

the world—to trace the many streams of happiness which are flowing throughout it—to mark the peacefulness and security which prevail among its inhabitants—to observe the satisfaction and composure with which they go about their farms and their merchandise—and then to say, if the scene can ever be so wofully altered as that He who is here known as all beneficence and love, should afterwards reveal himself in fire and indignation. Follies and faults they admit they may have; but human nature is frail and God is merciful; and trusting that they will at last find Him to be so, they put the one term of the alternative altogether out of sight, and, wrapping themselves up in their security, beg that we would not disturb them by any terrible imaginations—that we would see no visions but visions of peace—dream no dreams but dreams of plenty, and, in short, that we would hope and prophecy smooth things concerning them.

Now, if there be folly and presumption in limiting the mercy of God, and in pronouncing beforehand, as the Jews did, who shall and who shall not be saved, it must be equally foolish and equally presumptuous to abuse that mercy by the hope that men may continue in carelessness and sin, and yet be saved. This is to run in the face of a clear revelation, and to doubt the existence or deny the perfections of God. If He mean not to make any distinction between the characters of men, why did He give to them any revelation of His will? Why did He not allow them to live and die in total ignorance of His purity and justice, if these perfections are never to be fully exercised? Why did He pledge himself, as He has most irrecoverably pledged himself, to take the part of the righteous, and to set His face against the wicked? And why hath He exhibited so many examples of the punishment of sin, even in this life, but as tokens of a deeper indignation, which shall smoke against the finally impenitent in the next life? If there be no treasured wrath in reserve for sin, why does He so earnestly beseech men to flee from it? Why does He so affectionately entreat the wicked to turn, if it be not that the path in which they tread leadeth down to the chambers of death? Why does He seem so interested and so concerned about us, if He be not really so? Can it be seen, without shuddering, what a character this goes to stamp upon God? Why would He do such marvellous things as He hath done for us, but that we are liable to some awful calamity? Why hath He given to us so many prophets and preachers of righteousness, but that it is of the utmost consequence to forsake iniquity? Why did that burning and shining light—that man who was more than a prophet—why did he come baptizing and preaching repentance, if there be not some great wrath to flee from? Above all, why did the blessed Son of God move from

his place in heaven, and come down to this world of ours, if there be not some awful danger threatening its guilty inhabitants? What means that joy which bursts forth in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, if impenitance do not imply some dreadful calamity? What signifies all this stir on earth about being saved, if men be not, through sin, the rightful heirs of a deep condemnation? And why are we called to strive that we may enter in at a strait gate, when it may be well enough to go in at a wide one?

Salvation, however, implies not only a security from the punishment of sin, but an admission to a state of bliss. It implies not merely an exemption from the fears of guilt, the accusations of an evil conscience, and the wrath of an offended God, but an introduction to His presence and favor. They who are saved are said to enter into life—to enter into a state compared with which their former careless and sinful existence was as death. They are all filled with peace and joy, in believing the record of the Gospel. They have a peace which passeth all understanding, and rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. Their evil passions are subdued, their evil tempers are corrected, and they spend their time in holiness and peace, until at length they become meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light. Glorious things are spoken in Scripture of the state upon which they then enter, and all that is excellent or desirable upon earth has been employed to describe it. We read of a city, the streets of which are paved with gold and bespangled with stars, and of a paradise which is ever rich in fruit and never darkened with storm. We are told of crowns and sceptres—of living fountains and incorruptible treasures—of palms of victory, and robes of white, and mansions of rest, and regions of immortality, and of an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Yet after gathering into one brilliant fancy-piece all that is excellent or desirable, our conceptions fall far short of the reality; for eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the good things which God hath prepared for the righteous. And can a prize so glorious be gained without labor? What care doth it cost one to gather together a little wealth! With what pains does another ascend to some paltry preferment! And shall heaven and everlasting happiness fall into our arms while we are asleep? Shall crowns of bliss drop upon our careless heads? Shall sceptres of glory place themselves in our idle hands, and all the light and magnificence of heaven be shared around those who have scarcely formed one serious wish upon the subject? But this is encroaching upon the second head of the method, which was to show,

II. How it is difficult to be saved, and