

A
FUNERAL DISCOURSE

F O R T H E

REVEREND, PIOUS, AND LEARNED
JOHANNES THEODORUS
WILHELMUS MAAS,

MINISTER OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH,

O F S T . C R O I X :

Who departed this Life, in the Twenty-Second Year
of his Age, July 23, 1773.

B Y H U G H K N O X , D . D .

Pastor of the English Presbyterian Church of that Island.

Fœlix O si longa dies, si cernere vultus natorum, viridesque
genas tibi iusta dedissent stamina : Sed media cecidere abrupta ju-
vent gaudia; florentesque manu seidit atropos annos. SILIUS.

Occidit, & *felici* steterat vigesimus annus; tot bona tam parvo
clausit in orbe dies,

I nunc, tolle animos, at tecum sige triumphos, stantiaque in
plausum tota *suggesta* juvent. PROPERTIUS

N E W - Y O R K :

PRINTED BY SHOBER AND LOUDON, at the
NEWEST PRINTING-OFFICE.

M.DCC.LXXV.

1775

Abraham Beach's

A

FUNERAL DISCOURSE^E &c.

MY BRETHREN,

IT is with real, it is with heart-felt sorrow and regret, that I find myself called this day by the sovereign and all disposing Providence of God, to pronounce a funeral sermon for your late worthy Pastor, the *Reverend Mr. Maas*, who, but three weeks ago, broke to you the bread of life from this sacred desk. O how *deep, mysterious and unsearchable* are the ways and providences of God! What a *frail, transitory, uncertain* thing is human life! How inadequate is human reason to the arduous task of justifying the ways of God to man, or of unravelling the intricacies, and resolving the difficulties, which occur in his providential dealings? When we see a man blessed by indulgent Heaven with the noblest powers and capacities, and fitted, by the due cultivation of them, for the noblest services to his fellow-creatures; just setting out in a scene of active life, and promising the greatest usefulness in his day and generation.---When we behold such an one, *suddenly snatched away*, in the very *bloom of life and vigour of youth*, and made a tenant of the solitary mansions of the dead; while multitudes of useless and mischievous lives seem to be spared only as a curse to the world, and nuisance to human society; we are apt to be staggered at the di-

vine proceedings, and cry out with the perplexed Prophet, “ Righteous art thou, O LORD, when we plead
 “ with thee, yet let us talk with thee of thy judgments.*
 “ Why do the godly cease, and the righteous fail
 “ among the children of men †?” To what purpose
was all this waste ? Wherefore hast thou *conferred* and
cultivated those powers and talents, which are so quick-
 ly rendered useless by death ? Wherefore tantalizest
 thou thy poor creatures, by just exhibiting to their
 view so rich and valuable a blessing, and then locking it
 up in the dark and silent grave ! “ Surely every man
 “ walketh in a vain shew : Verily every man, even at
 “ his very best estate, is altogether vanity ‡ !”

THUS, are we apt to *charge* GOD *foolishly* and *speak*
unadvisedly with our lips, thro’ our ignorance of the divine
 plan, and the rectitude of the divine motives. “ Vain
 “ man would be wise, tho’ he be born like the wild ass’s
 colt §.” Perhaps the world had forfeited its right to
 such a blessing ;---human society, to such a member,
 ---and the church in which he laboured to such a Pastor.
 Perhaps such a perfected spirit, having done the business
 allotted it here below, is called to some *higher, nobler, and*
more important services in the upper world ;---to do *more*
honour to its Maker, and *more service* to the whole system
 of its fellow-creatures, in some other district of the uni-
 verse of being !---We are short-sighted creatures : We
 know little of the plan and connection of things, and
 therefore are very incompetent judges of the beauty,
 wisdom and equity of the divine procedures. However,
 thus much we ought, as *christians*, to *know* and *believe*
 concerning GOD, the great disposer of all human
 events ; that, “ although clouds and darkness are
 round

* Jerem. xii. 1.

† Psa. xii. 1.

‡ Psa. xxxix. 5 6.

§ Job xi. 12.

round about him, and may conceal his mysterious proceedings from our narrow and limited comprehension; yet *justice* and *judgment* are the firm basis and sure support of his throne; and that *the judge of all the earth cannot do otherwise than right* *.

WERE we to consider man, *merely as mortal*, he would be the most inexplicable riddle in the whole universe, and the more noble powers and greater perfections we discovered in him, still the more impossible would it be to account for the propriety of his existence in the scale of being. For what wise or valuable purpose could it answer, to endow a creature, designed only for a few years existence, with such *noble powers* and *improvable capacities*, as man possesses,---to give him a *conscience* and a *moral sense*,---to inspire him with earnest breathings after *immortality*, and with the hopes and fears of *invisible* and *eternal* things? That is to say, to give him powers, for which (on this supposition) he could have no manner of use, and deeply to implant instinct and appetites in his nature, which have no real objects or gratifications in the universe!

BUT the moment we begin to consider man in the true point of view, as a creature formed and designed for an endless existence; connected with the universe of being; related to the world of spirits; the *living image* and *immortal offspring* of the great GOD; *here*, in a state of moral trial and probation, and shortly about to enter upon a new scene of fixed and eternal realities; the present scene of divine providence begins to brighten up into a *wise* and *beautiful plan*; and a thousand difficulties, which embarrassed the mind on the other absurd and atheistical supposition, vanish into nothing, as mist before the rising sun.

MAN is indeed, *mortal*, but not *wholly so*: He *dies*, indeed, *unto us*, but he still *liveth unto GOD*: while the
body

* Psal. xxvii. 2. Gen. xviii. 25.

body returneth unto dust as it was, the spirit returneth unto God who gave it. The time is shortly coming, “ When all who sleep in the dust of the earth, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, shall live *.” We shall, indeed, *die*, but we shall not *perish*: Not a single particle of our real essential existence, shall be lost among the elements of nature, but every thing which can be called our *individual, identical selves must and shall* exist by the will of God, in an eternal state of conscious happiness or misery.

THE *christian system* alone fully assures us of the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body; thus bringing life and immortality to light, in their full extent. And in order that the late melancholy providence, which has given occasion for the present discourse, may be improved to our confirmation and establishment, in this important truth, I have chosen for the theme of it, that *rapturous, and triumphant exclamation* of the inspired Apostle.

I. CORINTHIANS XV. 55,---57.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law:
 But thanks be to GOD who giveth us the victory, through
 our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IN this chapter the Apostle sets himself to prove, at large, *the resurrection of christians from the dead*, and to answer several objections, which had probably been urged against this doctrine, by some persons of loose principles in the church of *Corinth*. This argument he pursues by shewing the certainty of CHRIST'S resurrection, which proves the possibility of a resurrection in general: and hence takes occasion to shew the connection
 and

* John v. :8.

and relation which subsists between CHRIST and his people ; so that his resurrection is the figure, pledge and security of their's. He is the HEAD, they are the members of his mystical body : He is the first-fruits, and they the full harvest ;---so that if CHRIST, who is the head and first fruits of them that sleep, is risen to a glorious and immortal life, so shall those also for whose sins he died, and for whose justification he arose again from the dead. Death shall not have a total and final dominion over them ; but their dead bodies shall in due time, be re-animated after the similitude of his glorious body, and they shall live and reign with him in life eternal.

THE Apostle observes, that if this doctrine were not true, the faith and hope of christians, would be the most foolish, false and vain things ; and that he himself and the other Apostles, and disciples of CHRIST, who were daily exposed to persecution and martyrdom for teaching and maintaining these doctrines, were guilty of the most absurd conduct imaginable, and would be of all men the most miserable :---That, upon this supposition the doctrine of the *Epicureans*, who teach, that the souls and bodies of men do utterly perish at death, is to be preferred before the christian doctrine which teaches the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body ;---and that, that maxim of *Epicurus*, ' let us eat and drink to day, for to-morrow we die,'---would be preferable to the maxims of *christianity* which enjoin upon us self-denial and mortification, in hopes of a future state of glory and immortality : For, why should we deny ourselves any of the pleasurable gratifications of sin or sense, if in this life only we had hope, and if, after death, there were no immortality of the soul, nor resurrection of the body ?

AND after having thus established the doctrine of the resurrection, and answered some objections against it,

it, he proceeds to give us some idea of the qualities and properties of a resurrection body.---“ The bodies
 “ of christians, says he, are sown or buried in corrup-
 “ tion, they are raised in incorruption; they are sown
 “ in dishonour, they are raised in glory; they are sown
 “ natural bodies, they are raised spiritual bodies.” So
 that, proceeds he, when this corruptible shall have put
 on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on im-
 mortality, then shall be brought to pass that saying
 which is written, “ Death is swallowed up in victo-
 “ ry *.” And while the Apostle is full of the faith and
 hope of this glorious and comfortable truth, he con-
 cludes the argument in the triumphant language of our
 text :---He sings himself, and teaches every true chris-
 tian to sing, “ O grave, where is thy victory! O death,
 “ where is thy sting! Thanks be to God, who giveth
 “ us the victory, through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.”
 In which words, the Apostle probably alludes to that
 similar passage in the Prophet Hosea †, “ I will ran-
 “ som them from the power of the grave; I will re-
 “ deem them from death, O death I will be thy plagues;
 “ O grave, I will be thy destruction.”

FROM the words, *three things* seem principally to offer themselves to our consideration.

I. IF we consider ourselves as mortal and sinful creatures, without the hopes of a pardon, resurrection and happy immortality, death must appear to be armed with a painful sting, and the grave to have obtained a complete victory over us.

II. THAT which arms death with its sharpest sting, and gives to the grave its completest triumph, is sin, or a consciousness of having transgressed the divine
 law

* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

† Hof. xiii. 14.

law: Which sting of death must be still the more formidable in proportion to our knowledge of the divine law, and consciousness of guilt in transgressing it. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."

III. God hath given to all true christians, the victory over death and the grave, through their LORD JESUS CHRIST. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

I shall endeavour (by the divine assistance) briefly and distinctly to consider these three doctrines; and then, having made some practical reflections from them, shall close the whole by paying a small tribute to the memory of my dear deceased friend, your late excellent pastor.

I. THEN, if we reflect upon our *mortal* and *sinful* condition, without any hopes of pardon, resurrection and happy immortality, death must appear to be armed with a painful sting, and the grave to have obtained a complete victory over us.

THE human body is, perhaps, the master-piece of divine workmanship in the whole compass of material creation; at least, in this earth on which we live. Nor will this supposition seem strange or improbable, when we consider that it is prepared by GOD as a meek habitation for the immortal soul, which bears his own image:---And that it was designed as model and exemplar of that vehicle which his eternal Son was to assume, and to which he was to be united, when he appeared upon earth, as the Redeemer of our guilty race; and in which he will shine in celestial splendors, at his own right hand, through the ages of eternity. Its brain, nerves and organs, blood and animal spirits are adapted to the operations of a rational and immortal spirit. Its erect posture and graceful motions bespeak its digni-

C

ty

ty above all other creatures on the face of the earth ; and its very aspect seems naturally to indicate its right of dominion, and to strike the most savage creatures, with reverence, awe and terror*.

Thus curiously fashioned and wonderfully made is the human body, the living temple of God, and habitation of the deathless spirit. But O how great is the change which death makes on this curious piece of the divine workmanship ? How complete is the conquest which the grave obtains over it ?---That body, which was lately the perfection of material beauty and divine contrivance---that wonderful automaton, the amazing structure, symmetry and uses of whose parts, fills every sensible mind with the highest admiration, and evinces, above most other things, the consummate wisdom of him who formed it, and set it in motion ; is now a pale and ghastly corpse---a mass of deformity and putrefaction !---Those eyes, which lately sparkled with exquisite lustre, and contemplated the beauties of nature, and the wonders of the creation with rapturous astonishment, are now sunk into their orbits, sealed in the slumbers of death, and covered with midnight darkness and obscurity !---Those brains, which were late the storehouse of sublime and heavenly Ideas---the medium of noble reflections and divine meditations, are now a lump of stench and putrefaction,---the food of worms !---That tongue, which lately possessed all the powers of persuasive eloquence ; which uttered the wisdom of speech ; poured out the balm of consolation, and overflowed with the high praises of God, seems now to be bound up in eternal silence !---That body, which was lately beloved and caressed by all who knew it, and perhaps even idolized by its friends and relations, is now become a spectacle of

* *Cætera cum terram prona animalia spectant os homini sublimi dedit, cœlumque tueri jussit; et erutos ad sidera tollere vitæ.*

of horror and aversion to every beholder, and is thrust out of sight into the silent grave !

HERE, lies all human perfections, and all human accomplishments, buried together in obscurity and oblivion ! Here lies the beloved hope and joy of the mournful father---the support and consolation of the distressed widow---the stay and succour of the helpless orphan---and the dearer half of the bereaved friend ! Youth and beauty, strength and activity, wisdom and learning, eloquence and greatness, lie buried in one promiscuous ruin. Here the conqueror of the earth falls a victim to death, and becomes the prey of worms.---Here pride ceases to swell, and grandeur is levelled with the dust. “ The small and
“ the great are here, and the servant is free from his
“ matter *.”

How ironically and emphatically does the prophet make the meanest inhabitants of the grave, to insult the Babylonish monarch, upon his arrival in the silent mansions of the dead ? “ Art thou also become
“ weak as we ? Art thou become like unto us ? Thy
“ pomp is brought down to the grave, and the sound
“ of thy viols ; the worm is spread under thee, and
“ the worms, cover thee †.” Indeed, as the wise man speaks, there is no wisdom knowledge or device in the grave, whither we are hastening with a rapid progress. It is the end of human glory---the burying place of all mortal excellency and perfection. “ Dust we are, and
“ to dust we must return,” is a sentence which tarnishes the lustre of all sublunary grandeur, and which without some future hope, brands every human acquisition and accomplishment, with disgrace, vanity and vexation of spirit.

How signal therefore is the victory of the grave over man, as mortal ? How fatal the sting of death

C 2

which

* Job iii. 19.

† II. xiv. 10, 11.

which casts all human glory under so deep a shade--- even the impenetrable darkness of the silent loathsome grave? O mortal man, from whence, and how low, art thou fallen? From being the lord and master-piece of this lower world, thou art become a mass of stench and corruption!---A ghastly scull!---A handful of sordid dust!

BESIDES, if we consider man, not only as a mortal, but also as a sinful guilty creature, this will still sharpen the sting of death, and arm that last enemy with ten-fold horrors. In this view, death will not only appear as the destroyer of our bodies, and the end of all sublunary perfection and enjoyment, but also as the executioner of the divine justice, to arrest the guilty soul, and transmit it to a place and state of endless misery and despair. And this naturally brings me to the

II. DOCTRINE raised from the text---namely--- That, that which arms death with its sharpest sting, is sin, or a consciousness of having transgressed the divine law :---Which sting of death must be still the more painful in proportion to our knowledge of the divine law, and consciousness of guilt by transgressing it. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin, is the law.”

DEATH simply considered, and without the additional circumstances of guilt and immortality, must be very dreadful to man, as it robs him of the life he now enjoys, and all the little happiness and pleasure which it affords him. But if we consider man as conscious of the immortality of the soul, and persuaded of a future state of retribution :---If we consider mortal man, as a guilty obnoxious creature; conscious of having violated the laws of heaven in ten thousand instances; just entering into an invisible and eternal world, there to stand before the awful impartial tribunal of that GOD, who, both
by

by the holiness of his nature, and his rectoral justice, cannot pass by the impenitently guilty unpunished, and just about to receive a sentence for eternity:---If we consider a poor dying sinner, in these awful circumstances, closing the scene of a wicked, careless, graceless life, without any rational hope of pardon, and the favour of his judge---we shall quickly perceive, that the *sharpest sting of death, is sin.* “O Death where is thy sting! The sting of death is sin.”

THE thief, robber and assassin, while pursuing their wicked courses, are cheerful, resolute and intrepid. No sense of fear, or apprehension of danger can divert them from the prosecution of their iniquitous designs. They lay their schemes and concert their measures with the greatest coolness and deliberation; and prosecute them with a bravery and boldness, which would be honourable in a better cause. But, alas! when they are arrested by the hand of justice, and summoned before the tribunal of a judge, how quickly is their courage changed into cowardice, and their cheerfulness into bitter cries and lamentations? How do they tremble and look pale at the sight of the judge, and fall into palpitations and swoonings, on the near view of the gallows and executioner.

JUST so, while the stupid sinner enjoys health, and is running on in the mad career of a drunken, debauched, flagitious life, he is all gaiety of spirits; all merriment and thoughtless frolick. He views death as at a great distance, with absolute unconcern--- curses the demure looks of the religious hypocrite--- despises every thing which might have a tendency to bring him to thoughtfulness and consideration--- begets his conscience with riot and intemperance---and blesteth himself in his own eyes, until, as the psalmist says, “His iniquity is found hateful*.” But anon, he is arrested with a dangerous disease, which shakes

* Psal. xxxv. 2

his mortal frame and reaches his vitals---yet still he hopes the best, and puts the thoughts of death far from him. He confides in the strength of nature, or the skill of the Physician, and cannot suffer himself to suspect that his days are near a period.

At length the obstinate disease rages and baffles the fondest hopes---all means prove ineffectual---life heaves and struggles with convulsive throws ;---grim death, the *king of terrors*, throws off the mask, puts into his hand the unwelcome unexpected summons, and stares him in the face!---Die he must, and leave the world, his beloved idol, and all his sinful pleasures and enjoyments.---He views the judge, seated on a flaming impartial throne, ready to pronounce his final and eternal doom.---He looks back upon a life full of sin and full of impenitency, and has reason to fear, “ that
 “ for all these things, God will bring him into judg-
 “ ment *.” Now he loses courage; he trembles and turns pale. No more *blasphemies* and *damnations*, no more loud laughs at religion---no more joy in the prospect of the drunken frolick, or high debauch---no more putting off religious duties with trifling and senseless excuses. The near views of death have brought the sinner to his senses. He would now give ten thousand worlds to redeem mispent time, and to re-call misimproved opportunities. Sin, the sting of death, sticks fast in his soul, and nothing but the hand of divine mercy can pluck it out: “ The sorrows of
 “ death encompass him, the pains of hell take hold
 “ upon him, and nothing but the powerful voice
 “ of divine forgiveness, can speak peace and conso-
 “ lation to his anxious, distressed, perplexed soul *.”

Thus you see, my brethren, how justly the Apostle terms sin, *the sting of death* ; and how dreadful a sense of guilt

* Eccl. xi. 9.

* 1m. cxvii. 3.

guilt increases the horrors of the dark and silent grave: Death armed with his sting, is stiled by Job, with the greatest propriety, **THE KING OF TERRORS***. And it is little wonder, if many are kept all their life-time subject to bondage, through the fear of death, when they consider it as armed with the terrors of a wicked, impenitent life †.

BESIDES, the Apostle intimates, that the “ strength of sin is the law.---By the law, is the knowledge of sin. There could be no sin, if there were no law; for sin is the transgression of the law ‡:” Consequently, the more light and knowledge of the divine law we have sinned against, still the deeper will this sting of death be fixed in our consciences. So that, of all men living, an impenitent christian, awakened to a due sense of his condition, must meet death armed with the most painful sting, and the greatest terrors; because, of all men living, he has sinned against the *clearest light*, the *greatest love*, and the *richest mercy*; which circumstance must needs set home the sting of death to its very shaft, and diffuse all its deadly venom through the whole soul. Verily I say unto you, my hearers, it will be more tolerable for the most ignorant and barbarous heathen lands, at the hour of death and day of judgment, than for such of us as shall go down to the grave, impenitently from under the meridian light of the glorious Gospel.

How must it at once increase and justify our condemnation, that light is come into the world, and shines around us, while we prove, that we prefer darkness to this light, by an obstinate perseverance in our evil deeds? But I now proceed to the

III. GENERAL

* Job xviii. 14.

† Heb. ii. 15.

‡ Rom. vii. 7. 1 John iii. 4.

III. GENERAL doctrine proposed, namely, " GOD hath given unto all true christians, the victory over death, and the grave, by our LORD JESUS CHRIST;" so that they have reason, with the Apostle, in the nearest prospects of death, to begin this triumphant song, " O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! Thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

THE Gospel, my brethren, is the great *Placart, Manifesto*, and *deed of conveyance* of this grace of GOD, to believing, repenting sinners. Here we see death disarmed of its sting, and the grave despoiled of its trophies, and triumphed over, by our all-victorious Redeemer. Here life and immortality are fully and clearly brought to light; the *glories* and *beatitudes of heaven* are fully and clearly revealed, and *hell* and *destruction* have no covering. Here CHRIST is exhibited in all his saving offices, as an almighty and all-compassionate Redeemer, both from sin and death. He came to " destroy the works of the devil, of which sin is the chief---to seek and save that which was lost,---to die the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to GOD---and to lay down his life a ransom for sinners. He bare our iniquities, and made his soul an offering for sin." The Gospel message and record is, " that GOD is in Christ, reconciling a guilty world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:---That GOD hath given unto us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son; so that, whosoever believeth on the Son of GOD, shall not perish, but have everlasting life---and that, whosoever cometh unto him," in the way of faith and repentance, " he will, in no wise cast them out*."

Now,

* 2 Cor. v. 19. John iii. 16, 36.==vi, 37. 1 John v. 11, 12.

Now, the true believer obtains a victory over sin, which is the sting of death, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in the following respects.

1. CHRIST takes away the *guilt of sin*, which is the venom and deadly poison of this sting, *by the sacrifice of himself*; by which he has made atonement, and purchased redemption, for all those who comply with the terms of his Gospel. The sins of believers (as to their guilt and condemning power) are washed away in his most precious blood; that blood which was *shed for the remission of sin*, and which *cleanseth from all sin*; even that *all-purifying fountain* which was opened in the *house of David*, and for the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, to wash away sin and uncleanness*. No sooner is the sinner, enabled to lay hold on Christ by faith, and apply to him in the way of the new covenant, but his guilt is considered as expiated and done away by the sacrifice of Christ, and the merit and righteousness of Christ, is imputed to the believer for justification and eternal life; so that there is “now no condemnation to them who are thus
“ in CHRIST; who walk not after the flesh, but after
“ the Spirit †.” The sentence of the divine law, and the wrath of GOD due to sin is removed from him, and he is made to inherit the “blessedness of those
“ whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are co-
“ vered; even the blessedness of that man, unto whom
“ the LORD imputeth not iniquity ‡.”

IN this respect, sin (as to the true believer) received its *death-wound on the cross of CHRIST*, and was triumphed over as a vanquished tyrant by the Captain of our salvation, in his expiring agonies, when he cried out, “It
“ is finished, and bowing down his head, gave up the
“ ghost.” Then and there, as the Prophet expresses it,

D

did

* Matth. xxvi. 28. 1 John i. 7. Zech. xiii. 1.

† Rom. 3d and 4th Chapt. viii. 1.

‡ Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.

did he “ finish transgression, make an end of sin, and “ bring in an everlasting righteousness,” for all those of every age and nation, who embrace the offers, and comply with the terms, of his everlasting Gospel *. Again,

2. CHRIST takes away the *power, love and dominion* of sin from the believer, (as it is a principle of rebellion and uncleanness) by the *influences of his regenerating and sanctifying Spirit*. By these he changes and rules in the believer’s heart; mortifies and subdues his corruptions and lusts; supports him under trials and temptations; gives him patience and resignation under afflictions; excites and cherishes his graces, and gradually renews and sanctifies his nature, until he has fitted and prepared him for his own enjoyment, and for *the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect* in the upper world. Thus is the christian able to do all things necessary to salvation, *through CHRIST who strengtheth him; and is made a conqueror, and more than a conqueror over all his spiritual enemies, “ through CHRIST who loved “ him and gave himself for him †.”*

3. GOD hath given unto true christians the victory over the grave, by the “ firm assurance of a glorious “ resurrection unto life and happiness eternal, through “ our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”---His resurrection is the pledge, model, and security of their’s. He *conquered death, and triumphed over the grave as a public person and covenant head of his people*. What he did and what he obtained was for their benefit and on their behalf. He arose from the dead as the first fruits of them that sleep, and, having entered triumphantly into heaven, took possession of the purchased inheritance, and the promised mansions of glory, for his redeemed ones, as their *fore-runner and elder brother*. The grave could not hold the body of CHRIST a prisoner; neither shall it be able to detain

* Dan. ix. 24.

† Philip. iv. 13. Rom. viii 37.

detain the bodies of true believers, who are all prisoners of hope, and partakers of their Master's triumphs. *All power is given unto him, and he hath the keys of death and of the invisible world.* CHRIST arose victorious on the resurrection morning; and so shall the bodies of believers who sleep in Jesus: But every one in his own season; *First, CHRIST, who is the first-fruit, and afterwards, them that are CHRIST's at his coming.* And then shall come to pass that saying which is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction." * Then shall the *sea* give up her dead in swarming multitudes, and *hell* and the *grave* shall give up the dead that are therein. The dust of the saints shall be rallied from all quarters of the earth by the omnipotent command of GOD, and be rebuilt into new forms of immortal youth and beauty. "The multitude of them who sleep in the dust of the earth shall then awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. They that have been wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they who have turned many unto righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever †.

HENCE, my brethren, you see the *ground* and *reason* of the Apostle's triumph in our text; "O death, where is thy sting, &c." I now proceed to make some practical reflections on the doctrine. And

1. How unhappy are those who are deprived of the light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST; who dwell in the regions of Heathen darkness, or who are overshadowed by the thick clouds of Mahometan delusion; upon whom the *sun of righteousness* has not arisen, bringing healing, and salvation under his wings?

D 2

How

* 1 Cor. xv. 13,---54. Hos. xiii. 14.

† Dan. xii. 2.

How doubtful, how precarious, how absurd are their notions of a future state? How mean and unworthy are their ideas of the immortality of the soul, and of the rewards and punishments which await them in another world? And consequently, how weak and ineffectual are their motives to holiness in this world? The *Pythagorean doctrine* of transmigration of souls from one body to another, is loaded with absurdities. The *poetical fictions* of *Tartarus* and *Elysium*, are such childish and ridiculous whimsies, as disgrace the human understanding;---and the *paradise of Mahomet*, is such a sensual and ludicrous dream, so derogatory from the purity and holiness of God, and so unsuitable to the nature of a reasonable, immortal spirit, that it may be justly termed *the paradise of fools*. And yet the *Heathen* and *Mahometan* religions pretend to give us no more rational accounts of the state of man after death than these.

O how ought our souls to melt with compassion, for the melancholy and comfortless circumstances of such as live in those lands of darkness, and habitations of cruelty, where the light of the Gospel hath not shined? How should this deplorable condition of Heathen and Mahometan nations, excite our earnest and fervent supplications to the Father of lights, that he would be pleased to cause the sun of righteousness to shine upon them with direct beams; that he would transpierce their midnight darkness, with an outstretched ray from himself;---and that he would speedily fulfil his ancient predictions, by “giving his Son the Heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession;---so that the knowledge of the LORD may cover the whole earth; and that from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, his name may be known, confessed and adored.”

2. How

2. How glorious and distinguishing are the privileges of *christians*, unto whom *life and immortality are clearly brought to light by the Gospel*?---We are not left in perplexing doubts and uncertainties, about the *nature and duration* of our souls. We are not left to grope for the evidences of a future state, amongst the fables of *Heathen mythology*, or the uncertain reasonings of *Pagan philosophy*. We are not left to trace the proofs of our future existence, by the obscure glimmerings of nature's light; nor to sit down and feast our imaginations, with the impure and ludicrous representations which the *false prophet of Mecca*, has given of this interesting truth.

THE same *potent voice* which, at first, spoke us out of nothing, and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, has assured us, that, although the body must return for a while, to its original dust, yet the spirit shall return unto him who gave it; and that both these integral parts of our nature after a short separation, shall be again re-united, and qualified for a life of eternal happiness or misery, according to the deeds now done in these bodies. This *eternal life and death* are now clearly set before us, and a method proposed by infinite mercy, and confirmed by unfailing faithfulness, in which we may obtain the former and escape the latter. An aggravated woe, shall therefore, be unto us, *my friends*, if having this light, we either despise or reject it, and love darkness rather; nor can we at all hope to *escape, if we neglect so great a salvation*.

3. WE learn from the doctrine that the "sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin, is the law." How dreadful therefore, must be the case of those sinners *at the hour of death*, who have lived impenitently under the clear light of the Gospel?----If our guilt is the *more aggravated*, in proportion to the clear-

ness of that light against which we have sinned, (as certainly it is) with what dreadful terrors must this sting of death be armed to those, who have been perpetually sinning under the *noon-tide light of the glorious Gospel*, and against the *infinite riches of that love*, and those *tender compassions*, which it exhibits to all those who break off their sins by repentance, and make timous application to a gracious Redeemer?

SINNERS little consider, that, by *every known and wilful sin* against Gospel light and mercy, they are sharpening the sting of death, and increasing the terrors of that last enemy,---God grant that the near prospects of *death*, and the terrors of a guilty, awakened *conscience*, may not give any of us here present, the *first conviction* of this awful, important *truth*:---But that, having timely warning, we may prevent these terrors, by a *speedy application* to that Almighty Redeemer, who has *destroyed him*, who had the *power of death*; and who alone is able to deliver us from the guilty, *distressing fears* of our last enemy.

4. AND lastly: What thanks do real christians owe to GOD, who giveth them the victory over the fears of death through our LORD JESUS CHRIST? No *human considerations*, no motives drawn from *reason* or *philosophy* could possibly render the mind of a man (of a thinking, accountable creature, conscious of its own guilt and immortality) superior to the terrors of death. When *eternity* lies open to our view, and we have no satisfying, well-grounded hope that we shall be happy for ever, the hesitating, unassured soul must needs *recoil* and *shudder* at the thoughts of launching out into the unseen untried world of spirits! 'Tis only the *almighty supports of religion* which can then give us *true fortitude*, and make us conquerors through JESUS CHRIST.---Nor can these supports avail us either,
unless

unless they are set home upon our souls, and made our own by the exercise of that faith which is the gift of God. " It is God who must work us for " that self same thing, by giving us the earnest of " the spirit*.

WELL therefore, may the Apostle put this *grateful* song into the mouth of every true *christian*; " Thanks " be unto GOD who giveth us the victory, through " our LORD, JESUS CHRIST." Our sufficiency for this last combat, as well as for every other part of the christian warfare, is only of GOD, who teacheth our hands to war, and our fingers to fight. O how happy are those who have a reconciled GOD, and an all-gracious Redeemer to flee to, in the last agonies of dissolving nature, when the *world* with all its vain supports, and deceitful friendships, is flying away like a shadow---when the heart and the flesh are *failing*, and the departing spirit taking its flight into *eternity*! Thrice happy they, who, at that *dreadful moment*, can, with a steady and unshaken faith, sing the Apostle's triumphant song, " O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

I SHOULD now conclude, by paying a small tribute to the memory of *my dear deceased friend, your late deceased pastor*.---But in this I am in a great measure anticipated, by a pretty full sketch of his character, as a *man*, a *scholar*, a *christian*, and a *divine*, which has already appeared in the public prints*.

I SHALL

* 2 Cor. v. 5.

† On Friday's evening, the 23d instant, about 8 o'clock, died of, a putrid bilious fever, universally regretted and lamented, the truly Revd. and very respectable JOHANNES THEODORUS WILHELMUS MAAS, in the meridian or rather prime of life and vigour of all his powers, being aged about 22 years. He was a native of Westphalia in Germany, and has officiated as Minister of the Dutch congregation in this Island near four years, to the universal satisfaction, and with the high approbation, of all his people, who justly deemed themselves

I SHALL therefore confine what I have here to say of him, to his ministerial relation to you, and his pastoral

themselves uncommonly happy in the possession of so worthy and excellent a Pastor.

His having been ordained to the work of the ministry at the uncommon early period of 18 years, and that, not only with the approbation, but applause, of his learned examiners, is, at once a proof of the amazing strength of his mental powers, his assiduous application to his studies, and the rapid progress he made in them. And, indeed, it appears by several letters received from some of the most learned professors in Holland, since his residence in this island, that he was reputed a very learned man when he left Europe, and that he stood a fair chance for a Professorship at his return from his pilgrimage in St. Croix. He was also deemed a kind of prodigy for parts and learning by the most capable judges in North-America, in his late voyage thither for his health; and I am well assured, that his services in the Gospel ministry were earnestly solicited by, and would have been highly acceptable to, some of the most pious and intelligent congregations on that continent.

His talents for the Christian ministry was very eminent. He possessed every natural power, and acquired accomplishment which is requisite for the most useful and reputable discharge of that sacred function. All competent judges allowed him to have been an accurate scholar and good philologist. He had a sound, clear, penetrating judgment, a lively imagination, a prompt and tenacious memory, and an easy, graceful elocution. It cost him little pains to compose, and much less to commit his sermons.

He reasoned justly, and had a particular felicity in communicating his sentiments with ease, clearness and precision. As a disputant, he discovered great penetration and a fine discernment. He quickly perceived the pinch of an argument, unravelled its intricacies detected its sophisms, and, from a number of clear first principles, which he had fixed to himself both in philosophy and divinity, brought out the conclusion he desired, by a clear, easy, logical deduction. In short, few men had clearer heads, or a finer talent for reasoning, than Dominie Maas had. Nor is this much to be wondered at, if we consider what a number of the best books, in many languages, he had devoured and digested, and that he retained almost every thing which he had either read or heard. Such powers as these, had they been carefully cultivated for a few years longer, before he entered upon a public scene of active life, must have rendered him one of the greatest men, perhaps, of the present century.

He

pastoral care and inspection over this church. This congregation, it would seem, has been very fortunate, in a succession of eminently learned ministers; men of fine talents and great

He suffered no man to despise his youth: Although, an easy, facetious, agreeable companion, yet he had a certain dignity, gravity and decency in all his deportment which commanded veneration and respect, and which, as it was the certain index of a chastized and well governed mind, did great honour to his profession as a clergyman, especially at an age like his.

Although from conviction, he had fixed upon that scheme of thinking in divinity called Calvinism, and was one of its most rational and ingenious advocates, yet he had too much good sense to exclude from his charity, those who differed from him in smaller matters: He well knew the power of prejudice, and that many of the disputables in religion, are such as divine authority has not clearly decided, as human reason has not been able to decide, and therefore such cannot be absolutely necessary to salvation, and as good men may differ about salvation.

And, which graces and crowns every other useful talent and amiable accomplishment, his moral character was fair and irreproachable, and his piety conspicuous and exemplary. In his pulpit discourses, which were well studied, solid and energetic, and delivered with that *pathos* and solemnity which became the sacred desk, he continually drove at the important point of bringing sinners home to God, through the atonement, mediation and intercession of a Redeemer, and by the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit.

Nor was his private life a disgrace or contradiction to his pulpit exhibitions. He was an example to his flock in every christian grace and virtue, and may be said, with those grains of allowance which must ever be made to human frailty, have lived the morality and divinity which he taught. His private conversation was ever either manly and philosophical, or grave, serious and edifying. It was next to impossible, that any conversation, in which he bore a part, should degenerate into subtlety or childish impertinence; nor (such was his talent for cultivating and moralizing every subject) was it well possible to be an hour in his company, without being either wiser or better.

To conclude this imperfect sketch: It is not an easy task to do justice to so great, so good, and every way so singular a character, as that of the Rev. Mr. Maas. In him the Dutch church of St. Croix has lost an *excellent pastor*, the community an *useful member*, learning a *bright ornament*, his wife and child an *affectionate husband* and *fond parent*, and the world a *good man*, whilst I, alas! am left to lament the loss of a candid, edifying, and much beloved friend.

great abilities ; turning and shining lights. The great head of the church, and chief shepherd and bishop of souls, has distinguished you, above many other parts of his Gospel vineyard, by sending among you a succession of the choicest of his instruments ; men eminently qualified to advance his own glory and promote your best interests. God hath been long carrying on a treaty of peace and reconciliation with you by some of the choicest of his ambassadors ; rising up early and sending them, praying you, in CHRIST'S *stead, that you would be reconciled unto God.* Very eminent and singular have been your means of *knowledge* and of *grace* ; and permit me just to observe to you, by the way, that proportionably great will be your *guilt* and *condemnation*, if your improvements in the divine life have not been *answerable*, and if you have continued fruitless and impenitent under these divine cultivations : For, it is an invariable maxim in the divine government, that *where God hath given much, there will he require the more*, and that he will require a just improvement of the *talents* and *opportunities* he has conferred on his rational creatures : And hence it is, “ that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomor-
 “ rha on the day of judgment, than for Caperna-
 “ um, and Bethsaida, and those other cities, where
 “ most of our Saviour's mighty works were done, and
 “ his luminous doctrines preached .”

NOR was this last servant of GOD, which he sent amongst you, (though but a stripling like young David) perhaps at all inferior to any of his predecessors, whether we consider his natural powers, his acquired accomplishments, or *moral* and *religious qualifications*. He early laid in an *excellent furniture* for the discharge of the sacred office. He had studied the scriptures, with the best commentators upon them, and that system of divinity which had adopted, with
 a correctness

a correctness and accuracy, which would have done honour to the most aged and experienced divine. In
 “ a word ; “ he was a scribe well instructed unto the
 “ kingdom of heaven : A good house-holder, bring-
 “ ing forth out of the treasure of his studies and of his
 “ heart, things both new and old *. A workman,
 “ who needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the
 “ word of truth †.”

He had an high and honourable opinion of the dignity and importance of the sacred office, and especially *the business of preaching*; and justly concluded, that, if ever men are accurate in their *ideas*, just in their *reasonings*, clear in their *method*, and correct in their *language*, it ought to be when they appear in the sacred desk, as the *embassadors* of CHRIST, teaching unto their fellow-men the way of salvation. He had a *mean* opinion of those unpremeditated, extempore effusions of *uninspired* men, which pass with many for the best kind of Gospel preaching. He could not *thus* serve GOD, and put off his hearers, with what cost him *nought*; nor offer the *lame* and *blind* in sacrifice, while there were *better in the fold*. His sermons were *well studied, methodical and accurate compositions*; and many of them, I doubt not, would do *honour* to his memory, and give pleasure and edification to the church of CHRIST, were they permitted to appear in print. He was a *truly evangelical preacher*: I have often heard him declare, that he did not deem that to be a *christian sermon*, wherein the method of a sinner's salvation through CHRIST, was not *so clearly* laid open, as that the most ignorant and stupid hearer might be left wholly inexcusable before GOD; and I have reason to believe, that his practice, as a Preacher, was agreeable to this favourite sentiment.

E 2

His

* Matt. xiii. 52.

† 2 Tim. ii. 15.

His scheme of practical divinity was this : ‘ That
 ‘ men, by nature and sin, are corrupt, impotent and
 ‘ lost creatures, and must utterly perish without the power-
 ‘ ful aid of a Redeemer : That they must be holy, in or-
 ‘ der to their being happy : That this necessary Gospel,
 ‘ holiness or righteousness, must have its foundation laid
 ‘ in spiritual regeneration, or a total radical change and
 ‘ new birth of the soul, by conversion ; and that it
 ‘ must be carried on unto perfection, by the sanctify-
 ‘ ing influences of the same Spirit, in a course of
 ‘ constant watchfulness, self-denial and mortification,
 ‘ and in a diligent attendance on all the appointed
 ‘ means and ordinances of grace : That the tree
 ‘ must first be made good before its fruit can be
 ‘ good : That the fountain of the heart must be
 ‘ first purified, before the streams of life will run
 ‘ clear : That, by faith we must be united to CHRIST
 ‘ as our living head, from whom we must derive,
 ‘ not only a justifying righteousness, but also those
 ‘ supplies of the quickning, sanctifying Spirit, which
 ‘ can alone qualify us for the heavenly felicity, and
 ‘ make us meet to be partakers with the saints in
 ‘ light.’

He began his ministry among you, by a number
 of sermons upon this greatly important doctrine of
 spiritual regeneration ; and had the pleasure, I hope, of
 seeing some good fruits of it, among some of his hear-
 ers. Nor need I tell, such of you, as have been
 constant hearers, that this has been the constant re-
 port of his ministry all along. His single, his unremit-
 ting endeavours was to bring you home to GOD through
 CHRIST, by a thorough and effectual repentance and
 conversion : And I dare venture to affirm, that he
 hath left a testimony in many of your consciences
 to this truth.

HE prosecuted the delightful work of the ministry with all that *spirit* and *zeal*, which his delicate infirm constitution would permit; and nothing more grieved him than when, through the languishings of nature, he was unable to exert himself with that vigour he could have wished, in the service of God and his church.

LIKE a good shepherd, he was deeply anxious about the everlasting interests of his flock. It is but a few weeks ago, that he gave me a satisfying proof of this with tears in his eyes; expressing his fears, that he had little saving fruit of his ministry among you. This he did in a private conversation, and in the confidence of friendship.

ALTHOUGH his last sickness was rapid in its progress, and flattered us with hopes of his recovery, 'til near the last, yet we have reason to hope that it did not meet him unprepared.

THE morning of the day in which he died, being apprehensive of his danger, he desired me to pray with him; after prayer observed, *how difficult a thing it was to prepare for death on a sick bed*. I told him I feared he was over-anxious about the event of his sickness. He answered: *By no means; and that he had no perplexing fears of that kind on his mind*.

SUCH, my brethren, is the Pastor, such is the watchman of Israel, which you have lost in the Reverend Mr. Maas. GOD hath called him from you, called him from the services of his church below, to the more exalted services and enjoyments of the upper world. His divine master hath called him to give an account of his stewardship among you, and to receive the rewards of his faithful services, through grace. We have little reason to doubt, that he hath obtained a triumph over death, and is now entered into the joy of his Lord. And
O remember

O remember, my soul, that you must shortly give an account of the manner in which you have *received* and *improved* his ministry! ' Be ye therefore followers of him, even as he was also of CHRIST JESUS.' Thank GOD it is not yet too late for you to *recollect* his *doctrines*, obey his *councils*, and *imitate* his *example*. One *laboureth* and another *entereth* into his *labours*. The seeds of knowledge and of piety which he hath sown among you, may yet grow up into a plentiful harvest of grace and glory, if the LORD is pleased to give it root in your hearts, water it and bless it. You are, now indeed, left as *sheep without a shepherd*; but O be unanimous and fervent in praying to the *Lord of the harvest*, that he would send you a *faithful labourer*, who may enter into the labours of his deceased servant, and carry on his own work among you! Beseech him that he would not send you a *famine of the word of GOD*, or *remove your candlestick out of its place*; that he would not utterly take away from you the much abused means of grace, but that he would still in mercy continue them with you to his glory and your final salvation.

AND now, that HE who hath the residue of the Spirit, may not leave you destitute, but may give you a *pastor after his own heart*; that he may *unite you in love*, and *establish you in faith and holiness unto eternal life*, may GOD, of his infinite mercy grant, for the sake of CHRIST. AMEN.