

AN ATTEMPT
ON THE BEHALF OF
THE CALLED AND BELIEVING
PEOPLE
OF
THE MOST HIGH GOD,
TO SET BEFORE THEM
THE FOUNTAIN OF EVERLASTING
CONSOLATION
IN
CHRIST JESUS
SO THAT THEY MAY BE PERFECTLY
RELIEVED FROM ALL FEARS
CONCERNING
DEATH AND DYING,
BY SAMUEL PIERCE,

INTRODUCTION.

BELOVED READER,

I am now in the seventieth year of my age, it cannot, therefore, be expected by me to continue long in this my present tabernacle, especially as I have most certainly passed through the first stage of the breaking up of nature. I have been for four years past in deaths often. Many a time I have expected every moment to expire. How my mind at such seasons was employed, and in what manner sustained, I have written, and given the paper into the hand of a friend, with a positive charge that it be showed to none till after I am actually deceased; then it is to be published. What is felt when nature begins first to break, is only known to such as have had the experience of it. The Lord hath, within these two months past, most wonderfully revived the. I think I know all about death except the act of dying. I know Christ, and am fully persuaded he is every way all sufficient for his beloved ones, both in life and death. I have had some very peculiar dealings with him, and accesses unto him, in various cases and circumstances in the course of my journey through life; and some very interesting accesses to him, when, in my own views, just at the moment of departure. I conceive I am left to live, to experience further the efficacy of the knowledge of Christ, in keeping up the mind in the free and full exercise of it on him, in the most immediate views of him in death and dying circumstances.

In the course of my time, I have been called upon to visit sinners and saints in their drawings nigh to the house appointed for all living; I have found what the excellent Mr. Toplady expresses to be a truth: "It is very difficult to know how to perform this service." The last time I was called upon to visit a sick friend, was since I myself received a very severe crush, as it respects nature's failing. The person in my view was one with Christ. She received what I said concerning him with great satisfaction; and this was what first gave occasion of my conceiving I would, if permitted, write a small

treatise suited to put into the chambers and hands of such of the Lord's people as might, either through sickness or old age, be drawing downwards to the grave, the house appointed for all living.

I reflected thus with myself, whilst I doubted not of the person I had visited concerning her eternal state, yet I considered her very great weakness of body, such that she could not bear much talk. This I had done in many, very many instances, in the course of visiting such as I really looked on as saints, and many scores of times. I thought, could any short matter be drawn up, so as for such to peruse, or for others to read to them, it might serve, in the hand of the Lord the Spirit, to draw out their minds to such subjects as are particularly suited to such circumstances.

These were my thoughts; and as I have declared the original from whence my first conception of these sprung, so I will, secondly, declare the nature, end, and design of this work. It is to take off all fears from the minds of the Lord's believing people concerning death and dying, by pointing out Christ as an all sufficient antidote against the fears of dissolution. Some express their fears of death as arising from what may be felt at that time, and when the parting stroke is given which separates body and soul. Others, their entrance hereby into a state they were never in before, fills them with perplexity and dread. Others, that they must hereby be in the immediate presence of the Lord, and having their minds too much and too deeply exercised on these, forget those glorious subjects which alone can carry their minds beyond all perplexity. My end and design, therefore, in this work, is to bring forth Christ, and those everlasting consolations which the gospel reveals as hid in him for his people, so that the hands of feeble saints which hang down may be lifted up and strengthened. My design is so to set forth Christ as most exactly suited to his weak, sick, and beloved ones, who are in dying circumstances, and are actually in the very article of death, as may serve to comfort them, seeing our Lord is a friend that loveth at all times, and that friend who sticketh closer than a brother. The subjects I shall treat of will be, Death; the Consolations suited to

Dying Believers; on the Act of Dying; on what may be conceived concerning the Invisible State; on Eternity; of the actual Entrance of disembodied Saints into Heaven, and their Reception there; on the Vision of Christ, and the Life, Glory, and Blessedness which will flow there from; of our Employment in the State of Glory, until our Lord's Descent at the Last Day. It must be acknowledged they are important ones. I shall treat of these very particularly, yet briefly ; and shall therefore give these in chapters, placing the contents over each, as thereby the reader will know what he is to expect; and shall close each with a soliloquy addressed to my own soul, and a short prayer, leaving the reader to think for himself how far it may suit him. I have chosen this form, as it may fix the subjects the more particularly on the mind, and also hoping each of them will be found quite sufficient for proper and particular consideration at any one season. I would also say, that as I shall aim to be comprehensive in what maybe expressed in each chapter, I the rather prefer this division, as thereby any part may be read that may be most suitable to the mind, case, experience, and circumstances the person may be in. I conceive the subjects mentioned are also, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, calculated to be a proper preparation at all times, and in all places, for saints who say in their own individual persons with the apostle, , I die daily," {1st Corinthians. 15: 31 }.

Death is universal: it reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Some die unborn, others as soon as they are born; some die babes, some infants, some youths, some in the very prime of manhood, some in middle age, some in old age. More die before ten than after sixty; when arrived to thirty-five, the body begins to decay; at forty-five, the mind begins to drop; at seventy, the lease is up: if any live to be eighty, it is but labor and sorrow. When the ages of men were procrastinated, so as to live 200, 400, 600, 900 years, yet it is recorded of them, they died. Only two have ever yet escaped the stroke of death ; one before the flood, another since, and though they died not, by putting off their bodies, yet they underwent a change in

their bodies analogous to the change we shall undergo at death, and such an one as must pass on ours at the resurrection.

Enoch and Elijah could not enter heaven in their mortal bodies any more than we can; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. No; they cannot. The saints, who will be found alive in their bodies at the second coming of Christ, will not die; yet they will undergo such a change as Enoch and Elijah did, or they could not enter heaven, and it will be to them as great a change as death is to us, it will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. {1st Corinthians. 15: 52}.

Were we, therefore, to conceive rightly of these subjects, I conceive our minds would be delivered from a variety of fears, which are very distressing.

I conceive the act of dying must be in all alike: that there is not much felt in the immediate article of dissolution; that it cannot take place before the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; their, (and not before) the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. {Ecclesiastes 12: 6, 7}. This I conceive comes on gradually, by which means the body loses its senses; it becomes insensible; the pulse stops; the body expires, which is no more than to fall asleep, only that the soul hath left it. I conceive that every one is alike in this; one feels no more than another in it; the body is passive, it is breathless. I am not speaking of what goes before this takes place, I here speak simply of the act of dissolution.

Our Lord Jesus Christ went out of his body in the same way, or he could not have been a breathless corpse; and by the same means we must.

I wish, for myself, to take in distinct views of every subject revealed in the word, so as to have clear and proper conceptions of the same

in my mind. I would understand death, and its process on the body, from the scripture, and look on what is actually visible in every death as the realization thereof. I would look on sickness, disease, and old age, as prognostic's of death, whilst at the same time I would look on death as distinct from them. I would consider myself under the sentence of death, and also as having it inherent in my constitution, and be living every moment in the certain expectation of the same. Yet I would also live as though it had no existence in me, as though it was passed, as though I should never see it, or be brought under it, by living on these words of Christ, who says, I am the resurrection and the life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. I would be looking unto, and living on Christ, thus I would consider his person as God-Man, and contemplate Him, and my oneness with Him, as the Father chose me in Him before the foundation of the world. I would consider Him in his incarnation, by which he became flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone, my near kinsman, my brother, and redeemer. I would consider the holiness of his human nature; and consider that he sanctified it, by taking the same into union with his person. He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, partaker's of one and the same nature, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Here I would behold my antidote against all the unholiness of my fallen nature, and all the inherent sinfulness of the same. I would look at Christ the Lord my righteousness, and on my person in Him; and receive this truth into my mind from the everlasting gospel of the blessed God, that He made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, and consider this to be my complete salvation, perfection, and glory. I would look at Christ's death as the conquest of death; at his laying a cold corpse in the grave, as sanctifying and perfuming the grave for me to lay where he did. I would consider his passage out of time into eternity, to be all-sufficient to remove all fears concerning this in my own particular case. I would consider the change this made on Him, as giving proof of what I am to expect, and which will take place in me as one of his members. I would

meditate on his life in glory, and receive these sweet words of his into my mind: Because I live, ye shall live. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my Father, for my Father is greater than I. I call this living on Christ, and am fully persuaded, that so far as these important realities prevail in the spiritual mind, it is raised up to some real and blessed views of what is contained in glory and immortality.

I do not mean that I have so fully attained, as to be perfected in this life of faith. No; all I mean is, to excite the Lord's people to consider, that living on Christ by faith is the only means whereby we may conceive what it will be to live with Him in heaven and glory everlasting.

The truths of the everlasting gospel, received into the spiritual mind, will produce supernatural effects. In the true knowledge of them we receive Christ; in our real believing on Christ, as set forth in them, we enjoy everlasting life. As the Lord the Spirit goes on to glorify Jesus, and the Father's love to us in Him, we are so established in our communion with God as makes us confident in it, and leads us to expect all influential blessings there from. I consider God's elect as having their minds drawn forth towards the Lord, in proportion as they are operated upon by the truths contained in the revelation of Christ, in the sacred page of inspiration. I consider all the Lord's people alike in Christ, both in life and death: one is not more blessed than another: they may be so in the revelation of Christ to their minds, and in the communications of his love, in a way of sense and enjoyment. In death, all the Lord's people die equally blessed, because they all die equally and alike in Christ ; yet some of them are favored with more of Christ's manifestative presence, others with less, but the one does not die more beloved of Christ than the other. You are not, therefore, to expect I am going to fill up the ensuing pages with the happiness of saints in their dying moments. I am not. No; it is their state in Christ which I shall be principally concerned with; as also, what those objects and subjects are which their minds

should be influenced by and reflective on. They will not lose their bodies by death, nor any one member of them; they will not lose their friends and comforts, neither will they know what death is; they will only fall asleep in their bodies. These bodies, with all the members of them, will be raised up at the last day: they will not lose their friends, they will only exchange them for their friends in heaven. They will not know death, it will only be a translation to the state of glory. Death is to saints what regeneration was, a passage from death into life: by the former we were translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; by the latter, we are admitted into the state of glory. As in the former, we perceived not the change which was then wrought on our souls; so neither shall we in the latter, when sin is forever eradicated, and we are clothed with immortality and eternal glory.

Our comforts will not cease in death, but we shall have them changed for those which are far more glorious and divine. These things, thus mentioned, will be more fully opened and explained in the course and body of the work before us. May the Lord give his blessing unto it! May it, in the hand of the Spirit, lift up the heart to the Lamb in the midst of the throne! May we consider, He will feed his saints in heaven, and lead, them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!

Reader, the Lord be with thee. May it be given thee, so to read as to understand !

I am,

Thy well wisher in Christ Jesus,

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

BETHEL HOUSE, BRIXTON, July 30, 18 15.

AN ATTEMPT, &c.

CHAPTER 1. On Death. What it is. With its universal dominion over all the human race.

OF all the evils in this our world, there is no one which we seem to dread so much as death. Not that it is the greatest. Sin is infinitely greater: it produced death: death is the wages of it. So says the apostle: The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The same apostle tells us the original of death. It entered and was enacted by the ordinance of the Most High God, in consequence of Adam's fall: its sentence was, Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. {Genesis. 3: 19}. Paul says, By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, (in whom, or) for that all have sinned. {Romans. 5: 12}. When we consider the trials, sorrows, miseries, and pains of this present state, and what may befall us in our bodies and minds, whilst we remain in this present evil world, it may be of some relief, and be looked on as a mercy, that we are not always to remain here. We are at times disposed to speak agreeable with this; yet it is but seldom: we are, I conceive, chiefly distressed in our minds, because by death we are translated into an unseen state. It is commonly said, none ever returned after death to give an account of what they passed through in the article of death, and what their state now is. No; nor is there any need they should, for the word of inspiration is sufficient for all this. We are informed therein concerning the creation of man; of the fall of all men in one man; of death; what it is; of its universal dominion over all the human race. There is a sense, in which it may be said we need no other book but it, for all knowledge is comprised therein. Our bodies are in it so opened, and every part of the animal frame so explained, that were we to attend closely unto the same, we should know the cause of our every disease, and thereby be capable of understanding what is most likely to give us relief; for surely, he who made the body, and gives an account of what is the union knot between body and soul, in the account he gives us of fluids and solids of which our bodies consist, must alone be capable of giving us the knowledge of those outward means and medicines which are properly suited to, the diseases and injuries which befall then.

The body of man is a wonderful structure it was formed by the Holy Trinity out of the dust; it is the microcosm of the whole world. The account of its original is given us in these words: And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. {Genesis. 2: 7}. The body was first formed, and then the soul infused into it; when it was infused, then it was created, then the body was animated, and the soul was created when it was infused. As man hereby had a sensitive, animal, and rational life, so, when the Lord God is pleased to gather to himself man's spirit and breath, the body dies: its union with the soul is then dissolved, and it returns to the elements out of which it was formed.

Man was made for the world, and all things in it were made for his use, benefit, and advantage. We have a most beautiful scripture to this purpose in the prophecy of Isaiah: Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there is none else, Isaiah. 45: 18. I have made the earth, and created man upon it, Isaiah. 45: 12 of the same chapter. Solomon, speaking of God and his works, says, He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. {Ecclesiastes 3: 11}.

Adam was the epitome of the whole world, and it was the epitome of him: there was every creature in it, every tree, herb, plant, and flower, suited to him to satisfy his body and mind; and in all he saw such evidences of the eternal power and Godhead of the Three in Jehovah, as made way for him to give unto them, as his Creators, glorious praise.

Yet Adam was not in an immortal state, neither was he created immortal either in body or mind. Jehovah might continue, but he

could not create a creature either immortal or immutable: it is his property to be immutable; and it is said, He alone hath immortality, {1st Timothy. 6: 16}. We say, the souls of men, as also angels, are immortal they are so: but this is by the gift of God. We conceive Adam's body to have been so in Paradise before the fall; it was, and it was not so: it was in this sense immortal, that he would never have died had he not sinned. But his body would have needed recruiting, to keep up the continual expense and activity of his spirits, therefore the tree of life was appointed for this end ; which, had he continued in his creation state, would have been to him the balsam of life, and recruited his body and senses with perpetual vigor. As to his body, it required the power of God every moment to sustain it, to poise the elements of it, to keep it in a perpetual equilibrium; otherwise Adam had no immortality in his own nature. It was possible for him to sin: he did actually sin when he was in this state; he fell under the sentence of death in his body as we are under it in ours. It passed on him, and on us; on us as considered in him; he lost the image of God, in which he was created, for himself and us also: thus, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

Death is a solemn subject: it is for a season the destruction of the body; it dissolves the beautiful microcosm of it; all the parts of it are left without any animality in them; the senses are all gone; the faculties of the mind all cease; the soul can no longer dwell in it. This makes death to us the king of terrors: our soul, mind, thought, that thinking faculty which hath hitherto possessed the body, can remain in it no longer it is separated from it by the violence of death; it must, therefore, as it cannot cease its existence, be in an invisible state without it. I conceive this is the chiefest reason why any of the godly cannot look on death comfortably; they think it would be far more agreeable to go to heaven in their bodies, as Enoch and Elijah did. Why, these were as truly changed in their bodies, and it made as great an alteration in their minds also, as death and separation, and entrance into heaven will in us. They do not reflect, that though

these two saints in Christ died not, yet the change which actually passed on them was equal to that which will pass on us at death; we shall by it be as truly translated to heaven as they were changed in their bodies without death, and translated body and soul thither without it.

As it respects death, it is the disunion of body and soul. The union knot between these is the breath in our nostrils, which, when it ceaseth, the body drops off, and is nothing but a breathless corpse: it is found to be nothing but a case, or sheath, in which the soul was implunged; which, being disunited from it, the body is but a dust heap, and therefore fit for nothing but the grave, where it is to rest until the resurrection morning comes. There is nothing in all this to affright the people of the Most High: it is the ordinance of heaven; it is the divine will; It is appointed unto men once to die. It is but once, and it is past for ever. The most holy and useful are not exempted. Prophets, patriarchs, saints, and believers of the highest attainments apostles, evangelists, the saints of all ages, past and present, and all the saints who are to come, did and will depart out of this world to heaven; only the saints who shall remain and be alive in their bodies when the last trumpet shall sound, will be excused from dying. Yet, as in the cases of Enoch and Elijah, a change will pass on them, which will be equal to death. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head, Saviour, and Representative of his Church, passed out of our world to glory in this very same way that we must. His body and soul were separated by death, so that it is a consecrated path: it has been trodden over and over; multitudes, even millions of millions of millions, have gone to heaven before us. Some of them have so spoken of Christ, so praised him, so triumphed in him, when the cold death sweat has been upon them that they have proved fully they found no evil in death, it had no sting. The death of Christ is the death of Death He that believeth on Him, hath everlasting life.

Death, natural death, hath universal dominion over all the human race: it is a most solemn evidence of the fall of all mankind in the

first Adam, the natural head of all his posterity. As we are conceived and born in sin, so we receive death into our constitutions, as soon as we are framed in the womb. Death may well be entitled them mortality which is in our bodies: it seized on some infants who were never born into our world; on others, so soon as they enter it. There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die; and every one dies when they least expect, yet no one dies, but at God's-appointed time; and the wisdom, goodness, and power of God, are most eminently displayed in the deaths of all men, as well as in their lives. This should make us contented to live, and also to die. The time, the place, the season, the circumstance, and all which concerns our going out of this world, is most divinely ordered by the Lord. Every one dies at the best time, and in the most convenient season for themselves and those they belong unto. All God's purposes; for which he brought us into being, and the reasons why he hath upheld us so few, or so many years in this world, all are accomplished in us, and by us, before he removes us out of it by death. Let it be saint, let it be sinner, God's end is answered. It would be of no use to church or state, for the holiest man, the wisest man, the greatest statesman, to continue alive in the body one single moment beyond what the Lord hath fixed in his immutable will. This should put saints on activity. All should be useful in their day and generation; all cannot be useful in one and the same way. Let saints who have property settle their minds, make their wills, and leave nothing undone, that if death seize them, they may not want to live one single moment, but be ready and willing to go immediately. Let saints of every description so carry on their affairs in the world, in the family, and in the church, as to have no thing to do but to die: let them take advantage of death's secret undermining their constitutions, of its frequent warnings by disease and sickness, or other symptoms of its intended secret attack on them, to be in constant expectation of it; then they will not be surprised, but meet it with holy cheerfulness and serenity. Most blessed is the advice which our Lord gives us in the following scripture: Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their

lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching! Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. {Luke 12: 35-40}.

The death of the body, our sleeping in it every night, might serve to save us from all unreasonable fears and concerns about it. Nature's nurse is sleep; nothing is more recruiting to the animal spirits; nothing more acceptable and reviving to the body; all its senses are then locked up; the whole frame is at ease; it rests sweetly, and is quite refreshed; thereby it is fitted for further uses and services. We are not afraid to sleep, We go to bed for that very purpose. We know not when sleep falls upon us; when it does, we cannot resist it; we awake, and are refreshed. So death is compared to sleep to sleeping in Jesus. In death, all our senses, faculties, and members, are closed up; we know not the moment we actually depart the body, for this comes on us instantaneously. We fall thereby into a fast sleep: the grave is then prepared for the body, as its proper place and bed. We feel no pain, no uneasiness of any kind. When our Lord calls for us to awake out of sleep, we find our bodies altogether the better, for having slept the sleep of death. We awake; we are satisfied; we are renewed with immortal youth. We see Christ face to face; we are completely conformed in body and soul, and made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself; so that death did us no kind of injury in performing its office on our bodies, bringing such sleep on them as to fit them for resting in the proper bed prepared by God himself for them in the dust. The Lord said to Abram, Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

Genesis. 15: 15. Here is an easy admission into heaven, and a free dismissal from his body; and also a grave and burial in it promised him. He was to die in peace in the enjoyment of that peace of God which passeth all understanding, he was to go to heaven; his body was to be buried, in full expectation of its resurrection from the grave, when it would be clothed with immortality. A most blessed prospect! Surely he could not, when he and death met as friends together, be afraid of it! He was not. So far from it, that it is recorded of him, He gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full, and was gathered to his people. Genesis. 25. 8. I have left out the supplementary words of years; he was full. Mr. Romaine says, "Abraham was fully satisfied with the goodness of the Lord to him." Abraham died fully satisfied with the Father's everlasting love to him in Christ; he died fully satisfied with Christ, and his salvation ; he fell asleep in his arms of death, fully satisfied with 'the testimony and witness of the Holy Ghost, concerning the Father's love and the Son's salvation ; he could have nothing beyond this to satisfy his mind out of heaven ; he was therefore gathered to his people, Abel, Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, and other saints, gone to heaven before him.

I have placed Abel before Adam, because he was the first saint of human race who ever entered into heaven; which place, though prepared before the foundation of the world for the habitation of the just, was but slowly filled from Adam's time down to the flood. Abel, who was a martyr for Christ, went thither first; and Enoch was the first who entered in body and soul. This was to the Church of God, then existing in our world, a pledge to their faith of a glorious life of immortality in the body, as well as in the soul.

Let me turn this whole subject, as it respects the substance of it, into a soliloquy to my own mind, and close the same with prayer; for why should I not aim to gain advantage from it ?

Thou art, O my soul! Fully persuaded, art thou not, of what death is; that thy own body is under the sentence of it, which cannot be repealed? As to thine own existence, it cannot cease, but thy body must die: it will soon cease its union with thee. What are thy thoughts concerning this? Surely I conceive there is no need to live in any fear concerning death. Whilst it will be to thee what it is to all beside, what cause hast thou to fear it? Seeing thou hast had evidence upon evidence, that the Lord hath been with his saints in their dying moments, and turned all their sorrows into joy, when they have clearly discerned the close approach of death. Surely, O my soul! it may encourage thee to consider this is the very passage from the state of grace to the state of glory. What hast thou to do with death? Surely nothing. It will have to do with thee; but thou needest not to look at it, or have any dealings with it; the Lord Jesus Christ knows all contained in death, what is felt, when the silver cord is loosed, when the golden bowl is broken, when the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel is broken at the cistern. As he was made in all things like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. Surely he will feel for me when death invades me. It may be, I may not know when death is upon me; I may die in my bed; I may fall into the arms of death suddenly. Let it be so; I will give myself no concern about it. I must quit the body, or I cannot see Christ, nor be with him, and live with him, in his kingdom of glory. I will not, therefore, look on death as my enemy, but as my real friend. I will expect that the Lord will be to me all he hath been to those who died in him before me. I will address his Majesty on a throne of grace on this important subject.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I am thine, and all that I have and am is at thine own disposal! My life, my breath, my time, my death, are all before thee. I most certainly feel, very sensibly, that I must die; I would be content that it must be so. I would praise thee, it will soon be so; and

I would triumph in thee, in the prospect thereof! Lord, create in my mind such proper views and ideas hereof, as I realize the subject: in the full apprehensions of it, let me rejoice and be exceeding glad in thee, the Lord. Let me be kept looking at thy death, and my complete salvation. Let me find thy love heaven. Let me clearly understand thy person to be life everlasting. Let me be looking unto thee, and looking on thee, as my perfection, my conqueror, my blessedness, my glory, my all! O that thou wouldst so enlarge and enlighten my spiritual faculties, to take in and comprehend what is revealed in the written word concerning thy conquest of death, and the whole contained in it, that I may live in thee cheerfully, believe in thee confidently, and die in thee triumphantly. I beseech thee to grant unto me so clear and true a knowledge of thee from thy holy gospel, as will produce in me, living or dying, all this! Amen.

Lord Jesus, Amen, and Amen.

CHAPTER II. The Consolations of the Gospel suited to Believers, to save them from all Concern and Fears respecting Death and Dying.

IT seems to be an idea which exists in the minds of all God's called people, that they shall need much of Christ's presence, and strong consolations in the article of death; they look on it as their last enemy as the greatest they ever had, or were ever called to encounter; and, some how, they expect some remarkable support in the season when they expect nature will entirely fail with them. Yet so it is, they neglect to receive into their minds those precious cordials, which are already provided for them in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

As it respects the greatest evil the Lord's people ever were, and will ever be the subjects of, it is sin. It is not death is the greatest evil in them. No; it is sin. Nothing can heal the wounds which sin, hath given us but the blood of Christ; nothing can cleanse our minds from the guilt and stains which we have contracted, but the wounds and stripes, the agony, and bloody sweat of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel, which is the revelation of Christ in all the perfection of his blood and righteousness, and sacrifice, contains an infallible antidote and cure for the whole disease of sin. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to make us inwardly acquainted with Christ Jesus; when we have, therefore, an inward, spiritual, and intellectual knowledge of the person and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, received from the glorious gospel, and God is pleased to shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, then we have an inward and experimental knowledge of life, righteousness, health, and cure, in the person, blood, and righteousness, of our most precious Lord Jesus. Faith is a real apprehension and spiritual perception of the everlasting virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. When our minds center in Christ, and he is the one object of our faith and hope, and we receive the Father's record and testimony concerning him, then we set to our seals that God is true ; then we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

It is absolutely necessary for us to be well acquainted with, and rightly influenced by gospel truths and principles, to the intent that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If sin be removed in its guilt and condemnation from our minds, then we have nothing to fear from death and judgment; for, where the blood of Christ is truly known, there the peace of God is enjoyed, which always makes way for our communion with God, in the real enjoyment of his love.

The gospel is suited to all believers, to save them from all fears and suspicions concerning Christ's love to them, his care of them, his concern for them, his friendship and attachment unto them: it reaches their cases even in death, and when dying; so that, if they are troubled and cast down, it must be owing to themselves. It cannot arise from any thing Christ hath spoken in the gospel; it must

proceed from their ignorance of it, their non attention to it, not from any thing concerning Christ recorded therein.

I would set forth the consolations of the gospel, as they belong to all believers; as also what there is contained in the same, to save them from all concern and fears respecting death and dying.

A man cannot know Christ, as set forth in the gospel, but from the word, and by the Spirit: he cannot know him, but he is a believer on him; he cannot believe on him, but he hath communion with him. Such an one cannot want greater evidence of his interest in him. Our Lord says, He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life; he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. Thus one truth hangs upon another, and in the true knowledge of them the fruits and effects of each are produced.

The covenant of the Eternal Three is the believer's security for all the blessings of this life, and of that which is to come. The word, oath, and promise of the Three in Jehovah, are the believer's foundation for faith and hope in God; and the promises, which God is pleased to speak to his people by, are all yea and amen in Christ; they are all as immutable as God's will; they are all the expressions of the good pleasure of his will in Christ Jesus concerning us: the believer in Christ is therefore secure; he is well provided for; he is in Christ in life, he is in Christ in death. We may consider the following particulars as containing consolations suited to saints, in the views of immediate death and dying.

1. What is recorded concerning the death of Old Testament saints?
2. The death of Christ, the head of all the saints. In consequence of which it may be well said, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; and what Christ says, and what is said concerning his saints in the New Testament, regarding their union with Christ, their state in him and their blessedness in their deaths, and dying.

1. As to what is recorded concerning Old Testament believers, the apostle expressly says, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. {Hebrews. 11: 13, 14, 15, 16}.

In the Old Testament we, read, Abraham was gathered to his people. Of Isaac, that he gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people. Of Jacob, that he yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. Of the Lord's command to Moses Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to mount Hor. And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there. {Numbers 20: 25, 26}. Of the Lord's speaking thus unto Moses: Get thee up into this mount Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; As Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people. {Deuteronomy 32: 49, 50}. The people they were gathered to, were the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven. The consolation suited to us, under the immediate apprehensions of death, may well be derived from viewing how easy their deaths were how the Lord so sustained them, that they did not so much as sigh; and also, that they were no sooner out of the body but they were in the house eternal in the heavens. As soon as they were absent from their bodies, they joined their fathers in the state of glory. Whoso readeth and understandeth this, will find strong consolation arising there from.

2. The death of Christ, the head of all the saints, contains everlasting consolation. There is every thing in it to carry believers in him, above and beyond all their concern and fears about death and dying. It is a consecrated path, sanctified by our Lord himself. When the Israelites were to enter Canaan, the river Jordan fled before the ark, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ gave death its commission to separate his soul and body, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost; and at that very instant swallowed up death in victory, and went immediately by it into his kingdom of glory. Death, believers in Jesus, can do us no more harm than it did Christ: it could do him none, he was sin proof and death proof; so are we in him. We have no more to fear from it than the saints in glory. It is as natural for us to fear it, as it is in our very natures to be sinful. But Christ's righteousness imputed to our persons delivers us from the imputation of all sin, both inherent and actual; his blood cleanseth us from all sin; his righteousness delivereth from death; in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. When our Lord offered up his commendatory prayer, and with it yielded up his soul to his divine Father, he at the same time commended and committed all the souls of his people, together with his own, to his Father's care and trust. A right apprehension of this affords everlasting consolation against the fears, and all concern about dying. All Christ's acts for his church will redound to their everlasting benefit. This was our Lord's last act, when he finished the work of salvation, and yielded up his soul in the same breath. It is not sufficiently considered by believers, for in it, and by it, we are everlastingly secured. He hath commended, and committed our souls with his own, which is of infinitely more worth than the souls of all the election of grace put together, into his Father's hands, so that we are safe and properly provided with for a dying moment. We need not, therefore, give ourselves any concern about a dying moment; we shall die as truly interested in Christ's prayer, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, as he did

himself. I think this may be to us, present, as it will be found to contain everlasting consolation !

3. What Christ says, and what is said concerning his saints in the New Testament, regarding their union with Christ, their state in Christ, and their blessedness in their deaths and dying; as it proves, that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, so it contains consolations suited to such of them as have immediate views of death and dying.

Our Lord says, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. {Revelation. 1: 17, 18}. Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. {John 14: 1, 2, 3}. The prophet saith, And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them, {Revelation. 14: 13}. Such as are in the Lord, they are the Lord's in life and death. They die in the Lord; they sleep in the Lord; they are the Lord's dead. The apostle says, For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. {Romans 14: 7, 8, 9}. The elect were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world: they are in him as members in a head; they are one with him; they are united in their whole persons to his person; their souls and bodies are united to the soul and body of the God Man, and nothing can dissolve this union; therefore they need not fear death and dying. They are interested in the person, undertakings, incarnation, holiness, righteousness, and

sacrifice of Christ, so that they are in the sight of God what Jesus their head is. Their state before Jehovah the Father, is the same with the state of Christ. God hath made Christ to be unto them, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, so that there can be no cause why they should fear death, or dying. They are blessed in their deaths and dying moments, because they are in Christ, and are blessed in him; and they are even then, whether they feel and perceive it or not, blessed by him, for he remembers them with everlasting kindness. Surely this is well suited to the cases of dying believers. What is recorded in the New Testament concerning the death of Stephen is very supporting and consolatory: he was stoned, calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he fell asleep. This is what death is to the saints. Some such persons, says the apostle, are fallen asleep. Such as sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Now, beloved in the Lord, here are very suit able subjects and consolations for such as are about to fetch their last breath; are there not? Many a saint died before us; before you, who, have now the immediate views of death and dying. Many of them, in the examples of those fetched from the Old Testament, died without sigh or groan ; yea, they died cheerfully : their minds were kept in perfect peace, whilst the, change which death made in their countenance passed on them, and the disunion of body and soul took place. All their safety and blessedness, were in Christ: so are ours. Why should we not then be as perfectly resigned to the stroke as they were?

The last act of Christ, which preceded his expiring on the cross, may well yield us very suited consolation in the very article of death, and in the very moment of dying. We shall die in union with him; we shall die interested in his life and death in his last words, and dying act. What can we have, therefore, to fear? Nothing. If we are fearful of death, and afraid of the act of dying, it is because we look off Jesus, and are not exercising our minds on him.

So the consolations of the gospel, suited to relieve us from all fears regarding death, are all sufficient cordials to support and sustain us in the immediate views of death and dying. It would be well to make use of them beforehand ; it becomes us to use them now, for the mind truly acquainted with them, and exercising faith continually in the remembrance of these, will thereby be lifted up above, and beyond all doubt and dismay.

I would, O my soul! Address thee, and ask, are these things so? Dost thou know the truth and hast thou been brought by the power of the Holy Ghost under the influence of the same? Then bless the Lord the Spirit for it; give him his glory. Art thou enlightened in thy mind, and led clearly to see that there is no more in death and in the act of dying, for thee to feel and experience, than all those have felt who have gone before thee? Then learn to be perfectly resigned to it, let it come when, where, and how it may. Thou hast the same Christ to support thee that all the Old Testament saints had; thou hast the same Christ to look on thee, who looked on Stephen. It is true he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This will not be granted thee, nor dost thou need it; but the same Jesus will actually keep his eye on thee all the while death is doing its office on thee; and thou wilt then have the benefit contained in Christ's recommendatory prayer; therefore, fear not. It is, dispraise Christ to be afraid of death. O my soul! pray for such a personal knowledge of Christ as may carry thee wholly out of and off thyself, and fix thee so intently on him, as that the feeling of death, when it shall come on thee, may not for a single moment divert thy thoughts from Christ. I know in the very act of death there will be an entire suspension of every spiritual faculty from the act and exercise of the same. Yet that will be soon over, and then it will be all act, and in full activity for evermore. It would, O my soul! be the way to glorify God in the article of death and dying, to lie wholly passive in his hands, to leave all with him. I will now express my own breathing's concerning it.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, the Incomprehensible and Essential Three, in the one Essential and Incomprehensible Jehovah, shine upon me in the person of Christ! Enlighten my mind to apprehend what is recorded in the holy word of inspiration, what is recorded concerning the death and dying of saints, who were one with Christ, and who died in the faith of him. I long, Holy Father, to honor thee, by believing in the election of grace, that covenant relation can never cease, nor everlasting love ever abate, that thou wilt never cease to be the God of thy people. I pray that I may constantly live in the belief of this truth, and actually die in the faith of it; and I request my mind may be so filled with the knowledge of it, as may make way for an increasing enjoyment in life and in the very article of death. O Lord Jesus Christ, thou knowest what death and dying are! i am shortly to experience them. Thou hast abolished death. Thou art upon thy throne in heaven, the prince of life. Wilt thou be pleased to shine upon me, so as that I may be receiving into my mind, such views of thy death, of thy last words, and of the words which thou has spoken since thy coronation in heaven, as may remove from me all fears concerning the dissolution of my body? O that I might die, in the very act of looking unto thee! in a passive resignation to thy will; in calling on thee, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Holy Spirit, i beseech thee to fortify my mind for this, by enlarging it, so as to comprehend the truth as it is in Jesus, and Him the truth, that I may be so continually and mentally engaged in taking in such views, and gospel apprehensions of him and his death, and his victories over it, as that I may in my own soul now, as well as in the article of death, experience the efficacy of his most blessed words: I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Grant this, o, Holy Ghost, to the honour of the Father, and the Son; to thine own honor also; that I may ascribe now, in the article of death, and dying, blessing, honor, glory, and thanksgiving, for salvation from sin, Satan, death, and over all fear and concern about it to the holy ones in the one Godhead.

Amen.