

SERMON 20

A VINDICATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE, IN THE INFLICTION OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT FOR SIN CONTAINING AN ANSWER TO AN ANONYMOUS PAMPHLET, INTITLED, '*THE SCRIPTURE-ACCOUNT OF A FUTURE STATE CONSIDERED.*'

AN *anonymous* Pamphlet hath been published lately, which bears the Title of, *The Scripture-Account of the future State considered.* It is a Matter of very small Concern to me, for what Reasons the Author chose to lie concealed, nor shall I make any Enquiry of him, concerning the Causes of that Concealment; but, *As I apprehend various Notions are advanced by the author, which are both unphilosophical and unscriptural, I shall take the Liberty to examine, and endeavor to refute them. I cannot but object to his Philosophy, in Relation to the cogitative Part of Man.* The human Soul thinks, compares its Ideas, assents and dissents, wills, nills, loves; and, on the contrary, it hates, or it takes Delight in some Objects, and hath an Aversion to others: No Man can doubt of such Acts in himself, who reflects upon what passes in his own Mind. And the Soul doth not think, because it wills so to do; for if Thought followed upon Volition, we might cease to think at all, whenever we please; but that is absolutely out of our Power. We are no more able to forbear thinking, than we can prevent, pleasing, or painful Sensations in us, by the impressions which different Objects make upon our various Senses. Thought and Consciousness, therefore: seem to be essential to the Soul, and inseparable from it.

That Matter cannot think, reason, and draw Conclusions, seems to me very evident: These are such Acts as can't reasonably be apprehended to spring, either from the Solidity, Qualities, different Composition, or various Motions of Body. All Matter, however *tenuous* or *subtle* we imagine it to be, must certainly have solid Extension; because, if it hath not, it differs not at all from Space: But that, I suppose, none will allow is true; and, consequently, the subtlest Matter must have solid Extension, and that which hath solid Extension is divisible, and may be separated. Hence it will necessarily follow, that, if Matter is endowed with a cogitative Faculty, or Power of Thinking, there may be an Inch, a Foot, or an Ell of Consciousness, which it is absurd to imagine. Body, be it great or small, *gross* or *subtle*, and Thought, are as different and distinct as any two Things can be. Consciousness, therefore, cannot be a Property of Matter. If Thought belongs to any Portion of Matter, what Reason can be assigned, why it should not be attributed to every Particle, which composes that thinking, solid Extension? And, if it may, then Consciousness will be capable of being divided into as many Parts as that thinking, solid Extension consists of, however numerous they are. If Cogitation belongs not to every Particle of that solid

Extension, how can it be a Property of the whole? Doth the Contact or Union of its Parts render it cogitative? Can Consciousness result from the Union of the Parts of unthinking, solid Extension? How is that possible?

Besides, many of our abstract Ideas are purely intellectual; and, therefore, there is clear Reason to conclude, that the human Soul, which is a thinking Substance, is *immaterial, indiscernible*, and consequently *immortal*; that in its Nature it is distinct from the Body, is able to exist without it, will be active, or not cease to think in its separate State. As the Soul is *immaterial*, in a *philosophical* Sense, it is not in *any Place*; it fills up no Part of Space; is not near to one Body, and distant from another, which is in a different Part of Space. Nor is it capable of *local* Motion, for that is a Removal out of one Part of *Space*, into another Part thereof. The Soul not being solid Extension, it takes up no Part of Space at all, and, therefore, *properly speaking*, it is not *anywhere*. It is, or exists, but it does not exist in *Place*; it is not *anywhere*, and can move *nowhere*.

This Writer, very unphilosophically, speaks of the Soul's sleeping, or ceasing to think, upon its Separation from the Body, and of its removing from one Place to another; neither of which can be proved, until it is demonstrated that the human Soul is Matter, or solid Extension. Body, if it is, it must be in some Place, i.e. in some Part of Space; but Spirit, by Reason it is not solid Extension, it is not in any Part of Space at all, and, consequently, local Motion agrees not with the Nature of Spirit. He also speaks of the Organs of the Soul, and of their being folded up and unfit for Action, for some Time after Death, and of their unfolding after a while, whereupon it begins again to think. Is the human Mind an Embryo? Are its Parts closed or folded up at Death? If so, in what Womb does it receive fit Matter to increase it, or to cause its various Parts to unfold, or open and expand? This is very strange Philosophy! Our Author seems to dream while he is awake and writes, whether he does or not when he is asleep. But, be it just as he fancifully imagines, until he can prove, that Matter may be endowed with a Power of Thinking, he cannot prove that the Soul will ever think and become conscious of its Acts. He will find it very difficult to demonstrate, that Thought, and Consciousness can arise from the Solidity, different Qualities, Composition, or various Motions of Matter.

The Author supposes that the Soul will awake out of its Slumber, or State of Inactivity, *with the same moral Temper and Disposition it had before Death*. This Supposition seems to me as hard to be explained and proved possible, as any Thing he advances is. How can the Soul, when it awakes out of its Sleep, recover its former Consciousness? Can those new Ideas, which in this Case it will acquire, enable it to recollect its former Ideas, which must have been obliterated and entirely lost: in its State of Stupidity? Let our Author shew the Possibility of this, if he is able. Much less can the Soul awake with the same dispositions, or Habits, whereof it was the Subject before its sinking into this State of Slumber, and Inactivity.

It is unreasonable to imagine, that Dispositions either to Good or Evil remain in the Soul, if all Consciousness is utterly lost; and therefore, tho' the Soul should be roused out of its Slumber, upon its awaking, it can have disposition neither to Good nor Evil, unless it is given to it, or wrought in it by God; and, if he gives the waking Soul its Disposition, it cannot be to Evil, it must necessarily be an Inclination to Good. And he conceits, that the Soul is united to some *Vehicle*, whereby it is affected, and by the Help of which it frames its Ideas. Some *learned* Men have thought this is probable; but, so far as I can perceive, they have not been able to explain how that *Vehicle* can assist the Soul to think. However that be, since he imagines that the human Mind sleeps upon Death, notwithstanding its Union with that *Vehicle* remains, he will not be able to explain how, at any Time, it can awake and begin to think again, by the Help of it. If the Mind, upon its Separation from the Body, becomes incapable of being affected by its *Vehicle*, how can it begin again to exert, itself in Thought and Consciousness, by the Means of it? If the Soul sleeps therein for a *single* Moment, it may continue in that Slumber *to Eternity*; nay, it will, unless an Act of Omnipotence Is put forth, to raise it out of that State of Stupidity into which it is supposed to be sunk.

This Doctrine, of the Soul's sleeping at Death, receives no Countenance *from* sound Philosophy, or right Reason. Let us now consider what the Author alleges from Scripture to support it. What he brings from thence, *for* the Proof of this Doctrine, will admit of quick and very easy Dispatch. It is only this: *That Lazarus, and Jairus's Daughter, and the Widow's Son of Nain, who were raised from the Dead, gave no Account of the separate State. Lazarus and Jairus's Daughter are said to sleep, by which is meant, that they were really dead. Death is compared to Sleep, because there is some Similitude between that and Death. The entire Silence of these Persons, who were raised to Life, about the separate State, gives not the least Degree of Countenance to the Doctrine of the Soul's sleeping, or ceasing to think at Death; for it is the Will of God, that we should wholly collect our Notions of the future, or separate State, from that Account which he hath been pleased to give us thereof, in his sacred Word. All our Faith concerning it must rest upon, and be resolved into, Divine Testimony. Again, those Instances of Resurrection from the Dead, were intended to a very different Purpose from that of giving us Information about the separate State, and are Exceptions unto the fixed Constitution of God, concerning Mankind, in general; and, therefore, nothing can reasonably be argued about this Matter from those Instances.*

Farther, was it not possible with God to prevent *Lazarus, etc.* conversing with other separate Spirits, that they might not obtain from them any Acquaintance with the Nature of their State and Employ? And might not God forbear to communicate to them, any Knowledge of the State of separate Spirits, who are to remain in that State of Separation from their Bodies, until the Morning of the Resurrection? Why might

he not, if these Things are possible? And who will, who can say, that they are impossible? Then they could not know any Thing more of the State of such separate Spirits than if they had not died. And yet there is no Necessity to suppose a Suspension of Acts, in those separated Minds; for they might be active, or converse in and with themselves, during their Separation from their Bodies; or their rational Powers might be exerted, tho' their Knowledge was not enlarged, either by Converse with separate Spirits, or an Emanation of Light from God, while they were separate from their Bodies. Hath not the Mind of a Man a large Stock of Ideas treasured up in it? And, if it is separated from the Body, can it not exercise itself in recollecting of, and reasoning upon those Ideas wherewith it is furnished, tho' no new Discoveries are made unto it? We can do this while in the Body; and for what Reason should we think, that we could not do it if our Souls were separated from our Bodies? It is far from being unreasonable to suppose, that a separate Mind hath such a Capacity; On the contrary, it is highly unreasonable to think that it hath not; which clearly appears from these Instances of Resurrection from the Dead: For if, when their Souls were separated from their Bodies, they lost all Thought and Consciousness, upon the Re-union of their Souls and Bodies, they must have been no other than *great Babies*, and as uncapable of Conversation as they were at the Time of their Birth. It is a clear Case, that they had not lost that Stock of Ideas which they had acquired before their Death; because, as soon as they were restored to Life, they were as able to converse with their Friends, as they were before they died; which must have been absolutely impossible, if they had lost all Consciousness by the Separation of their Souls from their Bodies.

These Instances, therefore, are so far from proving what they are produced for, *viz.* that at Death Men become *stupid* and *thoughtless*, that, on the contrary, they clearly prove, that the human Mind loses not its Stock of Ideas by its Separation from the Body, which it must *necessarily* do if it becomes *stupid*, or *inactive* and *thoughtless*. ***The Author proceeds to treat of Hades, or of the State of the Dead before the Resurrection.*** The *Hebrew* Word (לֵוַי), and the *Greek* Word (Αδῆ), whereby the separate State is expressed, have different Significations: 1. The Grave is sometimes meant; (1 Kings 2:6) 2. Hell, or the State, of the Damned; (Luke 16:23) 3. Extreme Sorrow and Anguish of Mind; (Psalm 18:6) 4. The lowest State of Abasement in this World; (Isaiah 14:15) The first Respects good and bad, for the Grave *is the House appointed for all living*; (Job 30:23) the second and third, the bad only. He fancies, that an *interior Sun* and an *interior Earth* are enclosed, by this *Globe* which we inhabit, which is nothing but an Arch or Shell: That this *interior Earth* does not revolve upon its own Axis, and therefore one Half of it enjoys perpetual Day and an eternal Spring, and the other is in perpetual Darkness. That the Patriarchs had the Knowledge of this by Revelation, and the Ancients derived it from them by Tradition, which gave Occasion to those Descriptions that they have given of Elysium and

Tartarus. A strange Chimera! Such Philosophy as this is was never taught the Sons of Men by the Author of Nature, that an eternal Spring would be maintained in the Earth by the Sun perpetually shining on it. That would make it become a *dry Heath*, thro' the intense Heat which must be communicated to it by the constant and uninterrupted Emission of the Sun's Rays. As one half of this Earth must be frozen and locked up by Extremity of Cold, the other half must be scorched and rendered barren by the Intenseness of Heat in it. The Recession and Intermission of the Sun's Rays are necessary unto the Fertility of the Earth. How is it possible that an invariable Degree of Heat can maintain a continual Spring? The Author's *philosophical* Principles are as *unreasonable* as his Notions of Divinity.

Thus he divides *Hades* into two Regions, *Paradise* and *Tartarus*: The former he supposes *is the Residence of good, and the latter of evil Spirits; that good Souls are under milder, and bad under severer Discipline; that the former may be perfected in Virtue, and the latter may be reclaimed from Vice, and so at length be admitted to Heaven*. The intermediate State between Death and the Resurrection, therefore, is a State of farther Trial of the Wicked, and, if they prove not *incorrigible*, they shall be happy. In such a State he thinks the *Devils also are*; and, if they are not *irreclaimably* bad, they shall enjoy Happiness. According to this Account of *Hades*, both the Godly and Ungodly are in it, for it includes *Paradise* and *Tartarus*; or *Heaven* and *Hell*. But this is a Mistake, for (Αδῆ) *Hades* is never put for Heaven, or the State of the Blessed; Hell, indeed, or the State of the Damned, is designed by it. Thus, of the *rich Man*, it is said, (εν τω Αδη, not εν τοΑδη, as the Author hath it), *in Hell he lift up his Eyes*.

Heaven may be considered as a State of Happiness, without including the Idea of Place in it. Into this State the Souls of the Saints immediately enter at Death: And it may be considered, not only as a blessed State, but, as inclusive of Place, where *Enoch, Elias, and Christ*, in his human Nature, now are, and all the Saints shall be, for evermore. Hell, also, may be considered as a State of Misery, without including the Idea of Place in it; into this State the Ungodly immediately enter at Death: And it may be considered, not only as a miserable State, but, as inclusive of Place, wherein the Ungodly will suffer Punishment both in Soul and Body. The Souls of departed Saints are now in Heaven, as a State; and the departed Spirits of the Wicked are now in Hell, as a State; but the Souls of neither, properly speaking, are in Place; for, to exist in Place, or in some Part of Space, is proper to Body, and it cannot, with Propriety, be said of Spirits, which are not solid Extension.

If this *interior* Earth is the Habitation of good and bad Souls, and the good dwell in the light Part, and the bad in the dark Part of it, as the Author supposes, then both are in the *Abyss*, for *Paradise* as well as *Tartarus* must be meant by the *Abyss*; and the Apostle *Paul*, who says of himself that he was in *Paradise*, must have descended into that *Abyss*; and, therefore, he doth not speak properly when he says that he was

caught up; he should rather have said, that he was *thrust down* into *Parade*, or the *third Heaven*. *Paradise*, or the *third Heaven*, is the Place where the human Nature of *Christ* is, and will be until his *second Coming*. His Disciples saw him *go up* or *ascend* into Heaven; but, if *Parade*, or the *third Heaven*, is this *interior Earth*, they must have seen him *descend*, and not *ascend*. And *Stephen*, who saw him *standing at the right Hand of God*, if *Paradise* is this *interior Earth*, must have seen the Earth, on which he stood, open, instead of seeing the Heavens above him open, in order unto his beholding of *Christ* in his exalted State; the *Chasm* thro' which he beheld *Christ* must have been in this Earth which we inhabit, and not in Heaven that is far above us; and, instead of looking up, he must have looked down into that *Abyss* which our Earth encloses. But it is a Shame to dwell upon the Refutation of this *idle and senseless Fiction*. The main Point in View to be proved is this, That *the Souls of bad Men are in a State of Probation after Death, and not in a State of Punishment*. That which is offered for Proof hereof is very little, and of no Force at all: Because *the Devils*, as yet, are not *tormented in that Degree* which they will hereafter be, and are not in the View of Angels and Men adjudged to *infernal Torments*, which they will be at the grand *Assize*, it is concluded, that they are not in a State of *absolute Misery and Torment*, and, therefore, it seems reasonable to think, that *the Souls of wicked Men are not*. Devils now suffer Punishment, for God *s pares them not*.

And, because departed Spirits are *reserved to be punished*, therefore they are upon Terms of Peace with God, their righteous Judge, and do not at present suffer *Punishment*, only some *medicinal Afflictions*, in order to their Amendment and Happiness in the Issue, if they are reclaimed by those Afflictions, which they suffer in *Hades*. This is very *extraordinary Reasoning*; it is such as scarcely deserves *any Notice*. Both Devils, and the Souls of the Ungodly, in the intermediate State, suffer proper Penalty, tho' they are not publicly sentenced to Hell, as they will be at the Day of Judgment. But what may seem of more Weight is this: Says the Author, *the Benevolence of our Lord led him to visit Tartarus, and he preached to the Spirits in Prison*. But this was at the Time of their Existence in this World, and it is not meant of his going to *Tartarus*, and preaching to them there; Reference is plainly had to the Days of *Noah*. ***Having finished his Account of Hades, he next treats of the Resurrection and general Judgment.*** There is but little that I shall take Notice of here. He grants the Resurrection of the Wicked, as well as the Resurrection of the Righteous, which the *Socinians* delay; but is mistaken, in thinking, that the Resurrection both of the Just and Unjust, is treated of by the Apostle, in 1 Corinthians 15, as every intelligent Reader will quickly discover, by a careful View of the Context: It is of the Resurrection of the Saints only, that the inspired Writer discourses in that Place; and, therefore, nothing is from thence to be collected to prove, that the Bodies of the Wicked, after the Resurrection, will be *mortal*, or of a *periling Nature*; which is what he at least would insinuate from some Part of that

divine Discourse. If Proof is to be deduced from thence, of the Mortality of the Body, when raised from the Dead, it must refer unto the Bodies of the Saints, and not the Bodies of the Impenitent, for nothing is spoken concerning them throughout the Place. He comments thus: *Of the Wicked it is only said, as the first Man was of the Earth, earthy, such are they that are earthy; they are as the first Man was, whole Image they bear, living Souls, in Bodies which are of the Earth, earthy; natural Bodies, which may corrupt and perish.* I am persuaded, that the Reader will think this Person is a *miserable* Interpreter of Scripture. He observes not what is the Scope of the Apostle, *viz.* to prove that there is a *natural*, and that there is a *spiritual* Body, nor that the Body is *natural* before its Resurrection, but *spiritual* when raised from the Dead; which are the two Things that the Apostle designs to prove; which is as evident, as that it is Light at *Mid-Day*. And, therefore, by the natural, or earthy Body, is not meant the Body, when raised from the Dead, but the Body in its present State, which stands in Need of Food to nourish and sustain it; the Observation of which alone is sufficient to discover, what an *egregious Trifler*, this Writer is in the Interpretation of Scripture. My present Haste will not allow me to enlarge on this so illustrious a Testimony unto the important Truth, of the exalted State of the Saints, in their Bodies, upon their Resurrection from the Dead. All I shall observe is this, that the Bodies of the Saints, which, before their Resurrection, were natural and earthy, when raised from the Dead, shall be *spiritual* and *glorious, like unto Christ's glorified Body*; for, *as they have bore the Image of the Earthy, they shall then bear the Image of the Heavenly.*

Our Author having advanced so far on his Subject, as the general Resurrection and Judgment, It might have been expected, that he would now treat of the Sentence of the infinitely great Judge, whereby the different States of Men will be determined; but he in a great Measure waves this, only using some general Expressions in Relation to this Point; whereas, the *opposite* States of the Righteous and the Unrighteous are not represented by them; because He had it in Design, to raise Mist before his Reader, that he might prevent his discerning, that the State of the Wicked is, in Fact, the Opposite of the State of the Godly. And, therefore, Before he proceeds to treat of the State of Punishment, and of the State of Blessedness, after Judgment, he spends no less than nine Pages in an elaborate Consideration of the Terms and Phrases, *forever, for ever and ever, everlasting, perpetual, or eternal*; and, because he finds, that, sometimes, they express a measurable Duration of a longer or shorter Continuance, he would have his Reader conclude, that these Terms and Phrases are not properly expressive of *Eternity, or endless Duration*. There is not the least Necessity, that I should imitate his *prolix* Discourse on this Matter; what he offers will admit of a *short* and *speedy* Answer. The *Hebrew* Word (עול), and the *Greek* Word (Αιωϵ), properly signify *perpetual Duration, or Eternity*.

It will be sufficient to shew the Reader very briefly, the different Senses wherein these Terms are used, in order to render his *Parade absolutely useless*, unto that Design which he hath in View. And the Term Everlasting, sometimes, means *absolute* Eternity, or Duration, which is without Beginning and without End: *From everlasting* (מעול) *to Everlasting* (עד־עול) *thou art God* (Psalm 90:2). Sometimes it designs a measurable Duration, of a longer or shorter Continuance. Thus, the long Duration of the Hills is expressed by it; and for the precious Things of the lasting Hills (Deuteronomy 33:16). So the Years of Jubilee are intended by it: *And he shall serve him forever*; (Exodus 21:6) *i.e.* until the Year of Jubilee, when all *Hebrew* Servants were to be discharged from a State of Servitude. And the Term of Life is intended by it: *So shall I keep thy Law continually; for ever and ever*, (לעול ועד); (Psalm 119:44) *i.e.* thro' the whole of my Life. Again, it is used *metonymically*, and the Period of the present State of Things is designed, or the End of the World, as our Translators very properly have rendered the Phrase; *and of the End of the World* (και τῆ συντελειᾶ του Αιωνό) (Matthew 24:3). It is the Cessation of the present State of Things that is meant in those Words, and not the End of that measurable Duration, wherein the World exists, as this *Trifler* would have it, tho' that Duration will end with the Dissolution of the World. And the Things of Time and Sense are also intended by it; *for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved* (του νυ Αιωνα) *this present World* (2 Timothy 4:10). The Apostle plainly means, Things which exist in Time, or measurable Duration, and not that Duration itself Farther, Everlasting expresses an immeasurable Duration, which hath no End, tho' it had Beginning: This is called *Eternity restrict*, and differs from *Eternity absolute*, which is proper to God. This *Eternity restrict*, is proper to the human Nature of Christ, to Angels, and unto Men, who will exist for ever, tho' once they were not: Their Existence began, but will never end. Our blessed Saviour's endless State of Dignity and Glory, is thus expressed by himself; *And behold I live* (εἰ τοῦ Αιωνά των Αιωνων) *for evermore* (Revelation 1:18). And the endless State of the Blessedness of his People, is thus represented by him; *He that believeth in me* (ου μη αποθαινη εἰ τον Αιωνα) *shall never die* (John 11:26). He will give to them (Ζωνη αιωνιον) *eternal Life* (John 1:28). Likewise, the endless Duration of the Punishment of the Ungodly, is in the same Manner represented; *And the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up*, (εἰ Αιωνά Αιωνων) *for ever and ever* (Revelation 14:11).

The Author denies that these Terms and Phrases, properly mean an endless Duration. *None of these Words*, says he, *in their natural Import, do signify an absolute Eternity, in the metaphysical Sense of that Word, unless when applied unto God, and then the Nature of the Object gives a Sense to the Words, whereof they are otherwise incapable.* Why does he speak of *Eternity absolute*? It is *Eternity restrict*, that is the Subject of Enquiry, and not *Eternity absolute*, which is proper to God. We are not

such *Blunderers* in *Metaphysics*, as to plead for the *absolute* Eternity, of either Angels, or Men, or even of the human Nature of our blessed Redeemer. We know, that they *once* were not, and do not need the Instruction of this Person, or the Instruction of any, who are of his *corrupt* Principles, to inform us, that the human Nature of Christ, and the Existence of Angels and Man, had Beginning. We are fully sensible, that it is *peculiar* to God, to be without Beginning. The Author hath betrayed either Ignorance, or, what is much worse, a Want of Regard to Truth and Ingenuity, in this Assertion. If he really thinks, that (על in the *Hebrew* Language) Everlasting, does not properly signify an immeasurable Duration; and, that (Αἰω αἰωῦς in the *Greek* Language) Everlasting and perpetual, do not properly signify an unlimited Duration, it must be owing unto Unacquaintedness with those Languages. The very Reverie of what he asserts, is the Truth. The *natural* Import of these Terms, is Duration *infinite*, or Eternity; and, when they are to be understood differently, the Reason is, the Nature of the Subject requires that limited Sense. I challenge him to produce a *Greek* Word, which more properly signifies Eternity, than this Word (Αἰω) does. If he knew not the natural Import of these Words, why does he so boldly assert concerning their proper Signification? If he did know, then he was highly disingenuous in asserting this. The Assertion must proceed either from Ignorance or Disingenuity, and a Want of Regard to Truth.

Nothing is proved by that large Apparatus of Texts, with his Version, which fill up nine Pages, but this, that the Terms for ever, everlasting, *etc.* are used to express a measurable Duration, which everyone knows; not that they do not properly signify Eternity, nor is he able to give Proof thereof. I am so well satisfied of his utter Incapacity to give such Proof, that I dare promise to become his Proselyte, on Condition of his proving it; which is what I would not be for the whole World. The Amount of his Reasoning can be only this: I have proved by various Instances, that the divine Writers, by 60 these Terms and Phrases, sometimes, express a measurable Duration of a longer or shorter Continuance; and, therefore, they do not properly import unlimited Duration, or Eternity. Thus, another might say, that the *Latin* Adverb (*aeternum*) always, or forever, does not properly mean endless Duration, but a Duration which hath an End, because sometimes it is used in such a limited Sense. I would ask this Person, whether he thinks, that the Terms, everlasting, eternal, forever, *etc.* in our own Language, properly mean an endless Duration? And there is Reason for my putting this Question to him, for we sometimes use these Terms in a different Sense; as, when we say of a spruce Gentleman, he is an *eternal Beau*, and of a Man who delights in walking, he is an *eternal Walker*. He instances our using these Words to express Duration which hath End; as when we say, *such a Person is gone to live in such a Place for always; or such Things are everlasting, or will wear and last forever*; will he affirm, because we thus use these Terms, that they do not, in their natural Import, signify an endless Duration? Should he assert this, he would

justly expose himself to *Hissing*. It is probable, that some may think, he deserves no better Treatment, for affirming, that these *Greek Words*, (Αἰων αἰωνιό) in their natural Import, do not signify Eternity, or endless Duration.

I acknowledge, if he could produce an Instance of the inspired Writers using these Words, to express a measurable Duration, after the Dissolution of the World, or the Close of Time, wherein it exists, it would be every considerable Difficulty upon us, and it might greatly tend to shock our Faith, concerning the endless Bliss of the Saints; and also it might be thought to give Countenance unto the Author's Opinion, that a Period will be put unto the Punishment of the Wicked; but this I am sure he cannot do. Let him do this, and I will immediately embrace his Opinion; tho' that would not prove, that the natural Import of those Phrases is a measurable Duration. What hath he proved by his *prolix* Parade? Nothing, but this; that these Words certainly express a limited Duration, of a longer or shorter Continuance, before the End of this World: And, therefore, he begs the Favor of his Reader, to allow, without the least Proof of it, that such a limited Duration is really meant by these Phrases, after the End of the World. What trifling is this? in a Word, he is a *pitiful Beggar*, and is absolutely unable to bring the least Degree of Proof, for what he is extremely desirous his Reader should believe the Truth of. He closes his *learned* Discourse on this Subject thus: *And the State of the Righteous and the Wicked, when described under these Words, (forever, etc.) can in no wise be proved without End, since every Age has an End, and every Αἰων or Period of Time, however long, has still a Conclusion. But we find that Immortality is promised to the Righteous, and it is said of them, that they shall not die any more; so that the Duration of their Existence no ways depends on these Words, eternal and everlasting, but is built on plain and express Promises.* This is admirable indeed. Who knows not that Time will certainly have an End? But hath he proved that Time is meant by the *Greek Words* (Αἰων and αἰωνιό) when used about the Existence of Men in the future State? No; nor is it in his Power to prove it, I am bold to affirm. As I have above observed, the *Greek Word* (Αἰων) properly signifies perpetual Existence, and it imports endless Duration. It is (χρονό απειρό) *infinite* Duration. If he requires more Proof of it than is already given, I will promise to oblige him with it; but if he is wise, he will excuse me herein. I demand of him to shew how the Promise, that the Righteous *shall not die any more*, proves their endless Existence? May they not be *annihilated*? Annihilation is not Death; and, therefore, tho' that Promise secures them from suffering Death again, it doth not ascertain their perpetual Existence. But the gracious Promises made unto them of the Enjoyment of everlasting Life, must clearly evince the endless Duration of their Existence, notwithstanding this Author's *feeble* Attempt to prove the contrary. If these Promises do not prove the eternal Existence of the Saints, I am sure it will be impossible to give Proof of the eternal Existence of our blessed Saviour,

as Man, for that is not capable of other and more evident Proof. If his Reasoning is right, we know not, nor can know, whether our precious Redeemer, and the whole Church of God, may not some Time or other be annihilated, or sink into nothing. This is a Consequence so *exceedingly horrid*, that it may well make one *shudder* to mention it; but it is natural and unforced. By that Medium, wherewith he can prove, that Christ will exist for ever, in his human Nature, we shall be able to prove the endless Existence of his *Body*, the Church.

The Author having, as he imagines, proved, that the Terms and Phrases, *forever, for ever* and *ever*, etc, do not properly signify endless Duration, ***He advances to treat of the State of Punishment after the general Judgment; and he allows, that God may inflict Punishment for Vice, but observes, that the proper Ends of Punishment, are reclaiming the Offender, and deterring others from Vice: That Penalty ought to be proportioned to the Crime for which it is inflicted: What crime will be punished more than others: That Sin doth not deserve infinite Punishment, because Virtue deserves not infinite Reward: And, that divine Punishment will certainly have an End. I shall briefly consider each of these Particulars ideas. I will begin with what he says are the proper Ends of Punishment, viz. reclaiming the Criminal, and for the deterring others.*** With Respect to the first End, human Laws, in many Instances, are not calculated to serve that End. I cannot be persuaded to think, that our Law hangs a Man, or takes off his Head, to make him better; nor ought any Law to adjudge a Person to Death, (*in Terrorem*) for a Terror to others, if his Crime *deserves not* capital Punishment. That is unjust in itself, and what is so, cannot be sanctified by the End, which may be pretended, or really designed, in the Infliction of such unequal Punishment. But, surely, he was asleep, and knew not what he wrote here; for tho' he says, that the End of all Punishment is, either to reclaim and reform the Criminal, or to deter others from offending, yet he insists upon it, that God designs, in the Infliction of Punishment, after Judgment, to destroy the very Being of the Wicked, and that *all Vice and Misery will be exiled the World*. So that God cannot possibly intend the Amendment of any, whom he will then punish, nor can he design to deter others from Vice, for all the Sons of Vice will cease to be, according to his Opinion; and, therefore, neither of these Ends can have Place, in the Punishment of the Impenitent, after the general Judgment. It is surprising, that this Person should so far forget himself, as to affirm, that these two Things are the *End of all Punishment*; when it was his Design to prove, that such is the Nature of divine Punishment, after Judgment, that it is not possible, that either one, or the other, can be intended therein. God, in the Infliction of penalty, acts agreeably to the infinite Rectitude of his own Nature. He shews his *necessary*, tho' voluntary Hatred of Sin. That is his End, and not reclaiming the Offender. Besides, Punishment will never alter the Disposition of the sinful Creature; that will continue the very same, whether he is punished more or less. Let this be disproved, if it can be done, by producing an

Instance of a sinful Creature, whose Mind hath been changed, thro' the Influence of Punishment inflicted, from a Love to Sin, unto a holy Delight in God, and his Duty. *It is certain, that Equity will always proportion Punishment, to the Crimes for which it is inflicted,* but who shall be Judge of the Demerit of Sin against God? Shall the guilty Creature, who, thro' Self-Love and Tenderness for itself, as well as other Causes, may form a wrong Judgment in this Point? Or shall God, who cannot but do the Thing *that is right*? Surely, it is most fit to refer the Determination of this Matter unto Infinite Wisdom and Justice, which, we are sure, will determine equitably, in this and all other Things.

That there will be Degrees in divine Punishment, I suppose all will grant, as Men are more or less guilty, in the Sight of God. But who is most fit to determine concerning the Guilt of the sinful Creature, as to its Nature, Weight, and Aggravations, God or Man? Certainly, he who *searches the Heart and tries the Reins*; and he only is capable of determining who are most guilty; and, therefore, none but he can appoint, what Punishment it is fit to inflict on the criminal Creature. But Men are so *daringly, insolent*, as to assume the *Prerogative*, of their infinitely great Judge, and imagine themselves fit to determine, in their own Cause, as Transgression of the divine Law.

What the Author objects unto the infinite Evil and Demerit of Sin, is trifling, or false. He argues thus: *In whatever Manner Sin or Vice be estimated, it must be finite, because it is the Production or Act of a finite Kind, of finite Principles and Passions.* Very well: Who ever said that Sin, or a sinful Act, is infinite? No Mortal, I am persuaded. That which is infinite cannot possibly proceed from a finite Being. We know this, full as well as this Writer does. But, with his Leave, or without it, we must distinguish between the Act of Sin, and the Demerit of that Act. Tho' all sinful Actions are finite, and must be so, because they spring from finite Beings, yet there is an infinite Evil and Demerit in Sin, because it is committed against all possible and infinite Good. Its Demerit arises from the Object against whom it is committed; and, therefore, as the divine Object against whom all Sin is directed, is infinite, so the Demerit of it must be infinite: If it is not, then there is not, there cannot be greater Evil and Demerit, in an Act of Sin against God, than attend an Act of Sin against a Creature. Why do not such Persons, as our Author, speak out plainly what they mean, and tell us *roundly*, that there is no greater Evil in sinning against God, than there is in sinning against a *poor Mortal* like ourselves? This is what he intends, it certainly is what he designs, tho' it was too *impious* a Thing for him, directly and explicitly, to assert. If this is not his Meaning, he says nothing which is to his Purpose; (or, if he allows, that there is greater Evil in Sin against God, than there is in Sin against a Creature, that Reason, which obliges him to grant, that it is, in any Degree, a greater Evil to offend against God, will compel him to yield, that it is infinitely greater, *viz.* the infinite Majesty of the Divine Being.

His other Objection unto the infinite Demerit of Sin, is absolutely false. *And it should be remembered, that if our Vices were deserving of infinite Punishment, our Virtues would, by the very same Rule, be deserving of an infinite Reward.* This Man, at present, is upon high Terms with his Maker, and hath the *Front* to insist on it, that his Virtues merit as *great a Reward* from him, *as his Sins deserve Punishment at his Hand.* Let him see to it, how he will be able to maintain his Plea, at the awful Tribunal of God, before which he must shortly appear. Demerit attends Sin, but even *perfect* Virtue is not *meritorious*. We do but our Duty, in yielding Obedience to divine Precepts; it is a Debt we owe to our Maker, and no Desert of a Reward from him, can arise from the Performance of our Duty.

The Spring of Merit principally, is performing a Work not due, and which another hath not a Right to require of us; for, he that doth that unto which he is perfectly obliged, only fulfills his Obligation, and hath nothing redundant, from which Merit can arise. — From whence it is manifest, that no Merit with God, can accrue to any Mortal, even tho' he should exactly, and as he ought, obey and fulfil the divine Law. So says the *learned Puffendorf*. The *Civil Law* would have furnished this Writer with a better Notion of Merit, than he appears to have; but, perhaps, that is not much the Matter of his Study, his Head being filled with Laws of another Kind. Tho' there is Demerit in Sin, there is not Merit in Virtue; and, therefore, his Reasoning, that if Vice is infinite in Demerit, Virtue must also be infinite in Merit, is most unreasonable and false.

In order to prove, that the Punishment of the Wicked will have an End, he observes, that *God will not retain his Anger forever: That, his tender Mercies are over all his Works: That, as the Father of Mercies, he will have Compassion of the Workmanship of his Hands: Although' he hath before told us, that God will determine the Measure of our Misery, in exact Proportion to our moral Tempers and Conduct; that is to say, he will punish us as far as our Crimes deserve. How, therefore, does he exercise Mercy towards us? It is not an Act of Mercy to cease to punish, when a Criminal hath suffered as much as his sins deserve, but an Act of Justice: Besides, these Acts of Chiding, relate unto the Correction of the Righteous, and not the Punishment of the Ungodly. By the second Death, he would have us understand Annihilation. For Proof of it, he observes, that the Wicked shall be burnt up, as Tares, Chaff, and Stubble. That is a metaphorical Representation of their Pain and Misery, but it imports not the Destruction of their Being. Fire does not destroy the Being of any Body; it separates its Parts, and alters its Form, but it still exists. And the Destruction of the Wicked, is not the Loss of Existence, but of Well-being, and suffering Torture, which is compared to that painful Sensation, which Fire causes in our Bodies. And his Observation, that the Greek Word (απολλυμι) signifies, to kill, to put to Death, to break to Pieces, to corrupt, by which the Punishment of the Ungodly is expressed, is not of the least Service to his Cause, for*

Annihilation is not implied in either of these Senses. The Loss of Happiness, and enduring Torment, are designed, but Loss of Existence, is not meant.

His next Attempt is to answer what may be objected to his Opinion from several Scriptures: *And those, that have done Evil shall go away (εἰ Κολασιν αιωνιον)* to lasting Punishment; our *Translation has it*, into everlasting Punishment; but the Righteous (εἰ Σωην αιωνιον) to lasting Life, Why is it wrote (Σωην?) it should be (Ζωην.) This might be the Printer's Mistake, but I think it runs thro' the Performance. Our Translation is *just*; for the Word (αιωνιῶ) properly means *everlasting*, or *endless Duration*; nor will he ever prove the contrary: Neither will the Punishment of the Ungodly *end* in Death or Destruction, *i.e.* Annihilation, as he affirms, without the least Proof. Let him prove, that they will be sentenced unto *Annihilation*, and I will yield the Point; but this he *cannot do*, These Words are a clear Proof, that the State of the Ungodly, and the State of the Godly, are *directly opposite*, and will be of the *same Duration*. The Godly will enjoy *eternal Life*, and the Ungodly will suffer *eternal Death*, and the Duration of the Existence of both will be *endless*; otherwise their States will not be opposite, which the Words clearly evince they will be. Besides, the Death and Destruction of the Wicked plainly mean *Tortures*, which they will *feel*, as the Life of the Righteous designs *Pleasures*, which they will enjoy; and, therefore, Annihilation cannot be intended, by the Death and Destruction of the Wicked. They are dead and destroyed, they *existing at the same Time*, and, consequently, they are not *annihilated*, by that Death and Destruction which they will suffer. By the *Life* of the Godly. is not meant their *Existence*, tho' that is necessarily included; and by the *Death* of the Ungodly is not meant their *Non-existence*, or ceasing to be, but the *direct Opposite* of the Life of the Godly, which is *suffering Misery*.

The second Scripture which he endeavors to reconcile with his Opinion is: *Where their Worm dieth not, and their Fire is not quenched*. The Sense of these Words is, as he pleads; *the Sufferings of the Wicked will be of the same Duration, as their Existence*. But, when they shall cease to exist, can their Worm survive, and their Fire not be quenched? He very well knows the Impossibility hereof, and says, that *all Vice and Misery will be exiled the Worlds*. Will not the Worm of the Wicked then be dead? He is sensible it will. And will not their Fire be then quenched? He cannot but think it will. So that this is not to interpret, but *fatly* to contradict Scripture. That which he offers to defend himself in thus contradicting the express Assertion of our Saviour, is extremely weak and foolish, and also manifestly false: It is this; *If the Punishment of the Wicked be as durable as their Beings, it will be and appear to them everlasting, tho' at last extinguished in Death, i.e.* Annihilation. *The Misery of the finally Impenitent being lasting, as their future Duration is to them, in the common Acceptation of the Word everlasting, because they will not survive their Misery; so that, in the most literal Sense, their Worm dieth not, and their Fire is not*

quenched. How can it be everlasting, if it hath End, which it must, if they cease to exist? Can it appear to them everlasting? If it does, it must be before they are annihilated, for it is impossible it can appear such to them, when they are not; nor can it appear to them everlasting while they exist, for they must know, that they have not reached an *endless* Duration.

This Testimony, therefore, remains in full Force, against the Doctrine which he advances; and, I dare say, it will never be in his Power, to *blunt* this *two-edged Sword*, which *mortally* wounds the Cause he is engaged in the Defense of. The third Text which he attempts an Answer unto, is: The Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up (εἰς Αἰῶνα Ἀἰῶνων) for ever and ever. This Phrase is properly expressive of endless Duration, and many Instances may be produced, wherein Duration without End, is designed by it. Our Saviour says of himself, *And behold I live for evermore, or for ever and ever* (Revelation 1:18). The Duration of Christ and the Church will be the same, and the Duration of the Wicked will be the same with the Duration of Christ and the Church. We shall be able to prove the endless Duration of the Ungodly, by the *same Medium*, that he can prove the endless Duration of Christ, as Man, and of his *Body*, the Church. He says, *doubtless this Punishment, both as to Measure and Duration, will be such as the holy Angels and the Lamb approve; for we are told, that it will be inflicted in their Presence*. Without all Question: Neither the holy Angels, nor the Lamb, will disapprove of Punishment being continued so long on Men, as they shall retain an implacable Hatred of God and all Good, tho' this Man may; and such Hatred will possess their Minds for evermore. He adds: *But how long the Period of their Sufferings may be, none can say; only the Subjects of it being mortal and perishing, we cannot suppose it will be endless, for then they must be deathless, and so incapable of a second Death and utter Destruction, which the Scriptures declare will be their End*. He hath not proved, nor can prove, that the Death and Destruction of the Wicked, means Annihilation. *Positive* Sufferings, when and while they exist are intended, and they are dead and destroyed, they frill existing, and, therefore, Annihilation is not designed by the *second Death*. It is contrary to common Sense, to think, that their Annihilation would be unto them a Punishment; that which puts an End to suffering Punishment, cannot be Punishment; and, therefore, if they will be annihilated, in their Annihilation they will not suffer Penalty. If Annihilation is a Punishment, it must be so to the Creature, while it exists, or when it is not. It can't be a Punishment endured by the Creature, while it exists, for it is not annihilated while it exists, and that which is not, cannot suffer Punishment.

He says, *the common received Notion of the endless Duration of Sinners in a State of Torment, for the Sins of this short Life, appears to me, not only wholly unscriptural, but likewise highly absurd, and contradicts all our best and primary*

Notions of Deity, as a Being of infinite Justice end Benignity. If it appears to him unscriptural, it is the Doctrine of the Scripture, nor will he ever prove the Contrary. The Demerit of sinful Actions, arises from their Nature, and not from the Length or Shortness of the Time, wherein they are perpetrated. If I were to kill a Man, in an *Instant*, which I might do, by shooting him thro' the Head, should I not demerit capital Punishment, for that wicked Action, tho' it was done in a Moment?

And, the Desert of Sin against God, springs from its Nature, and not from the Length of Time, which is taken up in sinning. That is *infinitely* evil, in its Nature, which is a direct Opposition to *infinite* Good; such is all Sin, and, therefore, the Demerit of Sin must be *infinite*, and it justly exposes the Creature unto Punishment, which is *infinite*, in its Duration. Besides, Men will not only be punished for sinful Actions, but also for their wicked Disposition. The Ungodly are *Enmity* against God. Tho' they tremble at his Wrath, they have no Desire after, nor Relish for the Joys, which spring from a Sense of his Love, nor ever will have; and, therefore, it is fit, and agreeable to divine Justice, to take *eternal* Vengeance on Creatures, who will *eternally* slight divine Goodness. Accordingly, of the Wicked it is expressly declared: That, *he who made them, Will have no Mercy on them; and he that formed them, will shew them no Favor* (Isaiah 27:11).

His Account of the heavenly State is *carnal*. Heaven, in his Opinion, is an *earthly* Paradise, *spontaneously bringing forth Fruits*, for the Entertainment and Delight of its Inhabitants. If he should come there, therefore, there will be no Need for him to drudge at the *Dung-Cart* or the *Plough*; without Toil and Labor he will be supplied with *elegant* Food, and *cheering* Drink. This is that Heaven, which our Author is, I suppose, in Expectation of enjoying, after the Resurrection; but this is not that Heaven, which *real* Christians have in View. It is an Account of the heavenly State, which is much more agreeable to the *Alcoran*, than the *Bible*. A *Turk* it may in *some* Measure please, but a Christian, I am sure, is in Hope, of an Arrival unto a State of Bliss, which infinitely exceeds this, in the Purity of its Pleasures, and the Sublimity of its Glories.

This Performance, taken together, is nothing, but mere Skepticism. What is proved therein? Nothing, except this one Thing, *viz.* that *the Salvation of no Mortal is possible*. Perhaps, my Reader may be surprised at this, but it is a Fact; for, he grants, that *unblemished* Holiness is necessary, in order to an Admission into Heaven: That *there is scarce a Person to be found, whose Sanctification is finished in this Life*: That, whenever Men shall awake out of the Sleep of Death and Inactivity, they will awake with just the same *moral Tempers and Dispositions*, whereof they were the Subjects before their Death: And, after all, he knows not whether they will awake out of this State of Inactivity, before the Resurrection; for he says: *If the intermediate State between Death and the Resurrection, should prove a State of Sleep and Inaction*. It is plain, therefore, he knows not but it may. Then all will arise imperfect,

and unfit for Heaven; and such will all the *living* Saints be, when Christ shall come to Judgment, And he asserts, that we *have no Ground from Reason or Experience to imagine, that Men are made holy in an Instant, by a Kind of Metamorphosis*. Now, if we compare these Things together, we must allow, that, if he hath proved any Thing, it is this, that the Salvation of *no Man* is possible; so that but few, surely, will think, he deserves Thanks for his Labor.