

William Bates, *The four last things viz. death, judgment, heaven, hell, practically considered and applied in several discourses*

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Of Hell.

CHAP. I.

The opening of the Text. The Punishment of unreformed Sinners shall be Extream and Eternal. The Torments in Hell exceed the heaviest Judgments inflicted here. They are represented in Scripture, so as to instruct and terrify Sinners. The Soul shall be the chief Mourner in Hell. The Apprehension shall be enlarged to all afflicting Objects. The Thoughts shall be fix'd upon what is tormenting. All the tormenting Passions will be let loose upon the guilty Soul. Shame, Sorrow, Rage, Despair, at once seize on the Damned.

MARK ix. 48.

Where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.

The words are the repetition of a powerful motive, by our blessed Saviour, to deter Men from indulging Temptations to Sin, how grateful or useful soever to them. *If thy Hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy Eye offend thee, pluck it out.* All the occasions whereby sin insinuates it self, and inflames our Inclinations, whether it bribes us with profit, or allures by pleasure, must be immediately cut off, and for ever separated from us. This counsel seems very severe to the natural man, who freely converses with temptations. To do violence to himself and to tear his beloved lusts from his bosom the carnal nature will not consent to. Our Saviour therefore urges such arguments as may move the understanding and affections, may strike sense and conscience: *For it is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, where fire never shall be quenched.* Hope and fear are the most active passions. The hope of heaven is motive enough to induce a true believer to despise and reject all the advantages and pleasures of sin that are but for a season. And the fear of an everlasting hell is strong enough to control the vicious appetites. Reason determines that when a gangrene that is deadly and spreading has seiz'd upon a member, presently to cut off an affected arm or leg to save the rest. How much more reasonable and necessary is it to part with the most charming and favourite sin, to preserve the soul from

eternal death? 'Tis observable, our Saviour inculcates three times that men may take notice of it with terror, *where the Worm never dies and the Fire is never quenched*. A worm gnawing upon the bowels that are of the most tender and quick sense, fire that causes the most vehement pain, are fearful representations to typify the torments of the damned. And that the Worm is undying and the fire unquenchable infinitely aggravates their punishment.

The Proposition is this: that the Punishment of those who will retain their pleasant or profitable sins shall be extrem and eternal.

In the handling of this Point, I will

1. Discourse of the Extremity of the Punishment.
2. Of the Eternity of it.

1. Of the Extremity of it.

Before the particular Description of the pains of the damned I shall observe in general that the full Representation of hell is beyond all human Expression; nay, our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of it. *Who knows the Power of thine Anger?* Psal. 90.11. What are the prepared Plagues, by infinite Justice, and almighty Wrath, for obstinate Sinners? It is impossible for the most guilty and trembling conscience to enlarge its sad Apprehensions according to the degrees of that misery. *The Lord will shew forth his Wrath and make his Power known in the Vessels fitted for Destruction*.

1. The most heavy Judgments of God upon sinners here are light and tolerable, in Comparison of the Punishment of sinners in the next state. For:

(1.) Temporal evils, of all kinds of degrees (as pestilence, famine, war) are designed for the bringing of men to a sight and sense of their sins, and are common to good and bad here. And if his anger be so terrible when he chastises as a compassionate Father, what is his fury when he punishes as a severe Judge? If the correcting remedies order'd by his wisdom and love for the conversion of sinners be so sharp, what is the deadly revenge of his irreconcilable Hatred?

(2.) The miseries of the present state are allayed with some enjoyments. None are so universally afflicted, so desolate, but something remains to sweeten the sense of their sufferings. Judgments are temper'd with mercies. No man is tortur'd with all diseases, nor forsaken of all Friends, nor utterly without comfort. And when the affliction is irremediable, yet if our grief produces sympathy in others, 'tis some ease to the troubled mind, and by that assistance the burden is made lighter. But in Hell, the Damned are surrounded with terrors, encompass'd with Flames, without the Thing to refresh their Sorrows, not a drop of water to a lake of fire. All that was esteem'd felicity here is totally withdrawn. Death puts a period to their Lives and pleasures of sin, for ever. For 'tis most just that those objects which were abused by their Lusts and alienated their hearts from their duty and felicity should be taken away. And which is extrem misery in their most pitiful state, they are absolutely unpitied. Pity is the cheap and universal Lenitive, nor denied to the most guilty in their sufferings here, for the Law of Nature instructs us to pity the man the malefactor suffers. But even this is not afforded to the damned. All their Agonies and Cries cannot incline the Compassion of God, and the blessed Spirits in heaven towards them. For they are not compassionate Objects, their misery being the just effect of their

perverse, obstinate choice. And in Hell, all human tender Affections are extinguish'd forever. Now 'tis the Perfection of misery, the Excess of Desolation, to be deprived of all good Things pleasing to our Desires, and to suffer all Evils from which we have the deepest Aversion and Abhorrence. As in Heaven, all Good is eminently comprised, and nothing but Good; so in Hell, all is Evil in excessive Degrees, and nothing but Evil.

(3.) Temporal Evils are inflicted by the Mediation of Second Causes, that are of a limited Power to hurt; but in the next World, he more immediately torments the Damned by his absolute Power. The Apostle tells us that the wicked *are punish'd with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power*. What is the Lashing with a few Rushes to a blow given by the hand of a giant that strikes dead at once? This Comparison is below the Truth.

More particularly, the state of misery is set forth in Scripture by such Representations as may powerfully instruct, and terrify even the most carnal Men. Nothing is more intolerably painful than suffering the Violence of Fire enrag'd with Brimstone, and Hell is described by a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, wherein the Wicked are tormented. Whether the Fire be material or metaphorical, the reality and intentness of the torment is signified by it. But the ordinary Fire, tho' mingled with the most torturing ingredients is not an adequate Representation of it. For that is prepared by Men; but the Fire of Hell is prepared by the Wrath of God for the Devil and his Angels. The Divine Power is illustriously manifested in that terrible Preparation. So that as some of the Fathers express it, if one of the Damned might pass from those Flames into the fiercest fires here it were to exchange a Torment for a Refreshment. The Scripture speaks of the vehement Heat, and fiery thirst, and outer darkness in which the Damned suffer, to satisfy the Rights of Justice in the Torment of those Senses, for the Pleasure of which Men willfully broke the Laws of God.

But the Soul being the chief sinner, shall be the chief Mourner in those Regions of sorrow. An image of this we have in the Agonies of the Spirit which sometimes the Saints themselves are in here, and which the most stubborn sinners can neither resist nor endure. *Job* was afflicted in that manner that he complains *The Arrows of Almighty are with me, the Poison whereof drinks my Spirit, the Terrors of God set themselves in array against me*. If a spark of his displeasure falls on the guilty conscience, it tears and blows up all, as a Fire-ball cast into a Magazine. *Solomon*, who understood the Frame of human Nature, tells us, *The spirit of a man can bear his Infirmity*, that is, the mind fortified by principles of moral counsel and constancy can endure the assault of external Evils; *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* This is most insupportable when the sting and remorse of the mind is from the sense of guilt; for then God appears an Enemy, righteous and severe, and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the Sharpness of his Sword and the weight of his Hand that every stroke is deadly inward. Satan, the cruel enemy of Souls, exasperates the Wounds. He discovers and charges sin upon the Conscience, with all its killing Aggravations, and conceals the divine mercy, the only lenitive and balm to the wounded Spirit. What Visions of Horror, what Spectacles of Fear, what Scenes of Sorrow are presented to the distracted Mind by the Prince of Darkness? And, which heightens the Misery, Man is worse Enemy to himself than Satan; he falls upon his own Sword and destroys himself. The guilty conscience turns *the Sun into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood*. The precious Promises of the

Gospel that assure Favour and Pardon to returning and relenting Sinners are turn'd into Arguments of Despair by reflecting upon the Abuse and Provocation of Mercy, that the Advocate in God's bosom is become the Accuser. Whatever the Soul wounded Sinner sees or hears afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. All the Diversions of the World, Business, Pleasures, merry Conversation, comedies, are as ineffectual to give Freedom from those Stings and Furies in the Breast, as the Sprinkling of Holy Water is to expel a raging Devil from a possess'd Person. Those who in their pride and jollity have despised serious Religion, either as a fond Transport and extasy towards God or a dull Melancholy and dejection about the Soul, or an idle scrupulosity about indifferent Things, yet when God has set their sins (with all their killing circumstances) in order before their Eyes, how changed, how confounded are they at that Apparition! How restless, with the dreadful Expectation of the Doom that attends them! *Belshazzar*, in the midst of his Cups and Herd of Concubines by a few words written on the Wall (containing his Process and Judgment) was so terrify'd by his guilty jealous conscience that his Joints were loosed. Nature sunk under the Apprehension. Now all these Troubles of mind are but the Beginning of Sorrows, but the smoak of the infernal furnace, but Earnests of that terrible Sun, which Divine Justice will severely exact of the wicked in Hell.

Indeed, these Examples are rare, and not regarded by the most, and by some look'd on as the Effects of Distraction. But to convince the bold and careless sinners who never felt the Stings of an awaken'd Conscience what extream terrors seize upon the wicked in the other World, consider:

1. The Apprehension shall be more clear and enlarg'd than in the present State. Now the Soul is oppress'd with a Weight of clay, and in Drowsiness and Obscurity, the great Things of Eternity are of little Force to convince the conscience, or persuade the Affections? But then the Soul shall work with the quickest Activity, the Mind shall, by an irrefitible Light, take a full view of all afflicting Objects. The most stupid and unconcern'd Sinners shall then see and feel their ruin'd State; what a glorious Felicity they have lost, what a misery they are plung'd into without the possibility of lessening it by false Conceits, and receiving any Relief by the Error of Imagination.

2. The mournful Thoughts shall be always fix'd upon what is tormenting. The Soul, in Conjunction with the Body, cannot always apply it self to one sort of Objects; for the Ministry of the sensible Faculties is requisite to its operations. And the Body must be supported by Eating and Drinking, and Rest, which interrupt troublesome Thoughts. Besides, the Variety of Objects and Accidents here avert the mind sometimes from what is afflicting. But the separate soul is in no dependence on the body, and after their re-union there shall be resort'd to a new Capacity for new Torments and preferred in that miserable state by the Power of God. There will be nothing then to divert the lost Soul from sad Reflection upon its misery. There are no lucid intervals in Hell.

3. All the tormenting Passions will then be let loose at once upon the guilty creature. And if there be no single Passion so weak, but lighten'd, will break the Spirit, and render Life so miserable that a Man will take Sanctuary in the Grave to escape; how miserable is the Condition when the most fierce and united Passions war against the Soul? This is signified by *the never-*

dying Worm, that gnaws on the tenderest Parts, and of quickest Sense, shame, sorrow, despair, fury, hatred and revenge, are some of that Brood of Vipers that torment the Damned.

1. Shame is a Passion of which human nature is very sensible, and this in the highest Degree of Confusion shall seize on the wicked. For all the just Causes of Shame shall then meet: the inward source of it is the consciousness of Guilt, of Turpitude and folly in the Actions, and all these are the inseparable Adjuncts to sin. The guilty soul by a piercing Reflection upon its crimes has a secret shame of its degeneracy and unworthiness. The passion is increased when a discovery is made of vile practices that defile and debase a man, expose to contempt and infamy, before persons of high Quality and eminent virtue, whom we admire and reverence, and whose esteem we value. To be surprised in an unworthy action by such a person disorders the blood and transfutes a colour into the face, to cover it with a veil of blushing. And the more numerous of spectators are the more the disgrace aggravated. And if derision be joined with the ignominy, it causes extream displeasure. O the universal confusion, the overpo'ring Amazement that will seize on sinners in the great day of discovery, when all the works of Darkness, all their base sensualities shall be revealed before God, Angels and Saints! When all the covers of shame shall be taken off, the excuses and denials to extenuate or conceal their sins shall vanish, and their breaths be transparent to the eyes of all! How will they be ashamed of their foul and permanent Deformity in the Light of that glorious Presence? How will they be astonish'd to appear in all their pollutions before that bright and immense Theatre? How will they be confounded to stand in all their Guilt before the sublime and severe Tribunal? How will they endure the Upbraidings for all the Sins which they have so wickedly committed, and the Derision for the Punishment they so deservedly suffer? The holy Judge will *laugh at their Calamity and mock when their Fear comes. The Righteous also shall see, and shall laugh at them.* Lo, these are the Men that made not God their Portion but perishing vanities, that preffer'd sweet Folly before severe Wisdom. The Devils will reproach them for that scornful Advantage they had over them, that as children are seduc'd for things of lustre to part with real Treasures, so they were easily persuaded for the Trifles of Time to exchange eternal Happiness. *Wither shall they cause their Shame to go?* Jer. 14.12. Those black Sinners that here never change Colour for their Filthiness, that hardned by custom in sin are impenetrable to Shame, as the brute Beasts that are absolutely destitute of Reason; nay, that have not only overcome all Tenderness, but glory in their shame shall glow at the manifestation of their sordid Lusts, their vile servitudes, and be covered with confusion and the sense of it shall be revived in their minds for ever.

2. To open shame is joined the greatest inward sorrow. This passion, when violent, penetrates the soul in all its faculties and fastens it to the afflicting Object. When it dwells in the bosom it gives an easy entrance to whatever cherishes and increases it, and rejects what might assuage and lessen the sense of the Evil. The most pleasant things do not excite desire or joy, but exasperate grief. Like those animals that convert the best nourishment into their own poison, so deep sorrow receives mournful impressions from all things, and turns the sweetest comforts of life into wormwood and gal. The causes of sorrow are either the loss of some valued good, or the sense of some present evil. And the sorrow is more violent as the cause is great in itself, and in

the apprehension and tenderness of the sufferers. Now both these causes with all the heavy circumstances that can multiply and aggravate sorrow meet in Hell, the centre of misery.

The loss is inconceivably great. If Cain, when banished from the society of saints, where God was publickly worshipp'd, and by spiritual revelations and visible apparitions graciously made himself known, cry'd out in anguish of soul, *My Punishment is greater than I can bear; from thy Face I shall be hid, and I shall be a Fugitive upon the Earth*: How intolerable will the final Separation from his glorious and joyful presence be? In the clear and transforming Vision of his glory and the intimate and indissoluble union with him by love, consists the perfection and satisfaction of the immortal soul. The felicity resulting from it is as entire and eternal as God is Great and True, who has so often promis'd in Scripture. Now the Damned are for ever excluded from the reviving presence of God. 'Tis often seen how tenderly and impatiently the human spirit resents the loss of a dear Relation. *Jacob*, for the supposed death of *Joseph*, was so overcome with grief that when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him he refused to be comforted and said, *I will go down mourning to the Grave*. Indeed, this overwhelming sorrow is both a sin and a punishment. 'Tis ordained by the righteous and unchangeable decree of God that every inordinate affection in man should be his own tormentor. But if the loss of a poor frail creature for a short time be so afflicting, how unsupportable will the sorrow be for the loss of the blessed God for ever? Who can fully conceive the extent and degrees of that Evil? For an Evil rises in Proportion to the Good of which it deprives us. It must therefore follow that celestial blessedness being an indefinite eternal Good, the exclusion from it is proportionably Evil. And as the felicity of the Saints results from the fruition of God in heaven and from comparison with the contrary state, so the misery of the damned arises both from the thoughts of lost happiness and from the lasting pain that torments them.

It may be replied, if this be the utmost Evil that is consequent to sin, the threatening of it is likely to deter but few from the pleasing their corrupt appetites. For carnal men have such gross and vitiated affections that are careless of spiritual happiness. *They cannot taste and see how good the Lord is*.

To this a clear answer may be given: In the next state, where the wicked shall be for ever without those carnal objects that here deceive and delight them, when deprived of all things that please their voluptuous senses, their apprehensions will be changed; they shall understand what a happiness it is to enjoy God, and what misery to be expell'd from the celestial paradise. Our Saviour tells the *Jews*, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you your selves thrust out*, Luke 15.28. How will they pine with envy at the sight of that triumphant felicity of which they shall never be partakers? To see that blessed Company entering into the sacred mansions of light will make the loss of heaven infirmely more discernable and terrible to the wicked who shall be cast into *outer Darkness* and for ever be deprived of Communion with God and his Saints. *Depart from me* will be as dreadful a part of the judgment as *eternal fire*.

With the loss of the most excellent Good, the suffering of the most afflicting painful Evil is join'd. The sentence is *Depart ye cursed into Everlasting Fire*. And if an imaginary sorrow conceived in the mind without a real eternal cause, as in melancholy persons, when gross vapours

darken and corrupt the brightness and purity of the spirits that are requisite for its cheerful operations, is often so oppressing that nature sinks under it. How insupportable will the sorrow of condemned sinners be under the impression and sense of God Almighty and Avenging Hand, when it shall fully appear how pure and holy he is in his anger for sin, how just and dreadful in punishing sinners? It may be, the indulgent sinner may lessen his fear of Hell by fancying the number of sufferers will assuage the sense of their misery. But this is a foolish mistake, for the number of sufferers shall be so far from affording any relief that the misery is aggravated by the company and communication of the miserable. Every one is surrounded with Sorrow, and by the sights of Woe about him feels the universal grief. The weeping, wailing, the cries and dolorous expressions of all the damned increase the torment and vexation of every one. As when the wind conspires with the flame, 'tis more fierce and spreading.

3. The concomitant of sorrow will be fury and rage against themselves, as the true causes of their misery. For God will make such a Discovery of his righteous Judgment that not only the saints shall glorify his justice in the condemnation of the wicked, but they shall be so convinc'd of it as not to be able to charge their judge with any defect or mercy, or excess of rigor in his proceedings against them. As the man in the parable of the marriage-feast, when tax'd for his presumptuous intrusion without a wedding-garment, *How comest thou in hither?* was speechless, so they will find no plea for their justification and defence but must receive the eternal doom with silence and confusion. Then conscience shall revive the bitter remembrance of all the methods of divine mercy for their salvation that were ineffectual by their contempt and obstinacy. All the compassionate calls by his Word, with the holy motions of the spirit, were like the sowing of seed in the stony ground that took no root, and never came to perfection. All his terrible threatening were but a thunder to the deaf, or lightning to the blind, that little affects them. The bounty of his providence design'd *to lead them to repentance* had the same effect as the showers of heaven upon briars and thorns that make them grow the faster. And that a mercy so ready to pardon did not produce in them a correspondent affection of grateful obedient love but by the unworthy provocations they pluck'd down the vengeance due to obstinate rebels will so enrage the damned against themselves that they will be less miserable by the misery they suffer than by the conviction of their torn minds that they were the sole causes of it. *What repenting will be kindled within them*, for the stupid neglect of *the great Salvation* so dearly purchased and earnestly offered to them? What a fiery addition to their Torment, that when God was so willing to save them they were so willful to be damned! They will never forgive themselves that for the short and mean pleasures of sense which if enjoyed a thousand years cannot recompense the loss of Heaven, nor requite the pains of Hell for an hour; they must be deprived of the one, and suffer the other for ever.

4. The sorrow and rage will be increased by Despair. For when the wretched sinner sees the Evil is peremptory and no outlet of hope, he abandons himself to the violence of sorrow and by cruel thoughts wounds the heart more that the fiercest furies in hell can. This misery that flows from despair shall be more fully opened under the distinct consideration of the eternity in Hell. Briefly, as the blessed are in heaven and heaven is in them, by those holy and joyful affections

that are always exercised in the divine presence, so the damned are in hell and hell is in them by those fierce and miserable passions that continually prey upon them.

CHAP. II.

The eternity of misery makes it most intolerable. The justice of God clear'd in the eternal punishment of sinners for temporary sins. The wisdom of God requires that the punishment threatened should be powerful to preserve the commands of the law inviolable. There is an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of men here and their condition for ever. The Damned are unqualified for any favour. The immense guilt of sin requires a proportion in the punishment.

2. The eternity of their misery makes it above all other considerations intolerable. Our Saviour repeats it thrice in the space of a few verses, to terrify those who spare some favourite Corruption, *that in Hell their Worm dies not, and the Fire is never quenched.* God will never reverse his sentence, and they shall never change their state. How willingly would carnal Men raze the word eternal out of the Scriptures, but to their grief they find it joined with the felicity of Heaven, and the torments of Hell. The second death has all the terrible qualities of the first, but not the ease and end it brings to misery. All the tears of those forlorn wretches shall never quench one spark of the fire. Where are the delicious fare, the music, the purple, and all the carnal delights of the rich man? They are all changed into a contrary state of misery and that state is fix'd for ever. From his vanishing Paradise he descended into an everlasting Hell. In this the vengeance of God is infinitely more heavy than the most terrible execution from Men. Human justice and power can inflict but one death (that will be soon dispatch'd) upon a malefactor worthy to suffer a hundred deaths; if he be condemned to the fire, they cannot make him live and die together, to burn and not be consumed: But God will so far support the damned in their torments that they shall always have strength to feel, though no strength to endure them. Those extream torments which would extinguish the present life in a moment shall be suffered for ever. This consideration infinitely aggravates the misery. For the lost Soul rack'd with the fearful Contemplation of what it must suffer for ever feels as it were at once all the Evils that shall torment it in its whole duration. The perpetuity of the misery is always felt by prevision. This is as the cruel breaking of the bones upon the wheel, when the Soul is tormented by the foresight of misery that without allays shall continue in the circulation of eternal ages. To make this more sensible, let us consider that pain makes the mind observant of the passing of the hours. In pleasures, time with a quick and silent motion insensibly slides away, but in troubles the hours are tedious; in violent pains we reckon the Minutes as long. 'Tis observable how passionately the afflicted Psalmist complains *Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Doth his Promise fail for evermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender Mercies?* In what various pathetick forms does he express the same affection? Though he had assurance that the gracious God would not be always severe, yet his Anguish forc'd from him complaints as if the moment of his trouble were an eternity. But

what strains of Sorrow are among the damned, who besides the present sense of their misery, have always in their Thoughts the vast Eternity wherein they must suffer it?

When three terrible Evils were propounded to *David's* choice, pining famine for three years, or bloody war for three months, or devouring pestilence for three says, he chose the shortest, though in it self the heaviest Evil.

Many sad days must pass under the other Judgments, where death by anticipation in such variety of shapes would be presented to the mind, that the lingering expectation of it would afflict more than the sudden stroke. Whereas the fury of the Pestilence would be soon over. But the Damned have not this relief *but shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*. How earnestly *do they seek for Death* but cannot find it? What a favour would they esteem it to be annihilated? For certainly, if when the Evils in the present state are so multiplied that no comfort is left, or so violent that the afflicted person cannot enjoy them and refresh his sorrowful Spirit, Death is chosen rather than life; it cannot be imagined that in the future state where the misery is extream, and nothing remains to allay it, that the damned should be in love with the unhappy good of simple being, and not choose an absolute extinction, if it might be.

If any one should be so foolish to think that Custom will render that state more tolerable, he will find a terrible confutation of his vain fancy. Indeed, continuance under light Evils may arm the mind with patience to bear them, but in great extremities it makes the Evil more ponderous and intolerable. He that is tortured with the stone, or on the rack, the longer the torture continues, the less able he is to sustain it. In short, as the joy of Heaven is infinitely more ravishing than the Blessed are without fear of losing of it; so the misery of Hell is proportionably tormenting that the Damned are absolutely destitute of hopes of a release. *O 'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* who lives for ever, and will punish for ever incorrigible Sinners!

There are some who strongly fancy, 'tis not consistent with divine justice to inflict an eternal punishment for temporary Sins. Therefore, they soften the sentence, by interpreting the Words of Christ *These shall go into everlasting Punishment* of the annihilation of impenitent Sinners; that is, they shall be for ever deprived of Heaven, but not suffer Torments for ever. To this there is a clear Answer: 1. The direct *opposition between everlasting Punishment, and everlasting Life* in the words of Christ, is a convincing Argument they are to be understood in the same extent for an absolute eternity. And the words in the *Revelation* are so express that they admit no mollifying interpretation, *They are tormented day and night, for ever and ever*. Which necessarily infer, the tormented have life and sense for ever. Now, that in Scripture 'tis evident that God hath decreed and denounced eternal punishment to obstinate sinners, is sufficient to satisfy all enquiries about the justice of it. For divinej is the correspondence of God's will and actions with the perfections of his Holy Nature. From hence we may infer with invincible Evidence that whatever he pronounces in judgment, and consequently inflicts, is most righteous. The truth is we may as easily conceive there is no God, as that God is unjust; because absolute rectitude is an inseparable perfection of his Nature. Thus the Apostle with abhorrence rejects the Question, *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the World?* That were to deny him to be God, who is the Creator, and King, and Judge of the

World. 'Tis a full reply to all the pittiful shifts that are made use of to elude the plain meaning of the eternal Judgment that will pass upon the Wicked; *Shall mortal Man be more just than God? shall a Man be more pure than his Maker?* The reprobates have now some bold advocates, that plead those things for favour to them which they will not dare to plead for themselves at the last day. The Holy Judge will then cut off all their excuses and reduce them to a defenceless silence, before he cuts them off. *God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he is judgeth.* The righteousness of the proceedings at the last day in determining the wicked to a state of everlasting torments has been consider'd in the Discourse of Judgment and will farther appear by the following Considerations.

1. The wisdom of God requires that the punishment threatned in his Law, as it must be so firmly decreed, that all obstinate rebels shall of necessity undergo it, so it must incomparably exceed all temporal Evils, to which men may be exposed for their obedience to the divine commands. Otherwise, the threatning would not be an effectual restraint from Sin: For the propinquity of an Evil makes a strong impression upon the mind, and a present fear makes a person solicitous to avoid the incursion of what is ready to seize on him, without forecasting to prevent an Evil look'd on at a distance. Therefore that the sanction of the divine law may preserve the precepts inviolable that there may be a continual reverence of it, and a fixed resolution in the hearts of men not to transgress, the penalty threatned must be in its own Nature so terrible, that the fear of it may conquer the apprehension of all present Evils that can be inflicted to constrain us to sin. Therefore, our Saviour warns his Disciples *Fear not them that can kill the body* (make that part die that is mortal) *but fear him that after he has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* Now, if the threatning of an everlasting Hell, through infidelity and inconsideration, be not effectual in the minds of men to restrain them from sin, if temporary torments in the next state were only threatned, which are infinitely more easy and tolerable, carnal sinners would follow the swinge of their corrupt appetites and commit iniquity with greediness. This would seem to reflect upon the wisdom of the lawgiver, as if he were defective in not binding his subjects firmly to their duty, and the ends of government would not be obtained.

2. God, as the Sovereign Ruler of the World, has established an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of men here, and their future condition for ever. The promised reward of obedience is so excellent and eternal that all the allurements of the world vanish in comparison with it. And there is such an infallible assurance of this reward in the word of God, that all, and only those who sincerely obey his Commands, shall enjoy it in the future atate, that a serious believer who ponders things cannot be diverted from his duty by present temptations. Besides, by a chain of consequences, sinful pleasures are linked with eternal punishment threatned in the divine law, and he that will enjoy forbidden Pleasures binds himself to suffer all the Pains annexed to them. Now, when God has, from his excellent Goodness and undeserved mercy, assured men of the glory and joys of Heaven that are unspeakable and eternal, upon the gracious terms of the gospel; and, upon their despising it, threatned eternal misery, if men obstinately neglect so great salvation, how reasonable is it they should inherit their own Choice? There is no middle state in the next world, no tolerable mediocrity, but two contrary states; yet

alike in this, that the happiness and misery are equally eternal: and 'tis just that all who neglect eternal life should suffer eternal death. For 'tis the natural and necessary Consequence of their option. Therefore, sinners are charged with extream madness *to wrong their own souls, and to love Death.*

3. It will appear how unqualified the damned are for the least favour, if we consider their continual hatred and blasphemies of God. The seeds of this are in wicked obstinate sinners here, who are stiled *haters of God*; but in the damned this enmity is direct and explicit, the fever is heightened into a Frenzy, the blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversation. Our Saviour tells us that in Hell there *is weeping and gnashing of teeth*; extream sorrow, and extream fury; Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and are wicked and stubborn, they are irritated by their misery, and foam out Blasphemies against the righteous judge. If their rage could extend to him and their power were equal to their desires, they would dethrone the most High. Hatred takes pleasure in revenge, either real or imaginary, and although God is infinitely above the transports of their fury and all their rancorous imprecations are reflexively pernicious to themselves, like arrows shot against the sun that fall down upon their heads that shot them, yet they are always venting their malice against the just power that torments them. 'Tis said of the Worshippers of the Beast *that they gnawed their Tongues for Pain, and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains.* The torment and blasphemies of those impenitent idolaters, are a true representation of the state of the damned. From hence it appears they are the proper objects of revenging justice. How can we reasonably conceive, that God, in favour to the reprobates, should cross the established order of creation? For two ranks of beings were made, the material, of perishing principles, the spiritual, of an immortal duration. And will God withdraw his conservative power of the guilty soul in its immortality, and to put an end to its deserved misery and self-tormenting reflections, annihilate it? If a criminal were justly condemned to a severe punishment and should contumeliously and fiercely reproach the prince by whose authority he was condemned, could it be expected there should be a mitigation of the sentence? And is it a thought consistent with the reasonable mind, that the righteous judge of the world will reverse or mitigate the Sentence against the damned who blaspheme his majesty and justice? And if they were as omnipotent to effect as they are malicious to desire would destroy his being. 'Tis true, the divine threatenng does not bind God to a rigorous execution of it upon sinners; he has declar'd, if *Sinners will turn from their evil ways, he will repent of the Evil he purposed to do unto them.* But when threatenngs are part of the laws whereby Men are govern'd, it is congruous to the wisdom and justice of the lawgiver to execute them in their full force upon the obstinate offenders, withal considering the inflicting of them is so far from working any ingenuous change in those rebels that thereby they become more fierce and obdurate.

Lastly, The immense guilt that adheres to sin requires a proportion in the punishment. 'Tis a rule in all Courts of Judicature that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity of the person offended. Now the majesty of God is truly infinite against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. This is the reason

of the Sentence, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* The curse threatned includes the first and the second death. What a dishonour is it to the *God of Glory* that proud dust should fly in his face, and control his authority? What a provocation that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject should despise the divine law and lawgiver? Though carnal minds elevate the guilt of sin, yet weighed *in the Scales of the Sanctuary* 'tis found so heavy, that no punishment inflicted on sinners exceeds, either in the degrees or duration, the desert of sin.

God's Justice is not satisfied in depriving them of Heaven, but inflicts the most heavy punishment upon sense and conscience in the Damned. For as the soul and body in their state of union in this life were both guilty, the one as the Guide, the other as the instrument of sin; so 'tis equal, when reunited, they should feel the penal effects of it. Sinners shall then be tormented wherein they were most delighted; they shall be invested with those Objects that will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive Faculties. The *lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness for ever* are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery. The punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessory in the works of Sin, so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and center'd upon damned spirits. The fire without is not so tormenting as the fire within them. How will the tormenting passions be inflam'd? What rancour, reluctance, and rage, against the just Power that sentenc'd them to Hell? What impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful sins, the just cause of it? How will they curse their Creation and wish their utter extinction as the final remedy of their misery? But all their ardent wishes are in vain; for the guilt of Sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in Heaven or fire in Hell, as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments which the strength and patience of an Angel cannot bear one hour.

CHAP. III

Practical Inferences. The tender mercies of God to men in revealing the prepared plagues for sinners to prevent their misery. Carnal men are more capable of conceiving the torments of Hell than the joys of Heaven. They are more apt to be moved by them. The desperate folly of sinners to chuse the pleasures of sin, notwithstanding the dreadful and everlasting torments that follow sin. The steadfast belief and serious consideration of eternal death, the wages of sin, is a prevailing motive to abhor and forsake it. Our dear obligations to our Saviour, who delivers us from the Wrath to come.

I shall now draw some practical inferences and conclude this Subject.

1. From the revelation in Scripture of the dreadful punishment prepared for unreformed sinners in the next state we may understand the tender mercies of God to men. how willing he is

they should be saved who are so wilful to be damned. Hell is represented to them by the most violent figures, to terrify their imaginations and strongly affect their minds, that they *may flee from the wrath to come*. God counsels, commands, intreats, urges sinners to be wise, to foresee and prevent the Evil that every hour is approaching to them, and with compassion and indignation laments their misery, and reproaches their folly in bringing it upon themselves. The divine mercy is as eminently and apparently declar'd to Men in the present corrupt state, in threatening Hell to excite their fear, as in promising Heaven to allure their hopes. For if carnal indulgent sinners are not roused by a quick apprehension of Hell, they will securely enjoy their pernicious Pleasures, and despise the blessed reward, and Heaven would be *as empty of humane souls as 'tis full of glory*.

(1.) Because they are more capable to conceive of the torments of Hell than the joys of Heaven. Storms and darkness are more easily drawn by a pencil than a clear calm day. Fire mix'd with Brimstone is very painful to; and the fancy strongly represents its vehemence in tormenting the body. And what misery the uncessant remorse of the guilty Conscience will cause in the Damned hereafter is in part understood by the secret accusations and twinges of conscience in self-condemning sinners here. But, they are absolutely strangers to the joys of the Holy Ghost, to the delights of the soul in communion with God, and to peace of conscience in his favour. They cannot without experience *know how good the Lord is* no more than see a taste. To discourse to them of spiritual pleasures that flow from the divine presence, of the happiness of the Saints *that are before the throne of God and serve him in his Temple* is to speak with the Tongue of an Angel unintelligible things. Their minds and language are confin'd to sensible things. *The natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern'd*. There may be in the carnal mind a conception of Heaven as a sanctuary wherein they may be secured from the wrath of God, and some smothering confused thoughts of its felicity, as the idea of light and colours in one blind from his birth; but only *the pure in heart can see God* as in the perfect vision of glory hereafter, so in the imperfect reflection of it here.

(2.) Carnal men are more disposed to be wrought upon by representing the torments of Hell than the joys of Heaven. For we cannot love but what is known, nor enjoy but what is loved. And as the purification of the heart from vicious affections is an excellent means to clear the mind; so the illustration of the mind is very influential to warm the heart. The true conception of Heaven in its amiable excellencies would powerfully and sweetly ravish the affections; and of this prepared souls are only capable. But those who are sensual are without relish of spiritual happiness and are allur'd or terrified only with what is pleasant or painful to Flesh.

'Tis recorded as the unparallel'd folly of *Nero* that when he was ready to cut his own Throat, to avoid the fury of the multitude, he broke forth into great expressions of sorrow, what an excellent artist he died! 'Twas not the loss of the Roman Empire that so much troubled him, as that so much skill in musick died with him. He valued himself more as a fiddler than an Emperor. Thus carnal men with a folly infinitely more prodigious when Death is near are not so much affected with the loss of the crown of glory, and the Kingdom of Heaven, as with their present leaving this world and its vanities. This makes Death intolerably bitter. Till the love of

God purifies the heart, the fruition of his presence is not esteemed or desired. A Seraphim sent from the presence of God with a flaming coal from the altar touch'd the lips of the holy Prophet, and his heart was presently melted into a compliance with the divine will. But if a rebel Angel, that burns with another fire than of divine love, were dispatch'd from Hell with a coal from that Altar, where so many victims are offer'd to divine justice as there are damned souls, and touch'd obdurate Sinners that they might have a lively sense what it is to burn for ever, it were the most congruous and effectual means to reclaim them; like stubborn metals, they are only made pliant by the fire. From what has been said we may observe the heavenly harmony between mercy and justice in God: he is the Father of Mercy, 'tis his natural Offspring, his primary inclination to the creature, and the threatning of vengeance against sinners is a gracious design to constrain them with humility and repenting affections to seek his favour. Briefly, his severity and flaming displeasure never destroys sinners, but to revenge the abuse of his neglected benignity and clemency.

2. This shews the woful depravation of the minds and wills of men that chuse sin, when thinly painted over with pleasure, notwithstanding the most dreadful and durable torments, the certain consequences of it. Desperate folly! either they believe, or do not, the eternal torment of Hell. If they do not, how prodigious is their impiety? If they do, 'tis more prodigious they dare indulge their vicious affections. A wicked believer is more monstrous and guilty than a wicked infidel. In some there is atheism full of folly, or folly full of atheism, that they will not believe the prepared plagues for the wicked in the next state, because they have no sensible proof of them. Reason, assisted by divine revelation, affords so clear an evidence of the future state, and the rewards and punishments in it, that if any sincerely apply themselves to consider things, he will receive the most affective conviction of them. 'Tis true, there is not sensible evidence; for God will try our faith before he satisfies our sight, partly, that we may honour his veracity by yielding a firm assent to his Word before the actual accomplishment of what is promised or threatn'd; and partly that our obedience may be voluntary and unconstrain'd, that his goodness may take its rise to reward us. But these presumptuous infidels live as if they had no spirit, nothing of understanding in them. They are wholly under the dominion of sense, as if they were free and lawless, independent and unaccountable, as if the most high governour of the world were an inferiour being, without power and justice to vindicate the honour of his despised deity. They do not fear Hell, but are afraid they should be fearful of it. This is such a piece of folly (but infinitely more woful) as that of the *West-Indians* who at their first invasion by the *Spaniards* were so terrified by their glittering swords that they presently fled, and very considerably resolved to hide themselves in the day, and assault their enemies in the night. They were fearful to see their danger, and rash to encounter it, and fighting in the dark, were kill'd in the dark. The threatnings of eternal Death are the brandishing of *God's glittering sword* before he strikes; and sensual infidels are afraid lest the belief of those terrible truths should pierce into their breasts. Therefore, are utterly averse from due considering their danger, and will not foresee what they shall certainly suffer. 'Tis in vain to offer arguments to convince them, for they are as deaf as adders to the wisest instructions, till sense extort an acknowledgment from them. They have hardn'd their hearts and faces against all reproofs, and by an open contempt of Scripture

threatnings, are past reclaiming. They are now fearless of that judgment, the thoughts whereof make the Devils tremble. But the time will shortly come when the Word of the righteous God, which now they despise, shall irresistibly and immediately, like lightning shot from Heaven, destroy them. There are many degrees of sin, many steps in the descent to Hell, but the lowest and nearest the gate of that infernal prison is the scornful derision of God's dreadful preparations for the wicked.

Others in the Christian Church who profess and presume they are true believers, yet by living indulgently in their pleasant or profitable sins discover their faith is counterfeit, or such a superficial assent to the truth of God's Word that is without efficacy, and will not avail them at the last. Unfeigned faith of the divine threatnings produces such a fear as would make men circumspect over their hearts and ways. The fear of a present destructive Evil controuls the most eager Appetites. 'Tis recorded, that when the Army of *Israel* was in pursuit of the *Philistines Saul* (to compleat his Victory) forbade, upon pain of Death, that any should taste food till the sun was down. In the chace of their enemies they pass through a wood dropping with honey; yet notwithstanding their hunger and faintness, and the easy provisions before them, no man so much as tasted it, *for the People feared the King's Oath*. And did men truly believe and fear the law of God, threatning Hell for sin, would they dare to commit it, though invited by pleasant temptations? Nay, not only a strong fear, but the mere suspicion of great danger, will restrain the most vehement desires of nature. What person, tho' inflam'd with thirst, would drink a glass of cool liquor, if he suspected that deadly poison were mix'd with it? And if men were persuaded that sin is attended with eternal Death, would *they drink in iniquity like water*? The Devils themselves are not able to conquer the fear of judgment to come, they *believe and tremble*. Therefore, when it is not active upon the conscience it is either because men do not believe it, or they fancy that retaining their beloved lusts, they may obtain an easy absolution and escape the damnation of Hell, which the Eternal judge has declar'd shall be the punishment of all that will not cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, separate their dearest corruptions from them. Astonishing perverseness! How many will not discern nor censure that Folly in themselves, which they will condemn in others for extream madness? If one riotously lavishes away his estate and for the short pleasure of a few years be reduc'd with the prodigal to extream poverty, and to loathsom imprisonment all his life after, would he not be esteem'd to have been besides himself? Yet this is a very tolerable case in comparison of exposing the soul to eternal vengeance, for the pleasures of sin that are but for a season.

3. Let us stedfastly believe and frequently consider, that *eternal Death is the wages of Sin* that we may renounce it with the deepest abhorrence, and forsake it for ever. We are assur'd, from the wisdom and compassion of our Saviour, that 'tis a powerful means to mortify the inclination to sin, and to induce us to prevent and resist all Temptations. The subtil tempter cannot present any motives that to a rectified mind will make sin eligible. Let the scales be even, and put into one all the delights of the senses, all the pleasures and honours of the world, that are the elements of carnal felicity, how light are they against the heavenly glory? Will the gain of the world compensate the loss of the soul and salvation for ever? If there were any possible comparison between deluding transient vanities and the happiness that is substantial and satisfying for ever,

the choice would be more difficult and the mistake less culpable, but they vanish into nothing in the comparison. According to the judgment of sense, would any one choose the enjoyment of the most exquisite pleasures for a year, and afterwards be content to burn in a furnace for a day; much less to enjoy them for a day, and to burn for a year? What stupid brutes are they who for momentary delights incur the fiery indignation of God for ever? Try but the finger with the flame of a candle, you will soon discover your weakness. Will the remembrance of sensual delights allay the torments of the damned? When carnal lusts are most inflamed, and objects are present, pain will extinguish all the pleasure of the senses. And if actual enjoyment cannot afford delight when the body is under a disease, will the reflections upon past pleasures in the fancy and memory refresh the damned in their extrem torments? No, the remembrance will infinitely increase their Anguish, that for such seeming and short pleasures they brought upon themselves misery intolerable, without ease or end. O that men would strip sin of its disguises, and wash off its flattering colours, and look into its odious nature, and to the consequential Evils of it in the next world! O that they would consider they hang by slender strings, (a little breath that expires every minute) over the bottomless pit, and that within a little while nothing will remain of the pleasures of sin, but the undying worm, and the ever-living flames! This would be a means to raise and preserve in them an invincible resolution and reluctancy against all temptations to sin and provoke God. But how hardly are men induced to exercise their minds on this terrible object. They think least of Hell, who have most reason to consider it.

To this I must add, that the mere fear of Hell and the judicial impresion upon conscience from it, is not sufficient to convert men to God. For that servile affection, though it may stop a temptation and hinder the eruption of a lust into the gross act, yet does not renew the nature, and make men holy and heavenly. There may be a respective dislike of sin, with a direct affection to it. Besides, that religion that is the mere effect of fear will be according to the nature of its principle, with resistance and trouble, wavering and inconstant. For tormenting fear is repugnant to the human nature, and will be expelled if possible. In short, the fear of Hell may be only a natural affection that recoils from what is painful to sense. Therefore 'tis the great design of the Gospel by the fear of Hell as a powerful preparative, to make way for the love of God, who offers pardon and indemnity to all returning sinners, and for the hope of Heaven the blessed reward promised to them. No offers of mercy will prevail to make sinners to yield themselves, till they are storm'd by the Terrors of the Lord. But when the fear of Hell has made a breach, divine grace enters and takes possession. As the virtue of the loadstone, when encompass'd and arm'd with iron, is increased, and draws a far greater weight than when 'tis naked and single; thus the attractives of Heaven are more powerful to move the hearts of men, when enforced from the terrors of hell. Now the love of God, and the hope of Heaven, are spiritual affections; and the obedience that flows from them is voluntary from the entire consent of the soul, and persevering.

Lastly, from the consideration of the punishment determin'd for sin we may understand how dear our engagements are to the Lord Jesus Christ. The rector and judge of the world would not release the guilty without a ransom, nor the surety without satisfaction; and the Son of God most willingly and compassionately gave his precious blood, the price of our redemption. He obtain'd the spirit of holiness to illuminate our minds, to incline our wills, to sanctify our

affections, without whose omnipotent grace neither the hopes or fears of things spiritual and future would ever have cleansed and changed our hearts and lives. We are naturally as senseless as the dead as to what concerns our everlasting peace, blind and brutish, and without fear; should plunge our selves into destruction, if the spirit of power and of a sound mind did not quicken us and direct us in the way to everlasting life. O, that we might feel our dear obligations to him who has *deliver'd us from the wrath to come* and purchas'd for us a felicity perfect, and without end! I would not lessen and disparage one divine work to advance and extol another; but 'tis a truth that shines with its own light, and is declar'd by our Saviour, that our Redemption from Hell to Heaven is a more excellent benefit than our creation. In as much as our well-being is better than our being, and eternal misery is infinitely worse than mere not being. Our Saviour speaks of *Judas, It had been better for him if he had never been born*. How engaging is the love of Christ, who rais'd us from the bottom of Hell to the bosom of God, the seat of happiness! If his perfections were not most amiable and attractive, yet that he died for us, should make him the object of our most ardent affections. *To those who believe he is precious*; to those who have felt their undone condition and that by his merits and mediation, are restored to the favour of God, that are freed from tormenting fears, and revived with the sweetest hopes, he is and will be eminently and eternally precious. *Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be to Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever*.

From pages 469-477 of the original.

This edition has also a treatise on Spiritual Perfection added to it, and the reader might wish to consult it as a contrast to Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (c. 1380), to compare the treatment of sin in both works.