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OF THE REVEREND

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WITH THE

L I V E S A N D P O R T R A I T S

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V O L. I I I.

L O N D O N :

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M,DCC,LXXXIX.

PNEUMATOLOGIA.

A

TREATISE

OF THE

SOUL OF MAN:

WHEREIN

The *Divine Original*, Excellent and Immortal Nature of the Soul are opened; its *Love* and *Inclination* to the Body, with the Necessity of its *Separation* from it, considered and improved. The *Existence*, *Operations*, and *States* of separated Souls, both in *Heaven* and *Hell*, immediately after Death, asserted, discussed, and variously applied. Divers knotty and difficult *Questions* about *departed Souls*, both *Philosophical* and *Theological*, stated and determined. The *Invaluable Preciousness* of Human Souls, and the various *Artifices* of *Satan* (their professed Enemy) to destroy them, discovered. And the great *Duty* and *Interest* of all Men, seasonably and heartily to comply with the most great and gracious Design of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*, for the Salvation of their Souls, argued and pressed.

By JOHN FLAVEL,

FORMERLY MINISTER AT DARTMOUTH, IN DEVON.

Ανθρώπος διπλῆς, διὰ τὸ σῶμα θνητός, αἰθάνατος δὲ διὰ ψυχὴν. Trifin.
 Ψυχὴ δὲ αἰθάνατος, καὶ ἀγῆστος ᾧ διὰ παντός. Phocylides.

Quid de Turcis, Tartaris, Moschis, Indis, Persis, aliisque omnibus nunc temporis Barbaris Nationibus dicam? Nemo tam Barbarus, aut impius est, qui non sentiat post mortem superesse loca, in quibus animæ aut pro malefactis puniuntur, aut continentur, delictisque perfruantur pro benefactis. *Zach. de Animæ immortalitate*, p. 653.

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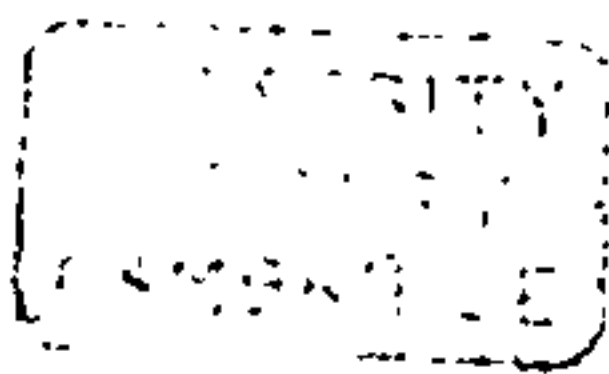
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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE publisher informs the reader, that this Copy is printed verbatim from the best London Edition, and that (where the author has not done it himself) the notes, which contain quotations from the learned languages, are translated, for the convenience of the English reader, and for the most part inserted in the text. We have, also, to give this edition every possible advantage, added a few original notes, chiefly on the philosophical parts, where their abstruseness seemed to require it.



T H E
L I F E
OF THE REVEREND
Mr. J O H N F L A V E L.

THE family of the FLAVELS derive their pedigree from one who was the third great officer that came over with William the Conqueror; but this worthy divine was far from that weakness and vanity to boast of any thing of that nature, being of the poet's mind, who said,

*Et genus, & proavos, & quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco——*

His father was Mr. Richard Flavel, a painful and eminent minister: He was first minister at Bromsgrove in Worcestershire, then at Hasler, and removed from thence to Willersey in Gloucestershire, where he continued till 1660, whence he was ejected upon the restoration of King Charles II. because it was a sequestered living, and the incumbent then alive: this did not so much affect Mr. Flavel, as that he wanted a fixed place for the exercise of his pastoral function. He was a person of such extraordinary piety, that those who conversed with him, said, they never heard one vain word drop from his mouth. A little before the turning out of the Non-conformist ministers, being near Totness in Devon, he preached from Hosea vii. 9. 'The days of visitation are
' come

‘ come, the days of recompence are come, Israel shall know it.’ His application was so close, that it offended some people, and occasioned his being carried before some justices of the peace ; but they could not convict him, so that he was discharged. He afterwards quitted that country, and his son’s house, which was his retiring place, and came to London, where he continued in a faithful and acceptable discharge of his office, till the time of the dreadful plague in 1665, when he was taken and imprisoned in the manner following. He was at Mr. Blake’s house in Covent Garden, where some people had met privately for worship: whilst he was at prayer, a party of soldiers broke in upon them with their swords drawn, and demanded their preacher, threatening some, and flattering others to discover him, but in vain. Some of the company threw a coloured cloak over him, and in this disguise he was, together with his hearers, carried to Whitehall ; the women were dismissed, but the men detained, and forced to lie all that night upon the bare floor ; and because they would not pay five pounds each, were sent to Newgate, where the pestilence raged most violently, as in other places of the city. Here Mr. Flavel and his wife were shut up, and seized with the sickness; they were bailed out, but died of the contagion ; of which their son John had a divine monition given him by a dream, as we shall observe in its proper place. Mr. Richard Flavel left two sons behind him, both ministers of the gospel, viz. John and Phineas.

John, the eldest, was born in Worcestershire. It was observable, that whilst his mother lay-in with him, a nightingale made her nest on the outside of the chamber-window, where she used to sing most sweetly. He was religiously educated by his father ; and having profited well at the grammar-schools, was sent early to Oxford, and settled a commoner in University College. He plied his studies hard, and exceeded many of his contemporaries in university learning.

Soon after his commencing bachelor of arts, Mr. Walplate, the minister of Diptford, in the county of Devon,
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was rendered incapable of performing his office, by reason of his age and infirmity, and sent to Oxford for an assistant: Mr. Flavel, though but young, was recommended to him as a person duly qualified, and was accordingly settled there by the standing committee of Devon, April 27, 1650, to preach as a probationer and assistant to Mr. Walplate.

Mr. Flavel, considering the weight of his charge, applied himself to the work of his calling with great diligence; and being assiduous in reading, meditation, and prayer, he increased in ministerial knowledge daily (for he found himself, that he came raw enough in that respect from the university), so that he attained to an high degree of eminency and reputation for his useful labours in the church.

About six months after his settling at Diptford, he heard of an ordination to be at Salisbury, and therefore went thither with his testimonials, and offered himself to be examined and ordained by the Presbytery there. They appointed him a text, upon which he preached to their general satisfaction; and having afterwards examined him as to his learning, &c. they set him apart to the work of the ministry, with prayer and imposition of hands, on the 17th day of October, 1650.

Mr. Flavel, being thus ordained, returned to Diptford, and after Mr. Walplate's death succeeded in the rectory. To avoid all incumbrances from the world, and avocations from his studies and ministerial work, he chose a person of worth and reputation in the parish (of whom he had a good assurance that he would be faithful to himself, and kind to his parishioners), and let him the whole tythes much below the real value, which was very well pleasing to his people. By this means he was the better able to deal with them in private, since the hire of his labours was no-way a hindrance to the success of them.

Whilst he was at Diptford, he married one Mrs. Joan Randall, a pious gentlewoman, of a good family, who died in travail of her first child, without being delivered.

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8 THE LIFE OF THE REVEREND

His year of mourning being expired, his acquaintance and intimate friends advised him to marry a second time, [Mrs. Elizabeth Morrice] in consequence of which he was again very happy. Some time after this second marriage, the people of Dartmouth (a great and noted seaport in the county of Devon, formerly under the charge of the Rev. Mr. Anthony Hartford, deceased) unanimously chose Mr. Flavel to succeed him. They urged him to accept their call, 1. Because there were exceptions made against all other candidates, but none against him. 2. Because being acceptable to the whole town, he was the more likely to be an instrument of healing the breaches amongst the good people there. 3. Because Dartmouth, being a considerable and populous town, required an able and eminent minister; which was not so necessary for a country parish, that might besides be more easily supplied with another pastor than Dartmouth.

That which made them more pressing and earnest with Mr. Flavel, was this: At a provincial synod in that county, Mr. Flavel, though but a young man, was voted into the chair as moderator; where he opened the assembly with a most devout and pertinent prayer; he examined the candidates who offered themselves to their trials for the ministry with great learning, stated the cases and questions proposed to them with much acuteness and judgment, and, in the whole, demeaned himself with that gravity, piety, and seriousness, during his presidency, that all the ministers of the assembly admired and loved him. The Rev. Mr. Hartford, his predecessor at Dartmouth, took particular notice of him, from that time forward contracted a strict friendship with him, and spoke of him among the magistrates and people of Dartmouth, as an extraordinary person, who was like to be a great light in the church. This, with their having several times heard him preach, occasioned their importunity with Mr. Flavel to come and be their minister; upon which, having spread his case before the Lord, and submitted to the decision of his neighbouring ministers, he was prevailed upon

upon to remove to Dartmouth, to his great loss in temporals, the rectory of Diptford being a much greater benefice.

Mr. Flavel being settled at Dartmouth by the election of the people, and an order from Whitehall by the commissioners for approbation of public preachers of the 19th of December, 1656, he was associated with Mr. Allein Geere, a very worthy, but sickly man. The ministerial work was thus divided betwixt them; Mr. Flavel was to preach on the Lord's Day at Townstall, the mother church standing upon a hill without the town; and every fortnight in his turn, at the Wednesday's lecture in Dartmouth. Here God crowned his labours with many conversions. One of his judicious hearers expressed himself thus concerning him: "I could say much, though not enough, of the excellency of his preaching, of his seasonable, suitable, and spiritual matter, of his plain expositions of scripture, his taking method, his genuine and natural deductions, his convincing arguments, his clear and powerful demonstrations, his heart-searching applications, and his comfortable supports to those that were afflicted in conscience. In short, that person must have a very soft head, or a very hard heart, or both, that could sit under his ministry unaffected."

By his unwearied application to study, he had acquired a great stock both of divine and human learning. He was master of the controversies betwixt the Jews and Christians, Papists and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, and betwixt the Orthodox and the Arminians and Socinians. He was likewise well read in the controversies about Church Discipline, Infant Baptism, and Antinomianism. He was well acquainted with the School Divinity, and drew up a judicious and ingenious scheme of the whole body of that Theology in good Latin, which he presented to a person of quality, but it was never printed. He was singularly well versed and exact in the oriental languages. He had one way of improving his knowledge, which is very proper for young divines; whatever remarkable passage he heard in private conference,

ference, if he was familiar with the relator, he would desire him to repeat it again, and insert it into his *Adversaria*: by these methods he acquired a vast stock of proper materials for his popular sermons in the pulpit, and his more elaborate works for the press.*

He had an excellent gift of prayer, and was never at a loss in all his various occasions for suitable matter and words: and, which was the most remarkable of all, he always brought with him a broken heart and moving affections; his tongue and spirit were touched with a live coal from the altar, and he was evidently assisted by the holy Spirit of grace and supplication in that divine ordinance. Those who lived in his family, say, that he was always full and copious in prayer, seemed constantly to exceed himself, and rarely made use twice of the expressions.

When the act of uniformity turned him out with the rest of his nonconforming brethren, he did not thereupon quit his relation to his church, he thought the souls of his flock to be more precious than to be so tamely neglected; he took all opportunities of ministering the word and sacraments to them in private meetings, and joined with other ministers in solemn days of fasting and humiliation, to pray that God would once more restore the ark of his covenant unto his afflicted Israel. About four months after that fatal Bartholomew-day, his reverend colleague, Mr. Allein Geere, died, so that the whole care of the flock devolved upon Mr. Flavel, which, though a heavy and pressing burden, he undertook very cheerfully.

Upon the execution of the Oxford act, which banished all nonconforming ministers five miles from any towns which sent members to parliament, he was forced to leave Dartmouth, to the great sorrow of his people, who followed him out of town; and at Townstall church yard they took such a mournful farewell of one another, as the place might very well have been called Bochim. He removed to Slapton, a parish five miles from Dartmouth, or any other corporation, which put him out of the legal reach
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of his adversaries ; here he met with signal instances of God's fatherly care and protection, and preached twice every Lord's day to such as durst adventure to hear him, which many of his own people and others did, notwithstanding the rigour and severity of the act against conventicles. He many times slipped privately into Dartmouth, where by preaching and conversation he edified his flock, to the great refreshment of his own soul and theirs, though with very much danger, because of his watchful adversaries, who constantly laid wait for him, so that he could not make any long stay in the town.

In those times Mr. Flavel being at Exeter, was invited to preach by many good people of that city, who for safety chose a wood about three miles from the city to be the place of their assembly, where they were broke up by their enemies by that time the sermon was well begun. Mr. Flavel, by the care of the people, made his escape through the middle of his enraged enemies ; and though many of his hearers were taken, carried before Justice Tuckfield, and fined ; yet the rest, being nothing discouraged, re-assembled, and carried Mr. Flavel to another wood, where he preached to them without any disturbance ; and, after he had concluded, rode to a gentleman's house near the wood, who, though an absolute stranger to Mr. Flavel, entertained him with great civility that night, and next day he returned to Exeter in safety. Amongst those taken at this time, there was a tanner who had a numerous family, and but a small stock ; he was fined notwithstanding forty pounds ; at which he was nothing discouraged, but told a friend, who asked him how he bore up under his loss, " That he took the spoiling of his goods joyfully, for the sake of his Lord Jesus, for whom his life and all that he had was too little."

As soon as the nonconformists had any respite from their trouble, Mr. Flavel laid hold on the opportunity, and returned to Dartmouth, where, during the first indulgence granted by King Charles II. he kept open doors, and preached freely to all that would come and hear him ; and when that liberty was revoked, he made it his business

notwithstanding to preach in season and out of season, and seldom missed of an opportunity of preaching on the Lord's day. During this time, God was pleased to deprive him of his second wife, which was a great affliction, she having been a help meet for him ; and such an one he stood much in need of, as being a man of an infirm and weak constitution, who laboured under many infirmities. In convenient time he married a third wife, Mrs. Ann Downe, daughter of Mr. Thomas Downe, minister of Exeter, who lived very happily with him eleven years, and left him two sons.

The persecution against the nonconformists being renewed, Mr. Flavel found it unsafe to stay at Dartmouth, and therefore resolved to go to London, where he hoped to be in less danger, and to have more liberty to exercise his function. The night before he embarked for that end, he had the following premonition by a dream : he thought he was on board the ship, and that a storm arose which exceedingly terrified the passengers ; during their consternation, there sat writing at the table a person of admirable sagacity and gravity, who had a child in a cradle by him that was very froward ; he thought he saw the father take up a little whip, and give the child a lash, saying, " Child be quiet, I will discipline, but not hurt thee." Upon this Mr. Flavel awaked, and musing on his dream, he concluded, that he should meet with some trouble in his passage : his friends being at dinner with him, assured him of a pleasant passage, because the wind and weather were very fair ; Mr. Flavel replied, " That he was not of their mind, but expected much trouble because of his dream ;" adding, " that when he had such representations made to him in his sleep, they seldom or ever failed."

Accordingly, when they were advanced within five leagues of Portland in their voyage, they were overtaken by a dreadful tempest, insomuch that, betwixt one and two in the morning, the master and seamen concluded, that, unless God changed the wind, there was no hopes of life ; it was impossible for them to weather

ther Portland, so that they must of necessity be wrecked on the rocks or on the shore. Upon this Mr. Flavel called all the hands that could be spared into the cabin to prayer; but the violence of the tempest was such, that they could not prevent themselves from being thrown from the one side unto the other as the ship was tossed; and not only so, but mighty seas broke in upon them, as if they would have drowned them in the very cabin. Mr. Flavel in this danger took hold of the two pillars of the cabin bed, and calling upon God, begged mercy for himself and the rest in the ship. Amongst other arguments in prayer, he made use of this, that if he and his company perished in that storm, the name of God would be blasphemed, the enemies of religion would say, that though he escaped their hands on shore, yet Divine vengeance had overtaken him at sea. In the midst of his prayer his faith and hope were raised, insomuch that he expected a gracious answer: so that, committing himself and his company to the mercy of God, he concluded the duty. No sooner was prayer ended, but one came down from the deck, crying, "Deliverance! Deliverance! God is a God hearing prayer! In a moment the wind is come fair west!" And so sailing before it they were brought safely to London. Mr. Flavel found many of his old friends there; and God raised him new ones, with abundance of work, and extraordinary encouragement in it. During his stay in London he married his fourth wife, a widow gentlewoman, (daughter to Mr. George Jefferies, formerly minister of King's-Bridge.)

Mr. Flavel, while he was in London, narrowly escaped being taken, with the reverend Mr. Jenkins, at Mr. Fox's in Moor-fields, where they were keeping a day of fasting and prayer. He was so near, that he heard the insolence of the officers and soldiers to Mr. Jenkins when they had taken him; and observed it in his diary, that Mr. Jenkins might have escaped as well as himself, had it not been for a piece of vanity in a lady, whose long train hindered his going down stairs,
Mr.

Mr. Jenkins, out of too great civility, having let her pass before him.

Mr. Flavel after this returned to Dartmouth, where with his family and dear people he blessed God for his mercies towards him. He was, a little time after, confined close prisoner to his house, where many of his dear flock stole in over night, or betimes on the Lord's day in the morning, to enjoy the benefits of his labours, and spend the sabbath in hearing, praying, singing of psalms, and holy discourses.

Mr. Jenkins, above mentioned, dying in prison, his people gave Mr. Flavel a call to the pastoral office among them; and Mr. Reeves's people did the like. Mr. Flavel communicated those calls unto his flock, and kept a day of prayer with them to beg direction from God in this important affair; he was graciously pleased to answer him by fixing Mr. Flavel's resolution to stay with his flock at Dartmouth. Many arguments were made use of to persuade him to come to London, as, that since he was turned out by the act of uniformity, he had had but very little maintenance from his church, that those at London were rich and numerous congregations; that he had a family and children to provide for; and that the city was a theatre of honour and reputation. But none of those things could prevail with him to leave his poor people at Dartmouth.

In 1687, when it pleased God so to over-rule affairs, that King James II. thought it his interest to dispense with the penal laws against them, Mr. Flavel, who had formerly been confined to a corner, shone brightly, as a flaming beacon upon the top of an hill. His affectionate people prepared a large place for him, where God blessed his labours to the conviction of many people, by his sermons on Rev. iii. 20. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' This encouraged him to print those sermons under the title of England's Duty, &c. hoping that it might do good abroad, as well as in his own congregation. He had made a vow to the Lord under his confinement, that if he should be once more entrusted with

with public liberty, he would improve it to the advantage of the gospel: this he performed in a most conscientious manner, preaching twice every Lord's day, and lectured every Wednesday, in which he went over most part of the third chapter of St. John, shewing the indispensable necessity of regeneration. He preached likewise every Thursday before the sacrament, and then after examination admitted communicants. He had no assistance on sacrament days, so that he was many times almost spent before he distributed the elements. When the duty of the day was over, he would often complain of a sore breast, and aching head, and a pained back; yet he would be early at study again next Monday. He allowed himself very little recreation, accounting time a precious jewel that ought to be improved at any rate.

He was not only a zealous preacher in the pulpit, but a sincere Christian in his closet, frequent in self-examination, as well as in pressing it upon others; being afraid, lest while he preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away. To prove this, I shall transcribe what follows from his own diary.

“ To make sure of eternal life, said he, is the great business which the sons of death have to do in this world. Whether a man consider the immortality of his own soul, the ineffable joys and glory of heaven, the extreme and endless torments of hell, the inconceivable sweetness of peace of conscience, or the misery of being subject to the terrors thereof; all these put a necessity, a solemnity, a glory upon this work. But, Oh! the difficulties and dangers attending it! How many and how great are these? What judgement, faithfulness, resolution, and watchfulness, doth it require? Such is the deceitfulness, darkness, and inconstancy of our hearts, and such the malice, policy and diligence of Satan to manage and improve it, that he who attempts this work had need both to watch his seasons for it, and frequently look up to God for his guidance and illumination, and to spend many sad and serious thoughts before he adventure upon a determination and conclusion of the state of his soul.

“ To

“ To the end therefore that this most important work may not miscarry in my hands, I have collected, with all the care I can, the best and soundest characters I can find in the writings of our modern divines, taken out of the scripture, and by their labours illustrated and prepared for use, that I might make a right application of them.

“ 1. I have earnestly besought the Lord for the assistance of his Spirit, which can only manifest my own heart unto me, and show me the true state thereof, which is that thing my soul doth most earnestly desire to know ; and I hope the Lord will answer my desire therein, according to his promises, Luke xi. 13. John xiv. 26.

“ 2. I have endeavoured to cast out and lay aside self-love, lest my heart being prepossessed therewith, my judgement should be perverted, and become partial in passing sentence on my estate. I have, in some measure, brought my heart to be willing to judge and condemn myself for an hypocrite, if such I shall be found on trial as to approve myself for sincere and upright. Yea, I would have it so far from being grievous to me so to do, that if I have been all this while mistaken and deceived, I shall rejoice, and bless the Lord with my soul, that now at last it may be discovered to me and I may be set right, though I lay the foundation new again. This I have laboured to bring my heart to, knowing that thousands have dashed and split to pieces upon this rock. And indeed he that will own the person of a judge, must put off the person of a friend.

“ 3. It hath been my endeavour to keep upon my heart a deep sense of that great judgement day throughout this work ; as knowing by experience what a potent influence this hath on the conscience, to make it deliberate, serious, and faithful in its work ; and therefore I have demanded of my own conscience, before the resolution of each question, O my conscience ! deal faithfully with me in this particular, and say no more to me than thou wilt own and stand to in the great day, when the counsels of all hearts shall be made manifest.

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“ 4. Having seriously weighed each mark, and considered wherein the weight and substance of it lieth, I have gone to the Lord in prayer for his assistance, ere I have drawn up the answer of my conscience; and as my heart hath been persuaded therein, so have I determined and resolved; what hath been clear to my experience, I have so set down; and what hath been dubious, I have here left it so.

“ 5. I have made choice of the fittest seasons I had for this work, and set to it when I have found my heart in the most quiet and serious frame. For as he that will see his face in a glass, must be fixed, not in motion, or in the water, must make no commotion in it; so it is in this case.

“ 6. Lastly, To the end I may be successful in this work, I have laboured all along carefully to distinguish betwixt such sins as are grounds of doubting, and such as are only grounds of humiliation; knowing that not every evil is a ground of doubting, though all, even the smallest infirmities, administer matter of humiliation: and thus I have desired to enterprize this great business. O Lord, assist thy servant, that he may not mistake herein; but, if his conscience do now condemn him, he may lay a better foundation whilst he hath time; and if it shall now acquit him, he may also have boldness in the day of judgement.”

These things being previously dispatched, he tried himself by the scripture marks of sincerity and regeneration: by this means he attained to a well grounded assurance, the ravishing comforts of which were many times shed abroad in his soul; this made him a powerful and successful preacher, as one who spoke from his own heart to those of others. He preached what he felt, what he had handled, what he had seen and tasted of the word of life, and they felt it also.

We may guess what a sweet and blessed intercourse he had with heaven, from that history we meet with in his Treatise on the Soul, which I refer to, and likewise from that revelation he had of his father and mother's death, in

the same work. He was a mighty wrestler with God in secret prayer, and particularly begged of him to crown his sermons, printed books, and private discourses, with the conversion of poor sinners, a work which his heart was much set upon. It pleased God to answer him by many instances, of which the two that follow deserve peculiar notice.

In 1673, there came into Dartmouth port a ship of Pool, in her return from Virginia; the surgeon of this ship, a lusty young man of 23 years of age, fell into a deep melancholy, which the devil improved to make him murder himself. This he attempted on the Lord's day early in the morning, when he was in bed with his brother; he first cut his own throat with a knife he had prepared on purpose, and leaping out of the bed, thrust it likewise into his stomach, and so lay wallowing in his own blood, till his brother awaked and cried for help. A physician and surgeon were brought, who concluded the wound in his throat mortal; they stitched it up however, and applied a plaister, but without hopes of cure, because he already breathed through the wound, and his voice was become inarticulate. Mr. Flavel came to visit him in this condition, and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of eternity, laboured to prepare him for it; he asked him his own apprehensions of his condition, and the young man answered, that he hoped in God for eternal life. Mr. Flavel replied, that he feared his hopes were ill grounded: the scripture telling us, that 'no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him:' self-murder was the grossest of all murder, &c. Mr. Flavel insisted so much upon the aggravation of the crime, that the young man's conscience began to fail, his heart began to melt, and then he broke out into tears, bewailing his sin and misery, and asked Mr. Flavel if there yet might be any hope for him? He told him there might; and finding him altogether unacquainted with the nature of faith and repentance, he opened them to him. The poor man sucked in this doctrine greedily, prayed with great vehemence to God that he would work them on his soul, and intreated Mr. Flavel

vel to pray with him, and for him, that he might be; though late, a sincere gospel penitent; and sound believer. Mr. Flavel prayed with him accordingly, and it pleased God exceedingly to melt the young man's heart, during the performance of that duty. He was very loth to part with Mr. Flavel, but the duty of the day obliging him to be gone, in a few words he summed up those counsels that he thought most necessary, and so took his farewell of him, never expecting to see him any more in this world. But it pleased God to order it otherwise; the young man continued alive contrary to all expectation; panted earnestly after the Lord Jesus, and no discourse was pleasing to him, but that of Christ and faith. In this frame Mr. Flavel found him in the evening: he rejoiced greatly when he saw him come again, intreated him to continue his discourse upon those subjects, and told him, Sir, the Lord hath given me repentance for this and all my other sins; I see the evil of them now; so as I never saw them before! O I loath myself! I do also believe; Lord, help my unbelief. I am heartily willing to take Christ upon his own terms; but one thing troubles me; I doubt this bloody sin will not be pardoned. Will Jesus Christ, said he, apply his blood to me, that have shed my own blood? Mr. Flavel told him, that the Lord Jesus shed his blood for them who with wicked hands had shed his own blood, which was a greater sin than the shedding of his; to which the wounded man replied, I will cast myself upon Christ; let him do what he will. In this condition Mr. Flavel left him that night.

Next morning his wounds were to be opened, and the surgeon's opinion was, that he would immediately expire; Mr. Flavel was again requested to give him a visit, which he did, found him in a very serious frame, and prayed with him. The wound in his stomach was afterwards opened, when the ventricle was so much swoln, that it came out at the orifice of the wound, and lay like a livid discoloured tripe upon his body; and was also cut through; every one thought it impossible for him to live; however, the surgeon enlarged the orifice of the wound, fomented

it, and wrought the ventricle again into his body, and, stitching up the wound, left his patient to the disposal of Providence.

It pleased God that he was cured of those dangerous wounds in his body ; and, upon solid grounds of a rational charity, there was reason to believe that he was also cured of that more dangerous wound which sin had made in his soul. Mr. Flavel spent many hours with him during his sickness ; and when the surgeon returned to Pool, after his recovery, Mr. Samuel Hardy, that worthy minister there, thanked Mr. Flavel in a letter, for the great pains he had taken with that young man, and congratulated his success, assuring him, that if ever a great and thorough work was wrought, it was upon that man.

The second instance is this: Mr. Flavel being in London in 1673, his old bookseller, Mr. Boulter, gave him this following relation, viz. That some time before, there came into his shop a sparkish gentleman to inquire for some play books : Mr. Boulter told him he had none, but shewed him Mr. Flavel's little treatise of " Keeping the Heart," intreated him to read it, and assured him it would do him more good than play books. The gentleman read the title, and glancing upon several pages here and there, broke out into these and such other expressions, What a damnable phanatic was he who made this book ! Mr. Boulter begged of him to buy and read it, and told him he had no cause to censure it so bitterly ; at last he bought it, but told him he would not read it. What will you do with it then ? said Mr. Boulter. Will you tear and burn it, said he, and send it to the devil ? Mr. Boulter told him, then he should not have it. Upon this the gentleman promised to read it ; and Mr. Boulter told him, if he disliked it upon reading, he would return him his money. About a month after, the gentleman came to the shop again in a very modest habit, and, with a serious countenance, bespeaks Mr. Boulter thus ; Sir, I most heartily thank you for putting this book into my hands ; I bless God that moved you to do it, it hath saved my soul ; Blessed be God that ever I came into your shop.

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And then he bought a hundred more of those books of him, told him he would give them to the poor who could not buy them, and so left him, praising and admiring the goodness of God. Thus it pleased God to bless the sermons, discourses, and writings of Mr. Flavel.

Many times, when he preached abroad, he has had letters sent him from unknown persons, informing him how God had blessed his ministry to their souls, and converted them from being bitter enemies to religion. This encouraged him, when he rode abroad, not only to accept of invitations to preach, but many times to offer his labours unto those that would be pleased to hear him; though, for this, he had no occasion where he was known, the people being generally importunate with him. One day, after a long and hard journey, an intimate friend of his, out of a tender regard to him, pressed him with cogent arguments to forbear preaching at that season, but could not prevail with him; his bowels of compassion to needy and perishing souls made him overlook all considerations of himself; he preached an excellent sermon, by which there was one converted, as he declared himself afterwards upon his admission to the Lord's table.

The last sermon that he preached to his people at Dartmouth, was on a public day of fasting and humiliation; in the close of which he was enlarged in such an extraordinary manner, when offering up praises to God for mercies received, that he seemed to be in an ecstasy: this happened about a week before his death, and may justly be accounted a foretaste of those heavenly raptures that he now enjoys amongst the blessed spirits above.

The last sermon he preached was on the 21st of June, 1691, at Ashburton, from I. Cor. x. 12. 'Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' It was a very pathetical and excellent discourse, tending to awaken careless professors, and to stir them up to be solicitous about their souls. After having preached this sermon, he went to Exeter; and at Topsham, within three miles of that city, he presided as moderator in an assembly of the nonconformist ministers of Devonshire, who unanim-
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mously voted him into the chair. The occasion of their meeting was about an union betwixt the Presbyterians and Independents, which Mr. Flavel was very zealous to promote, and brought to so good an issue in those parts, that the ministers declared their satisfaction with the heads of agreement concluded on by the London ministers of those denominations. Mr. Flavel closed the work of the day with prayer and praises, in which his spirit was carried out with wonderful enlargement and affection.

He wrote a letter to an eminent minister in London; with an account of their proceedings, the same day that he died; Providence ordering it so, that he should finish that good work his heart was so intent upon, before he finished his course.

The manner of his death was sudden and surprising: his friends thought him as well that day in the evening of which he died, as he had been for many years: towards the end of supper, he complained of a deadness in one of his hands, that he could not lift it to his head. This struck his wife, and his friends about him, into an astonishment: they used some means to recover it to its former strength; but, instead thereof, to their great grief, the distemper seized upon all one side of his body. They put him to bed with all speed, and sent for physicians, but to no purpose; his distemper prevailed upon him so fast, that in a short time it made him speechless. He was sensible of his approaching death; and when they carried him up stairs, expressed his opinion, that it would be the last time; but added, "I know that it will be well with me;" which were some of his last words. Thus died this holy man of God suddenly, and without pain, not giving so much as one groan. He exchanged this life for a better, on the 26th day of June, 1691; in the 61st year of his age.

His corpse was carried from Exeter to Dartmouth, attended by several ministers, and a great many other persons of good quality; abundance of people rode out from Dartmouth, Totness, Newton, Ashburton, and other places, to meet the corpse: when it was taken out of the
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hearse at the water-side, his people and other friends could not forbear expressing the sense of their great loss by floods of tears, and a bitter lamentation. It was interred the same night in Dartmouth church, and next day Mr. George Troffe, a minister of Exeter, preached his funeral sermon from Elisha's lamentation upon the translation of Elijah, II. Kings ii. 12. 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.'

We shall conclude with a character of Mr. Flavel.—He was a man of a middle stature, and full of life and activity. He was very thoughtful, and, when not discoursing or reading, much taken up in meditation, which made him digest his notions well. He was ready to learn from every body, and as free to communicate what he knew. He was bountiful to his own relations, and very charitable to the poor, but especially to the household of faith, and the necessitous members of his own church, to whom, during their sickness, he always sent suitable supplies. He freely taught academical learning to four young men, whom he bred to the ministry, and one of them he maintained all the while at his own charge. He was exceedingly affectionate to all the people of Dartmouth, of which we shall give one remarkable instance. When our fleet was first engaged with the French, he called his people together to a solemn fast, and, like a man in an agony, wrestled with God in prayer for the church and nation, and particularly for the poor seamen of Dartmouth, that they might obtain mercy; the Lord heard and answered him, for not one of that town was killed in the fight, though many of them were in the engagement. As he was a faithful ambassador to his master, he made his example the rule of his own practice; and was so far from reviling again those that reviled him, that he prayed for those that despitefully used him; one remarkable instance of which is as follows: in 1685, some of the people of Dartmouth, accompanied too by some of the magistrates, made up his effigies, carried it through the streets in derision, with the covenant and bill of exclusion pinned to it, and set it upon a bonfire, and burnt

burnt it: some of the spectators were so much affected with the reproach and ignominy done to this reverend and pious minister, that they wept, and others scoffed and jeered; it was observable, that at the very same time, though he knew nothing of the matter, he was heaping coals of fire of another nature upon the heads of those wicked men; for he was then praying for the town of Dartmouth, its magistrates and inhabitants; and when news was brought him, upon the conclusion of his prayer, what they had been doing, he lift up this prayer unto God for them in our Saviour's words, ' Father, forgive ' them, for they know not what they do.'

EPISTLE

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the much honoured his dear kinsman, Mr. JOHN FLAVEL, and Mr. EDWARD CRISP, of London, Merchants; and the rest of my worthy friends in London, Ratcliffe, Shadwell, and Limehouse; Grace, Mercy, and Peace.

Dear Friends,

“**A**MONG all the creatures in this world, none deserves to be styled great but Man; and in man nothing is found worthy of that epithet but his soul.”

The study and knowledge of the soul was therefore always reckoned a rich and necessary improvement of time. All ages have magnified these two words, “know thyself,” as an oracle descending from heaven.

“No knowledge,” saith Bernard, “is better than that whereby we know ourselves: leave other matters therefore, and search thyself; let thy thoughts, as it were, circulate, begin and end there.”

The study and knowledge of Jesus Christ must still be allowed to be most excellent and necessary: but yet the worth and necessity of Christ is unknown to men, till the value, wants, and dangers of their own souls are first discovered to them.

The disaffection of men to the study of their own souls is the more to be admired, not only because of the weight and necessity of it, but the alluring pleasure and sweetness

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that is found therein. What Cardan speaks is experimentally felt by many, “that scarce any thing is more pleasant and delectable to the soul of man, than to know what he is, what he may and shall be, the vicissitudes of this present world, and what those divine and supreme things are which he is to enjoy after death :” for we are creatures conscious to ourselves of an immortal nature, and that we have something about us which must overlive this mortal flesh, and that we shall not cease to *be*, when we cease to *breathe*.

And certainly, my friends, discourses of the soul and its immortality, of heaven and of hell, the next and only receptacles of unbodied spirits, were never more seasonable and necessary than in this atheistical age of the world, wherein all serious piety and thoughts of immortality are ridiculed and hissed out of the company of many; as if those old condemned heretics, who asserted the corruptibility and mortality of the soul as well as body, had been again revived in our days.

And as the atheism of some, so the carelessness of the most, needs and calls for such potent remedies as discourses of this kind do plentifully afford. I dare appeal to your charitable judgements, whether the conversations of the many do indeed look like a serious pursuit of heaven, and a flight from hell?

Long have my thoughts bent towards this great and excellent subject, and many earnest desires have I had to know what I shall be when I breathe not. But when I had engaged my meditations about it, two great difficulties opposed the farther progress of my thoughts therein: namely, 1. The difficulty of the subject I had chosen; and, 2. The distractions of the times in which I was to write upon it.

1. As for the subject, such is the subtilty and sublimity of its nature, and such the knotty controversies in which it is involved, that it much better deserves that inscription than Minerva’s temple at Saum did, “Never did any mortal reveal me plainly.” It is but little that the most clear and sharp-sighted discern of their own souls now in
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the state of composition ; and what then can we positively and distinctly know of the life they live in the state of separation ? The darkness in which these things are involved, greatly exercise even the greatest wits, and frequently elude and frustrate the most generous attempts. Many great scholars, whose natural and acquired abilities singularly qualified them to make a clearer discovery, have laboured in this field even to sweat and paleness, and done little more but entangle themselves and the subject more than before. This cannot but discourage new attempts.

And yet without some knowledge of the subjective capacity of our souls to enjoy the good of the world to come, even in a state of absence from the body, a principal relief must be cut off from them under the great and manifold trials they are to encounter in this.

As for myself, I assure you, I am deeply sensible of the inequality of my shoulders to this burden ; and have often thought of that necessary caution of the poet, (A) to wield and poise the burden as porters used to do, before I undertook it. Zuinglius blamed Carolostadius (as some may do me) for undertaking the controversy of that age, because, saith he, his shoulders are too weak for it.

And yet I know man's labours prosper not according to the art and elegancy of the composure, but according to the divine blessing which accompanies them. Rufinus tells us of a learned philosopher at the Council of Nice, who stoutly defended his thesis against the greatest wits and scholars there, and yet was at last fairly vanquished by a man of no extraordinary parts : of which conquest the philosopher gave this candid and ingenuous account :—" Against words, said he, I opposed words ; and what was spoken I overthrew by the art of speaking : but when instead of words, power came out of the mouth of the speaker, words could no longer withstand truth,

(A) " Examine well, ye writers, weigh with care
What suits your genius, what your strength can bear ;
For when a well-proportioned theme you chuse,
Nor words, nor method will their aid refuse."

[HORACE'S Art of Poetry.]

nor man oppose the power of God." O that my weak endeavours might prosper under the like influence of the Spirit upon the hearts of them that shall read this inartificial, but well-meant discourse !

I am little concerned about the contempts and censures of fastidious readers. I have resolved to say nothing that exceeds sobriety, nor to provoke any man, except my dissent from him should do so. Perhaps there are some doubts relating to this subject, which will never be fully solved till we come to heaven. For man by the fall being less than himself, doth not understand himself, nor will ever perfectly do so, until he is fully restored to himself, which will not be whilst he dwells in a body of sin and death. And yet it is to me past doubt, that this, as well as other subjects, might have been much more cleared than it is, if instead of the proud contentions of masterly wits for victory, all had humbly and peaceably applied themselves to the impartial search of truth. Truth, like an orient pearl in the bottom of a river, would have discovered itself by its native lustre and radiancy, had not the feet of heathen philosophers, cunning atheists, and daring school divines, disturbed and fouled the stream.

2. As the difficulties of the subject are many, so many have been the interruptions I have met with whilst it was under my hand; which I mention for no other end but to procure a more favourable censure from you, if it appears less exact than you expected to find it. Such as it is I do, with much respect and affection, tender it to your hands, humbly requesting the blessing of the Spirit may accompany it to your hearts. If you will but allow yourselves to think close to the matter before you, I doubt not but you may find somewhat in it apt both to inform your minds, and quicken your affections. I know you have a multiplicity of business, but yet I hope your great concern makes all others daily to give place; and that how clamorous and importunate soever the affairs of this world are, you both can and do find time to sit alone, and think on the more important business you have to do.

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My friends, we are borderers upon eternity ; we live upon the confines of the spiritual and immaterial world. We must shortly be associated with bodiless beings, and shall have (after a few days are past) no more concerns for meat, drink, and sleep, buying and selling, habitations and relations, than the angels of God now have. Besides we live here in a state of trial. Man is one in whom both worlds meet ; his body participates of the lower, his soul of the upper world. Hence it is he finds such tugging and pulling this way, and that way ; upward, and downward ; both worlds as it were contending for this invaluable prize, the precious soul. All Christ's ordinances are instituted, and his officers ordained for no other use or end, but the salvation of souls : books are valuable according as they conduce to this end. How rich a reward of my labours shall I account it, if this Treatise of the Soul may but promote the sanctification and salvation of any of my readers.

To your hands I first tender it. It becomes your property, not only as a debt of justice, the fulfilling of a promise made you long since upon your joint and earnest desires for the publication of it ; but as an acknowledgement of the many favours I have received from you. To one of you I stand obliged in the bond of relation and under the sense of many kindnesses, beyond whatever such a degree of relation can be supposed to exact.

You have here a succinct account of the nature, faculties, and original of the soul of man, as also of its infusion into the body by God, without himself being the author of sin resulting from that union. You will also find the breath of your nostrils to be the bond which holds your souls and bodies in a personal union, and that whilst the due temperature of the body remains and breath continues, your souls hang as by a weak and slender thread, over the state of a vast eternity in heaven or in hell : which will inform you both of the value of your breath, and the best way of improving it, whilst you enjoy it.

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The immortality of the soul is here asserted, proved and vindicated from the most considerable objections; so that it will evidently appear to you, by this discourse, you do not cease to be, when you cease to breathe: and seeing they will outlive all temporal enjoyments, they must necessarily perish, as to all their joys, comforts, and hopes, which is all the death that can be incident to an immortal spirit, if they be not in a proper season secured and provided of that never-perishing food of souls, God in Christ, their portion for ever.

Here you will find the grounds and reasons of that strong inclination which you all feel them to have to your bodies, and the necessity (notwithstanding that) of their divorce and separation, and that it would manifestly be to their prejudice if it should be otherwise. And to overcome the unreasonable averfions of believers, and and bring them to a more becoming, cheerful submission to the laws of death, whensoever the writ of ejection shall be served upon them; you will here find a representation of that blessed life, comely order, and most delightful employment of the incorporeal people inhabiting the city of God: wherein, beside those sweet meditations which are proper to feast your hungry affections, you will meet with divers curious and useful questions stated and resolved; which will be a grateful entertainment to your inquisitive minds.

It is possible they may be censured by some as undeterminable and unprofitable curiosities; but as I hate a presumptuous intrusion into unrevealed secrets, so I think it a weakness to be discouraged in the search of truth, so far as it is fit to trace it, by such causeless censures. Nor am I sensible I have in any thing transgressed the bounds of Christian sobriety, to gratify the palate of a nice and delicate reader.

I have also set before the reader an idea or representation of the state and case of damned souls, that, if it be the will of God, a seasonable discovery of hell may be the means of some mens recovery out of the danger of it; and closed up the whole with a demonstration of the
invaluable

invaluable preciousness of souls, and the several dangerous snares and artifices of Satan, their professed enemy, to destroy and cast them away for ever.

This is the design and general scope of this treatise, And O that God would grant me my heart's desire on your behalf in the perusal of it ! even that it may prove a sanctified instrument in his hand both to prepare you for, and bring you in love with the unbodied life, to make you look with pleasure into your graves, and die by consent of will, as well as necessity of nature. I remember Dr. Staughton, in a sermon preached before King James, relates a strange story of a little child in a shipwreck fast asleep upon its mother's lap, as she sat upon a piece of the wreck amidst the waves : the child being awakened with the noise, asked the mother what those things were ; she told it they were drowning waves to swallow them up : the child with a pretty smiling countenance, begged a stroke from its mother to beat away those naughty waves, and chid them as if they had been its playmates. Death will shortly shipwreck your bodies ; your souls will set upon your lips, ready to expire, as they upon the wreck ready to go down : would it not be a comfortable and most becoming frame of mind to sit there with as little dread as this little one did among the terrible waves ? Surely if our faith had but first united us with Christ, and then loosed our hearts from this enchanting and ensnaring world, we might make a fair step towards this most desirable temper : but unbelief and earthly mindedness make us loth to venture.

I blush to think what bold adventures those men made, who upon the contemplation of the properties of a despicable stone, first adventured quite out of sight of land under its conduct and direction, and securely trusting both their lives and estates to it, when all the eyes of heaven were veiled from them, amidst the dark waters, and thick clouds of the sky ; when I either start or at least give an unwilling shrug, at adventuring out of the sight of this world, under the more sure and steady direction

rection and conduct of faith and the promises. To cure these evils in my own and the reader's hearts these things are written, and in much respect and love tendered to your hands, as a testimony of my gratitude, and deep sense of the many obligations you have put me under. That the blessings of the Spirit may accompany these discourses to your souls, afford you some assistance in your last and difficult work at death with a becoming cheerfulness, saying in that hour, can I not see God till this flesh be laid aside in the grave ; must I die before I can live like myself ? then die, my body, and go to thy dust, that I may be with Christ. With this design, and with these hearty wishes, dear and honoured cousin and worthy friends, I put these discourses into your hands, and remain

Your most obliged

Kinsman and Servant,

JOHN FLAVEL,

T H F

T H E
P R E F A C E.

AMONG many other rich endowments bestowed by the Creator's bounty upon the Soul of Man, the impressions of the world to come, and an ability of reflection are peculiar, invaluable, and heavenly gifts. By the former, we have a very great evidence of our own immortality, and designation for nobler employments and enjoyments than this embodied state admits; and by the latter, we may discern the agreeableness or disagreeableness of our hearts, and therein the validity of our title to that expected blessedness.

But these heavenly gifts are neglected and abused all the world over. Degenerate souls are every where fallen into so deep an oblivion of their excellent original, spiritual and immortal nature, and alliance to the Father of spirits, that (to use the upbraiding expression of a great philosopher) 'they seem to be buried in their bodies as so many silly worms that lurk in their holes, and are loth to peep forth and look abroad. So powerfully do the cares and pleasures of this world charm all (except a small remnant of regenerate souls) that nothing but some smart strokes of calamity, or the terrible messengers of death, can startle them; (and even these are not always able to do it) and when they do, all the effect is but a transient glance

at another and unwilling shrug to leave this world, and so to sleep again : and thus the impressions and sentiments of the world to come, (which are the natural growth and offspring of the soul) are either stifled and suppressed, as in atheists ; or borne down by impetuous masterly lusts, as in sensualists.

And for its self-reflecting property, it seems in many to be a power received in vain. It is with most souls as it is with the eye, which sees not itself, though it sees all other objects. There be those that have almost finished the course of a long life (wherein a great part of their time hath lain upon their hands as a cheap and useless commodity, which they knew not what to do with) who yet never spent one solemn entire hour in discourse with their own souls. What serious heart doth not melt into compassion over the deluded multitude, who are mocked with dreams, and perpetually busied about trifles ? Who are (after so many frustrated attempts both of their own, and all past ages) eagerly pursuing the fleeing shadows ; who torture and rack their brains to find out the natures and qualities of birds, beasts, and plants ; indeed any thing rather than their own souls, which are certainly the most excellent creatures that inhabit this world. They know the true value and worth of other things, but are not able to estimate the dignity of that high-born spirit which is within them. A spirit which (without the addition of any more natural faculties or powers, if those it hath be but sanctified and devoted to God) is capable of the highest perfections and fruitions, even complete conformity to God, the satisfying visions of him for ever. They herd themselves with beasts, who are capable of an equality with angels. O what compassionate tears must such a consideration as this draw from the eyes of all that understand the worth of souls !

It hath been my sin, and is now the matter of my sorrow, that whilst myriads of souls (of no higher original than mine) are some of them beholding the highest Majesty in heaven, and others giving all diligence to make sure their salvation on earth, I was carried away so many
years

years in the course of this world, (like a drop with the current of the tide) wholly forgetting my invaluable soul; whilst I prodigally wasted the stores of my time and thoughts upon vanities; that long since passed away as the waters which are remembered no more. It shall be no shame to me to confess this folly; since the matter of my confession shall go to the glory of my God. I studied to know many other things, but I knew not myself. It was with me as with a servant to whom the master commits two things, viz: the child and the child's cloaths; the servant is very careful of the cloaths, washes and brushes, starches and steels them, and keeps them safe and clean; but the child is forgotten and lost. My body, which is but the garment of my soul, I kept and nourished with excessive care; but my soul was long forgotten; and had been lost for ever, as others daily are, had not God roused it by the convictions of his Spirit out of that deep oblivion and deadly slumber.

When the God that formed it, out of free grace to the work of his own hands, had thus recovered it to a sense of its own worth and danger, my next work was, to get it united with Christ, and thereby secured from wrath to come; which I found to be a work of difficulty to effect, (if it be yet effected) and a work of time to clear, though but to the degree of good hope through grace.

And since the hopes and evidences of salvation began to spring up in my soul, and settle the state thereof, I found these three were great words, Christ, Soul, and Eternity, to have a far different and more awful sound in my ear than ever they used to have. I looked on them from that time, as things of greatest certainty, and most awful solemnity. These things have lain with some weight upon my thoughts, and I have felt, at certain seasons, a strong inclination to sequester myself from all other studies, and spend my last days, and most fixed meditations, upon these three great and weighty subjects.

I know the subject matter of studies and inquiries (be it never so weighty) doth not therefore make my meditations and discourses upon it great and weighty; nor am I

such a vain opinionator as to imagine my discourses every way suitable to the dignity of such subjects : No, the more I think and study about them, the more I discern the indistinctness, darkness, crudity, and confusion of my own conceptions and expressions of such great and transcendent things as these : but I resolved to do what I could ; and accordingly some years past I finished and published in two parts the Doctrines of Christ ; and by the acceptance and success the Lord gave that, he hath encouraged me to go on in this second part of my work, how unequal soever my shoulders are to the burden of it.

The nature, original, immortality, and capacity of my own soul, for the present lodged in, and related to this vile body, destinated to corruption ; together with its existence, employment, perfection, converse with God and other spirits, both of its own, and of a superior rank and order, when it shall (as I know it shortly must) put off this its tabernacle : these things have a long time been the matters of my limited desires to understand, so far as I could see the pillar of fire (God in his word) enlightening my way to the knowledge of them. Yea, such is the value I have for them, that I have given them the next place in my esteem, to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and my interest in him.

God hath formed me (as he hath other men) a prospecting creature. I feel myself yet uncentered, and short of that state of rest and satisfaction to which my soul in its natural and spiritual capacity hath a designation. I find that I am in a continual motion towards my everlasting abode ; and the expence of my time, and many infirmities tell me I am not far from it : by all which I am strongly prompted to look forward, and acquaint myself as much as I can with my next place, state, and employment. I look with an inquisitive eye in that way.

Yet would I not be guilty of an unwarrantable curiosity, in searching into unrevealed things, how willing soever I am to put up my head by faith into the world above, and to know the things which Jesus Christ hath purchased and prepared for me, and all the rest that are
waiting

waiting for his appearance and kingdom. I feel my curiosity checked and repressed by that elegant paronomasia, Rom. xii. 3. Μὴ παραφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν, 'In all things I would be wise unto sobriety.' I groan under the effects of Adam's itching ambition to know, and would not by repeating his sin increase my own misery: nor yet would I be scared by his example into the contrary evil of neglecting the means God hath afforded me, to know all that I can know of his revealed will.

The helps philosophy affords in some parts of this discourse, are too great to be despised, and too small to be admired. (c) I confess I read the definitions of the soul given by the ancient philosophers, with a compassionate smile. When Thales calls it a nature without repose; Asclepiades, an exercitation of sense; Hesiod, a thing composed of earth and water; Parmenides, a thing composed of earth and fire; Galen, saith it is heat; Hippocrates, a spirit diffused throughout the body; Plato, a self-moving substance; Aristotle calls it, Entelechia, that by which the body is moved: if my opinion should be asked, which of all these definitions I like best? I should give the same answer which Theocritus gave to an ill poet, repeating many of his verses, and asking which he liked best, those (said he) which you have omitted. Or if they must have the garland at the prize they have shot for, let them have it upon the same reason that was once given to him that always shot wide, *difficilius est toties non attingere*, because it was the greatest difficulty to aim so often to the mark, and never come near it. One word of God gives me more light than a thousand such laborious trifles. As Cæsar was best able to write his own commentaries, so God only can give the best account of this his own creature, on which he hath impressed his own image.

(c) For to whom is the truth known with certainty without God? And how can God be known without Christ? Or Christ explored without the Spirit? Or the Spirit vouchsafed without faith? [TERTULLIAN on the Soul.]

Modern philosophers, assisted by the divine oracles, must needs come closer to the mark, and give us a far better account of the nature of the soul; yet I have endeavoured not to cloud this subject with their controversies or abstruse notions; remembering what a smart, but deserved check Tertullian gives those, *qui Platonium & Aristotelicum Christianismus procudunt Christianis*. Words are but the servants of matter. I value them as merchants do their ships, not by the gilded head and stern, the neatness of their mould, or curious flags and streamers, but by the soundness of their bottoms, largeness of their capacity, and richness of their cargo and loading. The quality of this subject necessitates in many places the use of scholastic terms, which will be obscure to the vulgar reader; but apt and proper words must not be rejected for their obscurity, except plainer words could be found that fit the subject as well, and are as fully expressive of the matter. The unnecessary I have avoided, and the rest explained as I could.

The principal fruits I especially aim at, both to my own and the reader's soul, are, that whilst we contemplate the freedom, pleasure, and satisfaction of that spiritual, incorporeal people, who dwell in the region of light and joy, and are hereby forming to ourselves a true scriptural idea of the blessed state of those disembodied spirits with whom we are to serve and converse in the temple worship in heaven; and come more explicitly and distinctly to understand the constitution, order, and delightful employment of those our everlasting associates; we may answerably feel the fond and inordinate love of this animal life subdued; the frightful mask of death drop off and a more pleasing aspect appear; that no upright soul that shall read these discourses may henceforth be convulsed by the name of death, but cheerfully aspire, and with a pleasant expectation wait for the blessed season of its transportation to that blessed assembly. It is certainly our ignorance of the life of heaven, that makes us dote as we do upon the present. There is a gloom, a thick mist overspreading the next life, and hiding even from the
 eyes

eyes of believers, the glory that is there. We send forth our thoughts to penetrate this cloud, but they return to us without the desired success: we reinforce them with a rally of new and more vigorous thoughts, but still they come back in confusion and disappointment, as to any perfect account they can bring us from thence; though the oftener and closer we think, still the more we grow up into acquaintance with these excellent things.

Another benefit I pray for, and expect from these labours, is, that by describing the horrid state of those souls which go the other way, and shewing to the living the dismal condition of souls departed in their unregenerate state, some may be awakened to a seasonable and effectual consideration of their wretched condition, whilst yet they continue under the means and among the instruments of their salvation.

Whatever the fruit of this discourse shall be to others, I shall have cause to bless God for the advantages it hath already given me. I begin to find more than ever I have done, in the separate state of sanctified souls, all that is capable of attracting an intellectual nature: and if God will but fix my mind upon this state, and cause pleased thoughts about it to settle into a steady frame and temper, I hope I shall daily more and more depreciate and despise this common way of existence in a corporeal prison; and when the blessed season of my departure is at hand, I shall take a cheerful farewell of the greater and lesser world, to which my soul hath been confined, and have an abundant entrance, through the broad gate of assurance, unto the blessed unbodied inhabitants of the world to come.