-deceivers, as well as unmask many artful hypocrites. And if you are conscious of following the Lord with an upright heart, take heed that you do not slacken your diligence, or yield to unwatchfulness: “Let your loins be girded and your lights burning: and be yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord:” “for blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve him.” Luke xii. 35-38. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord,”