

4. Bibliographie der Schriften

Three Practical DISCOURSES: I. Of the Love of GOD. II. Of Charity to the Poor. II. Of the differing Degrees of Glory. By August. Herman. Franck [!], ...

Francke, August Hermann

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The Different Degrees of Glory.

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The Different Degrees of Glory.

MATTH. XX. 20,—23.

Then came to him the Mother of Zebedee's Children with her Sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him: Grant, that these my two Sons may sit, the one on thy right Hand, and the other on thy left, in thy Kingdom. But Jesus answer'd and said: Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them: Ye shall drink indeed of my Cup, and be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with: But to sit on my right Hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them, for whom it is prepared of my Father.

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TO apprehend the true Meaning of these Words, we must look back into the foregoing *xixth* Chapter of the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, where our Saviour, *ver. 28.* speaks to this effect: *Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.*

This, withoutdoubt, the Mother of the Children of *Zebedee* had heard, and therefore (that we may express her Mind more at large,) she addresses herself to our Saviour in the following manner: “Thou hast given
 “that glorious Promise to the
 “twelve Apostles, that they shall
 “sit upon twelve Thrones, and
 “judge the twelve Tribes of *Israel*,
 “and this at that very Time when
 “thou shalt sit upon the Throne of
 “thy Glory. Now since they are to
 “be distinguish’d above others with
 “so eminent a Prerogative, there
 “will undoubtedly be a considerable
 “Distinction among themselves also:
 “And

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“ And whereas these twelve are all
“ to sit upon Thrones, some of Ne-
“ cessity will approach nearer to Thee
“ than others, and consequently,
“ *Two* must needs happen to sit, one
“ on thy right, and the other on thy
“ left Hand. And oh ! that it might
“ be the Lot of these my two Sons,
“ to be dignified with this Prehemi-
“ nence ! ” This, I think, was the
Substance of her Petition, and of
her two Sons, who consented to it,
(as appears both from the *Answer* of
our Saviour in this Place, and more
distinctly from *Mark* x. 35.) and de-
sired they might be distinguish’d, not
only from other Men in general, but
also in particular from the rest of
the Twelve Apostles themselves.

But our Saviour’s Answer was:
You do not know what ye ask. He di-
rects his Answer to the Sons, as well
as to the Mother, and declares, that
they did not know what they asked.
The reason was, because they did nei-
ther understand the Nature of his
Kingdom, (for they had no other No-
tion of it, than that it would be like o-
ther Temporal Kingdoms, consisting
in the Distinction of outward Ho-
nours,

nours, Power, Authority, and Preferments,) nor what it was to sit on his Right and Left. Not that he denied the Truth of the Thing it self, but only shews them their Ignorance in asking it: Yea, he intimates likewise, that they did not understand at all the Consequence of their desired Preferment, or what it would be attended with, if granted. Therefore He asks them: *Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?* 'Tis usual in the Scriptures, to express the Sufferings by the Cup and Baptism; as *Psal. cxvi. 13: I will take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord.* And *Luk. xii. 50:* our Saviour speaking of his Passion, says: *I have a Baptism to be baptized with.* In like manner, he saith here: *Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?* As if he should say thus: “Your Flesh and Blood prompts you
“to imagine that you could be Partakers of my Glory without Crosses and Tribulations: But I perceive you do not rightly understand
“stand

“ stand that you are first call’d to the
“ Kingdom of the *Cross*, which pre-
“ cedes the Kingdom of *Glory*, where-
“ in you expect to be preferr’d by
“ me; there being no other Way to
“ *Glory*, but that of the *Cross*. There-
“ fore, if you have a Mind to be next
“ to me in my *Glory* there, you must
“ consider, whether you are willing
“ to be next to me in my Sufferings
“ here.”

He refers himself to the Discourse made to his Disciples a little before, *ver. 18: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the Chief Priests, and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to Death.* This they should have laid to Heart, and ponder’d it well, if ever they would gain their End of being next unto him in his Kingdom, and of obtaining the first Places under his glorious Government: For then truly they must enter in by the same Way the Lord himself went through, when he enter’d upon his *Glory*. But as they had been mistaken before, so were they now mistaken again, when the Lord asked them, *Whether they were able to drink*
of

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of his Cup, and be baptized with his Baptism? For they answered him without Hesitation: *We are able.* The Readiness of their Answer, is but too plain a Proof how little they were sensible of their own Insufficiency, and of their Backwardness to undergo any notable Suffering at that time.

This *Presumption* of theirs, whereby they thought themselves able to drink of the Cup of their Master, and to be baptized with his Baptism, gives us a lively Representation of the Degeneracy of Man's Heart, which often flatters it self with being good and pious, whilst it is altogether destitute of the Power and Life of Regeneration. Such a Man maketh up to himself the fairest Hopes of Bliss and Prosperity, he thinks to meet with in the Course of Religion: he would readily serve the Lord, if temporal Happiness would but go along with his spiritual Concerns: For this Reason he puts away the evil Day as far as he can, and when he hears of any Sufferings, he either supposes 'em to be at a great Way off, or makes them much less than they really are: or, he persuades himself to have Strength enough to undergo and endure

dure all, rather than to deny CHRIST, or to be ashamed of him: But in all these Reasonings he is very much mistaken. Our Saviour had here a Compassion for the great Weakness and Blindness of this Mother and her Children, and therefore told them, *Ye shall drink indeed of my Cup, and be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with: But to sit on my right Hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

Thus he foretold them, that in due time after they had been endued with Power from on high, or received that Spirit, by whose gracious Assistance they were to preach the Gospel, it would be also their Lot at last to drink of his Cup, and be baptized with his Baptism; that is, to glorifie the Lord with a Death of Martyrdom, and seal the Truth of the Gospel with the Effusion of their Blood. But yet he adds: *To sit on my right Hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father; or, (according to the Original,) to them ONLY for whom it is prepared*
of

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of my Father : (as the Word *ἀνά* intimates, which is also used in the same Sense, *Mark ix. 8.*) Our Saviour doth not deny that there would be such a Sitting on his right and left Hand : Neither doth he deny it to be in his Power to give ; for that would be contrary to his own Promise, *Rev. iii. 21* : *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne.* But the Import of these Words is this : It was not fit for him to give it to any, *but those only, for whom it was prepared of his Father.* As if he would have said :
 “ It was not such a Matter, as a Man
 “ perhaps might obtain by way of
 “ Petitioning, (like in humane Affairs,
 “ People might beg a Favour of great
 “ Princes,) or, which was conferr’d
 “ by an external regard to some particular
 “ Persons only : But in his
 “ Kingdom, every one would be
 “ weighed, as it were, in GOD’s Balance,
 “ (*Dan. v. 27.*) with the nicest
 “ View, that nothing be found wanting ;
 “ and nothing be done against
 “ the just and holy Counsel of his
 “ Heavenly Father. In as much as
 “ Man

“ Man was made conformable to the
“ crucified JESUS here, (as well to
“ his inward as outward Life,) he
“ should in like manner be made con-
“ formable to him in his Kingdom
“ hereafter, and the Degree of Glo-
“ ry should be proportioned to the
“ Degree of his Humiliation.

Now to make as useful an Applica-
tion of these Words as we can; We
may learn from hence, that for cer-
tain, there will be many and different
Degrees of Glory in the Life to come.

’Tis not without ground, what one
says: *There will be such a variety of Re-
wards in eternal Glory, that hardly Two
shall receive the same Reward alike.* For
tho’ in this Life, Men can never at-
tain to a perfect Knowledge of the in-
ward State, and the various Degrees
of the Christian Life in others; yet
GOD knows every one most exactly
and intrinsically, and will not forget
in the Life to come, to distinguish e-
very one according to that Degree
which he has arrived to here. And
even in this matter will the *Wisdom*
and *Justice* of GOD the more won-
derfully appear; since his Glory is
to be displayed in so many differing
Ways

Ways and Degrees among his chosen People.

The Truth of this Assertion may be somewhat cleared up from the contrary. For even the *Torments* of Hell will not be all alike, but admit of various *Degrees* and *Distinctions*: Some whereof will always be more exquisite, more terrible and intensive than others. Thus the Scripture tells us, that it will be *more tolerable* for some in the Day of Judgment, than for others, *Matt. xi. 24.* And our Saviour makes a difference betwixt him that knows his Lord's Will, and him that doth not know it, telling us: *That that Servant which knows his Lord's Will, and doth not according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes: Whereas, he that knows it not, and doth commit things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes,* *Luk. xii. 47, 48.*

As it is with the Torments of Hell, so it will be likewise with the Joys of Heaven, on which our Text treats more particularly. For the Mother of the Children of *Zebedee* doth not ground her Request on a bare Fancy of her own, but upon the Discourse
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of our Lord himself, who had said before : *When the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon Twelve Thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel.* From which Words it is plain, that the Lord conferreth a *Prerogative* on the Apostles above all the rest, who should attain to eternal Salvation. The same He hath confirmed, Chap. xix. 29 : *Every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my Names sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit eternal Life.* Where he doth not say : And he shall also sit upon Thrones, as the Apostles shall do ; but only, he shall *inherit eternal Life.* By which he plainly declareth, that there will be many different Degrees in Glory to be bestow'd on those that believe in his Name.

Now when the Mother of Zebedee's Children begg'd of our Saviour, that her Sons might sit one on his right Hand, and the other on his left, he doth not absolutely reject her Petition, as a Thing altogether unreasonable and foolish in it self ; but saith only : *The Sitting on my right Hand, and on my*

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my left, is not mine to give, save only to those, for whom it is prepared of my Father: Intimating, that even among the Apostles themselves, as to the Distinction and Degrees of Glory, there would be a Difference, where one should approach nearer to his Glory than the other.

This Truth of the different Degrees of Glory in the future World, may be further evinced by several other Passages of Scripture: as *Dan. xii. 2, 3: Many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting Life; and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt. And they that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* That the Lord here speaks of eternal Life, is plain from the Text it self, which expressly declareth, that some of those *that sleep in the Dust of the Earth, i. e. that are dead and buried, shall awake to eternal Life.* This is generally ascribed to all that are to be saved: But then, some of those are to have the same Prerogative beyond others, which they had here in the Kingdom of Grace. Some of them
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are called *Wise, Understanding, or Prudent*, or such as have here, in the true Prudence of the Righteous, prepared themselves for a blessed Eternity, and at the same time encouraged others, by their holy Life and Conversation, to follow their good Example.

Of some it is said, that they have *turned many to Righteousness*, or have made many good and pious Christians, not only by shewing unto them the Way of Righteousness in their own Life, but also by inculcating unto them the same from Scripture: which being done in all Faithfulness and Integrity, the Lord hath given so eminent a Blessing to their *Planting and Watering*, that by their Endeavours many have been gained and converted. Of the first it is said, that they *shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament*; when the latter are to be raised to higher Degrees of Glory, and shall shine *as the Stars for ever and ever*. If it had been meant in general of all Believers, that they should shine as Stars, there had been no need to exempt those who have turn'd many to Righteousness and by a particular Character, not only distinguish

guish them from the rest of blessed Souls, but set also an additional Weight of Glory upon them; *viz.* that they *should shine* above others, *as the Stars for ever and ever.*

From these express Words of the Prophet, one may most evidently conclude, that the Lord will pass by none of his faithful Confessors, but bestow his gracious Reward on every individual Vessel of Grace, with this difference only, that a particular Crown of Glory is prepared for those *who have turned many to Righteousness.* Not to mention now those, who, in spiritual Matters, have been wise and prudent, and who are accordingly distinguished from a multitude of those that sleep in the Dust of the Earth, and shall awake to everlasting Life; the former having this Prerogative above the latter, that they shall *shine as the Brightness of the Firmament.* And doth not all this abundantly convince us, that in the Life to come, the Reward will not be equally alike, but admit *different Degrees* of Glory?

St. Paul confirms this matter likewise, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42: *There is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the*
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the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars; for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory: So also is the Resurrection of the Dead. The Substance of these Words amounts to this:

[As there is no small difference amongst the Heavenly Bodies, as to their Brightness and Glory, (for the Sun out-doth the Moon in Splendour; and again, the Moon, tho' she borroweth her Light from the Sun, shines however much brighter than the Stars: And again, as one Star exceeds the other in Bigness, Light, and Brightness;) so likewise will it be with the Resurrection of the Dead, in regard either of the different Degrees of Glory which will appear amongst the Blessed themselves, or in comparing their Bodies in the State after their Resurrection with their earthly, infirm, and necessitous Condition, they have been groaning under whilst they were in this Life.

'Tis observable, that the Apostle, after he had set forth the various Degrees of Glory in the Life to come, and explained this Matter by several Similitudes, he at last, in the Conclusion of the xvth Chapter, grounds

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thereon the following awakening Exhortation: *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* For when he saith: *Ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord:* He doth not thereby intimate chiefly, that their Labour in the Lord should always prosperously succeed, and do a great deal of Good in the World; (tho' even this would be true,) but he will encourage the *Corinthians* to consider over and over again, that as they labour'd here in the Lord, so they wou'd be rewarded hereafter; and that the Crown and Victory would be the more bright and glorious; the greater the Struggle had been for obtaining it. That the Lord, for that end, did write down as it were, every one of their Labours and Conflicts upon his Book, and was not *unrighteous to forget the least Work and Labour of Love shewed here towards his Name*, Heb. vi. 10. In what Measure or Degree they had here expressed their Faithfulness in the Service of the Lord, in the same they should be

be rewarded in Glory, at the Resurrection of the Dead. This therefore should powerfully excite them, not only *to continue in the Faith grounded and settled, and never be moved away from the Hope of the Gospel;* (Col. i. 23.) but also to grow always in the Work of the Lord, to the End, that GOD himself might be the more glorified by a higher Degree of Glory conferred on them out of the Abundance of his Mercy.

To the same Purpose it is, what the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. iii. 8: *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one: and every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour.* If all shou'd be equally alike, the Apostle could not have said: *according to his own Labour;* since there would be no Distinction of Rewards, tho' there were a Distinction of Labours here. 'Tis therefore plain from these Words, that, as here the Labour in the Lord is different; (some being done in greater Purity, Fervency, and Constancy of Faith, Charity, and Hope, than others,) so also the Reward and Degree of Glory would be exactly dispensed according to every

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one's State and Condition; that, as no Christian's Labour is in every Respect like to that of another; so neither should any one's Reward or Degree of Glory be equally alike unto that of another in every Respect and Circumstance.

Upon this very Motive doth the same Apostle ground his Admonition given to Servants, *Eph. vi. 7, 8: With good will doing Service as to the Lord, and not to Men: Knowing that whatsoever good Thing any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be Bond or Free.* The whole Stress of his Argument, to persnade them to a faithful Discharge of their Trust, lieth in this, that it was not an indifferent Matter, with what Measure of Faithfulness, or what purity of Intention, they did serve their Masters. He will not have them rest in a bare external Discharge of their Trust, by believing they have done their Duty, when they have outwardly performed the Service incumbent on them; but he will have them consider, whether in the midst of their outward Occupations they have steddily adhered to *Christ*, and with a Mind free from

from *secular Ends*, answered the Will of GOD in their Station. For the pure Eye of Christ exactly observes every one's Works in particular, and pondereth with what Purity of Intention they are done, and how the Heart in all these Things stands affected towards Him. When therefore *Jesus Christ*, the Judge of the Quick and the Dead, doth come to Judgment, we must not think He will equally bestow the same Reward and Degree of Glory on every one of those Servants that are saved by Faith; but rather, that the righteous Judge will reward every good Work, let it be great or small, according to the exact Measure of Faithfulness and Purity of Faith and Love wherein it has been wrought; so that he, who hath done more Good than others, and that with a purer Intention too, shall receive also a far greater Reward of Glory than others. And should not this Consideration prove a powerful Inducement to us to do good whilst we have any Time left for it?

To the same Purpose 'tis said, *Gal. vi. 7: Whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.* This is to be understood,

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stood, first, of the *different Seed* it self which is sown; and secondly, of the *Measure* wherein this different Seed is committed to the Ground: And thirdly, of the several *Qualities* adhering to the Seed, let it be good or bad. In this Sense the following *eighth Verse* is to be taken: *He that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting.*

That this is not only to be understood of the Difference of the Seed it self, inasmuch as it is either *good or bad*, and consequently attended with a different Harvest; but that the Apostle has a further Meaning in it, we may gather from a like Comparison he makes upon this very Subject, 2 Cor. ix. 6: *This I say: He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.* The following Verses do likewise deserve our Consideration; wherein he tells us, that not only the Harvest it self, whereof he speaks, Gal. vi. 8. would be different, either *good or bad*, but doth intimate also, that one should have a richer and a more blessed Crop
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or Harvest than another, according to the just Proportion and Measure he had sowed here, either *sparingly*, or *bountifully*, that is, according as he had been a sincere Labourer by Faith in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But as there is a Difference in the good Seed it self ; (for those that sow *Oats*, *Barley*, *Rye*, or *Wheat*, they sow all good Seed, yet one sort is better and more pretious than the other:) so it is in spiritual Matters also. The more pretious the Seed is, *i. e.* the purer, and the more unmixed that Love is, wherein the Christian has acted for the sake of his Lord and Master, the more glorious will also be the Time of Reaping that succeeds it.

The same Matter is hinted at by the Apostle, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10 : *Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Where the Words : *according to that he hath done*, intimate not only, that every Wickedness should receive its condign Punishment,

and every good Work, the promised Reward ; but also, that the more Sin any one had committed, the greater his Punishment should be: And the more Zeal, Fervency, Constancy, Purity, and singleness of Mind, any one had expressed in his Life and Conduct, in order to please the Lord, the greater Reward of Glory he should hereafter receive in another World.

Out of the many Scriptures which confirm this Matter, we will mention but one more, and that is, *Matth. x. 41, 42: He that receives a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward ; and he that receives a Righteous Man, shall receive a Righteous Man's Reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a Cup of cold Water only, in the Name of a Disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his Reward.* Here our Saviour most plainly points out the different *Degrees* in the Reward of good Works, extending it not only to this, but even to the Life to come. And tho' neither a temporal, nor an eternal Reward, can be merited by Works, but is entirely conferr'd out of pure Grace ; yet the Justice of
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the Lord hath fixed a *Proportion* betwixt the Goodness of the Work, and the Dispensation of the Reward succeeding it; insomuch, that as the former bears different Degrees in Goodness, so also the Reward bears different Degrees of Excellency. 'Tis then that the Words of Christ shall be fulfilled, *Luk. vi. 38: Good Measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall Men give into your Bosom. For with the same Measure ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*

Now this Truth we have explained to you, both from *Matt. xx.* and other Places of Scripture, is so useful and necessary, that it deserves to be considered over and over again. For if this Consideration be laid aside, Flesh and Blood, as it is apt enough already to make us backward in well-doing, so it will undoubtedly slacken the more, by the Neglect of so powerful a Motive, which is given us by Christ and his Apostles, to the End, that we might be excited to a diligent Performance of our Duty, and encouraged steddily to *run the Race which is set before us.*

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And besides, if People are taught no other Notion of the Life to come, but that all the good Souls there would be on a *Level*, and no difference or distinction of Degrees admitted at all, they will easily fall away into such a Slumber and Deadness, as to fancy they'll come off at last well enough, though they should here spend their Time in the Service of Sin and Vanity, and all along neglect the Hour of their Visitation.

If they have but a few Minutes allow'd them before they quit this World, they think a *Lord have Mercy upon me !* will set them on a Level with all those holy Souls, who from their tender Years, through the whole Course of their Life, have served the Lord with Faithfulness, Zeal, and Fervency ; supposing that these, would gain no Pre-eminence to all Eternity, nor any higher Degree of Glory, notwithstanding all the Good they had done here in this Life. For this Reason, they will take as great a Length of the Pleasures of this Life, as ever they can, and believe themselves to be much wiser than those, who, with all their Might, early and earnestly strive

strive to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. For as these despise the transitory Felicity of this World, and content themselves with the Hope of Glory to be revealed hereafter; so the aforesaid profane Worldling thinks to take the wisest Course, by enjoying both the Happiness of the World here, and then to step into full Possession of that which is to come hereafter. A

The Song of this sort of People is set down, *Wisdom ii. 6, 7, 8, 9: Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good Things that are present: and let us use the Creatures like as in Youth. Let us fill our Selves with costly Wine and Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring pass by us. Let us crown our selves with Rosebuds, before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our Voluptuousness: let us leave Tokens of our Joyfulness in every Place. But this is the Language of Epicurus and his Followers, some whereof will freely own, that this is their Portion and their Lot.*

But as for those that flatter themselves with Hopes of Salvation in the midst of all the Provocations offer'd to a gracious GOD, they suppose they shall

shall obtain Mercy at last, and notwithstanding their continued Course of Sinning, be for ever as happy as those, who, perhaps, *have resisted unto Blood, striving against Sin*, Heb. xii. 4.

Those, I say, fancy to get much more than the fading Pleasures of Sin in this World. For after having taken here their Fill of the Lust of the Eyes, of the Lust of the Flesh, and of the Pride of Life, according to their Hearts Desire, they do not question but they shall, after a short devotional Groan, be translated to Heaven immediately, and be not only eternally saved, but even enjoy such a Portion of Happiness as all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and faithful Followers of Christ, shall ever enjoy. Nay, they will make you believe, that also these might have been wiser and happier, had they not led such an austere and mortified Life here, but taken as much of the Pleasures of this World, as possibly they might; and after the Enjoyment thereof, slept over, by the shortest and easiest way, into a full Possession of unspeakable Joy and Happiness, to
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fit with Christ upon his Throne, and to reign with him to all Eternity.

Behold! a piece of Prudence of the Children of this World, who in all these Conceits think themselves to be very wise, whilst they are indeed the greatest Fools upon Earth. Do but hear what the Lord saith concerning this sort of People, *Mal.iii.13*: *Your Words have been stout against me, saith the Lord: Yet ye say, what have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, it is in vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now, we call the Proud happy; yea, they that work Wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God, are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkned, and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them, as a Man spareth his own Son, that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the Righteous*

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Righteous and the Wicked ; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. Thus doth the Lord decide this matter at once, and calls that a hard Saying against his divine Majesty, when a Man says, it was *in vain to serve God, and no Profit to keep his Ordinance, and to walk mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?* The Children of this World call a pious Life, a Life of *Vapours* and Melancholy, or, according to the Prophet's Phrase, a *sad and mournful Walking* ; whereas nothing can be sweeter and more grateful to the Minds of Men, than an unspotted Conversation ; and nothing harder and more tiresome, than the Service of Sin and Vanity. The Lord himself hath declared the Untruth of this Assertion, and promised to shew at last the vast Difference between him that hath served his Master, and him that hath served him not.

Alas ! these Men are highly mistaken in their Conceits about Religion. They harbour a wrong Notion of the Work of *Repentance*, supposing it to be a thing they had within their own Reach and Command, and that consequently they could re-
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pent of their Sins whenever they had a Mind to it, contrary to the Words of St. Paul, Phil. ii. 13, 14: *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling. For it is GOD which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good-Pleasure.* They do not consider the imminent Danger of their Ways, and how hazardous a Matter it is to turn the Grace of GOD into Lasciviousness, and yet, after so long and horrid an Abuse, depend upon it for Life and Salvation.

Truly, they have reason to fear, lest these Tenders of Grace, which they have rejected so long, may, by a just Judgment, withdraw in Time, and leave the Sinner to his own Ways and Delusions. For both Scripture and Experience confirm the Truth of what is commonly said: *As a Man hath lived, so he dieth.* Upon the whole, it has been sufficiently proved from express Testimonies of Scripture, that GOD keeps a most exact Account of all the Actions of Men, to the very Thoughts and Desires, nay, the very least Motion, and most secret Disposition of the Heart: And that all these, let them be good or bad, shall be laid open

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open in the Day of Judgment, in Order that what is Evil, receive its condign Punishment; and what is Good, its gracious Reward. Let therefore the Word of Solomon be a daily *Memento* unto you, recorded *Eccles. xii. 14.*: *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter: Fear God, and keep his Commandments: For this is the whole Duty of Man: For God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil. Likewise that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Judge nothing before the Time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to Light the hidden things of Darknes, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts: and then shall every Man have Praise of God.*

If one should offer to argue from *Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 16.*: (*If the Wicked turn from his Sin, and do that which is lawful and right; none of his Sins, that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him;*) that those that repented at last, before they died, should obtain a full Remission of all their former Sins and evil Actions, and consequently lose nothing at all of that eternal Glory, which is promised to
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true Believers ; He ought to know, (1.) That the Text quoted from *Ezekiel*, doth by no means speak of such a *Death-Bed* Repentance, as consists in a few penitential Groans, or some transient Fits of Devotion. For thus runs the whole Text: *When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die: If he turn from his Sin, and do that which is lawful and right: If the Wicked restore the Pledge, give again that he had robbed, WALK in the Statutes of Life without committing Iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his Sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him: He hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.* From whence it is plain, that new Obedience, together with the succeeding Fruits of Repentance, must most visibly appear in a returning Sinner, and manifest it self to that degree, that every one may be convinced of his real Conversion to GOD.

(2.) However, though it be very hazardous to put off the Work of Repentance to the latter Days of a Man's Life, yet it cannot be denied, that even a late Repentance may be attended

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ed with a Remission of all former Offences, provided it be but sincere and unfeigned. But then 'tis to be observed, that a late and earnest Repentance is a greater Rarity than People imagine; the whole Scripture affording no more than one only Instance in the Thief on the Cross, and this of so extraordinary a Nature too, as is not to be drawn into Imitation. And there may be some reason to believe, that a Sense of his Crimes was wrought in his Soul immediately after he had committed them, and was now by the Laws of Justice cast in a Prison. But suppose that even a late Repentance be also sincere and unfeigned; yet can so late a Penitent never pretend to reap in Eternity, what he has not sown in Time: whereas others reap there, what they have sown here, every one according to the Measure of his Seed, either sparingly or plentifully, as has been mentioned before.

St. Paul assureth us, that the Work of such a Teacher as hath preached up nothing but *Wood, Hay, and Stubble*, (that is, such things as do not greatly tend to a real Edification, 1 Cor.

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iii. 13.) *shall be burnt, that he shall suffer Loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by Fire.* That is, as a Man is glad to escape with his Life, when the whole House is set on Fire: So likewise such a Teacher will be glad, if his Soul be but saved, (which cannot be without true Repentance,) tho' he should find no Reward for all the Labour and Pain he hath endured in his Ministerial Function.

The same will be the Case of all those, who, tho' no Teachers by Profession, have however, in the midst of all the Acts of their pretended Religion, done nothing but heaped up *Wood, Straw, and Stubble*, that is, have wasted their Time with Trifles and Vanities, rather than endeavoured to lay up in their Souls the pure Gold and Silver of a Faith working by Love, or the precious Pearl of the Kingdom of GOD. If those be saved at last, it must certainly be as through Fire, of a sincere, tho' late Repentance; wherein, nevertheless, they will suffer the Loss of all the Works that did not proceed from a divine Principle. 'Tis therefore beyond all Doubt and Exception, that the Reward attending
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good Works, will not be equal, or equally conferred on all; but that there will be differing *Degrees* of Glory, as so many evident Proofs of the Truth and infinite Wisdom of GOD, rewarding every one *proportionably* to what he has sown to the Spirit during the Time of his Visitation upon Earth.

Those therefore, who defer their Conversion till they have first enjoyed the Pleasures of this World, act very imprudently in the Management of their Soul and eternal Salvation. For suppose they could be sure, that notwithstanding the long Abuse of all the Tenders of Mercy, GOD would give them Repentance at last; yet would they be great Losers by that short Pursuit of Temporal Pleasures and Vanities. For when other Children of GOD, (after having faithfully followed the Lord JESUS, and been constant in well-doing, and from their Heart abhorred evil and vicious Ways,) shall appear at last before the Throne of GOD, adorned with all the glorious Fruits of Righteousness they have wrought here; and find there recorded to their unspeakable Joy,

Joy, that they have here fed and cloathed, lodged and visited the Lord in his *poor* and indigent Members; (tho' all this be done from a Principle of Faith working thro' Love, and not from any mercenary Regard to Gain or Reward;) when these, I say, shall find all their Works again *laid up in Store* whilst they were here; (1 *Tim.* vi. 19.) then others, and even the late Penitents, cannot pretend to reap what they did never sow.

Then it will appear, which of those have acted most wisely. And this Difference which then appears, will stand to all Eternity. We shall then see what a Difference there is betwixt a Child of GOD, which has prov'd obedient to the early Summons of Grace, and never forsaken the first Love, or, after some Coldness therein, retrieved it again; which hath daily improved in Goodness and Grace, and after having finished at last the glorious Fight of Faith, obtained eternal Life and Felicity: And between another, who is saved like a Brand plucked out of the Fire on a sudden. Such a one must pass through a short but painful Contrition of Heart, in order

der to be the better prepared for the Enjoyment of Grace, and that lively Faith which is conceived and born amidst the various Pangs of unfeigned Repentance. Thus is such a Soul saved at last, yet *so as by Fire*. However, the Salvation it self she obtains, will afford her for ever most plentiful Matter to praise and exalt that Love, which hath rescued her on the very Brink of Destruction.

Far be it however to ascribe in the least any Merit or Righteousness to the Works of Men. The Doctrine, that we are justified by Faith alone, out of the pure Grace of GOD, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom GOD hath set forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood; (Rom. iii. 24, 25, 28.) is a divine and an eternal Truth, which ought not to be broke in upon by any other Doctrine whatsoever. The Confession of our Ancestors is very plain upon this Head: *We are justified before GOD, not in Regard to our Works; but we obtain Remission of Sin, and are justified before GOD for Christ's sake out of meer Grace, by Faith; the Conscience drawing at the same Time a Comfort from the Promise*
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of Christ, and believing firmly that we have Remission of Sin, and Mercy, and Righteousness, nay, Eternal Life it self conferr'd upon us for the Sake of CHRIST, who has reconciled us to GOD by his Death, and made full Atonement for our Sins. And again: We obtain Remission of Sin by Faith in Christ, and merit nothing either by our preceeding or subsequent Works, but receive Forgiveness out of mere Grace for Christ's sake. We ought therefore constantly to believe, that notwithstanding our good Works, we are reputed Righteous before GOD for Christ his sake, not for any Merit of Works, &c.

But that this Doctrine of Justification by Grace through Faith alone, doth not clash in the least with the Doctrine of the different Degrees of Glory in Heaven; hereof Christ himself, together with St. Paul, (who most copiously explaineth the Article of Justification,) hath clearly convinced us; as hath been sufficiently proved from *Matth. xx.* and other Scriptures quoted on that behalf.

Eternal Life is entirely a Gift of GOD, *Rom. vi. 23.* But it doth not follow from thence, that the gracious

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ous Reward of the Lord must be *equally* bestowed on all. The Distribution of the Land of Promise may give us some Light in this Matter. This Land was not given to the Children of *Israel* out of any Regard to their Merits or Righteousness, as the Lord himself doth fully declare, *Dent.* ix. 4, 5, 6. And nevertheless was the Partition *unequal*, according to their several Tribes. In like manner there are *many Mansions in the Father's House*, (*Joh. xiv. 2.*) But then they will be *unequally* distributed among the blessed Inhabitants.

I say, all these *different Degrees of Glory*, are by no means to be look'd upon as a meritorious Reward entailed on those that best deserve it; but are as a free Gift only, conferr'd for Christ's sake: They will however help to display the Riches of the Wisdom of GOD, of his Love and Faithfulness, of his Truth and Justice, and in a Word, the *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, *Eph. iii. 8.* As in the Kingdom of Grace, to every one that believeth, *Grace is given according to the MEASURE of the Gift of Christ*; (*Eph. iv. 7.*) so in the Kingdom of
Glory

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Glory to every one, that hath persevered in Grace, shall be given Eternal Life, and a *Degree of Glory according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ*; who alone is the procuring Cause of all the Gifts and Mercies of God. Praised be God for his unspeakable Mercy!

Before I conclude, I exhort you all, that hear this now, or shall read it hereafter, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you consider more and more so important a Truth, and in the Fear of the Lord search the Divine Oracles on that Account: But then search them not out of an itch of Curiosity, to feed your Fancy with Knowledge, (which wou'd but tend to your greater Damnation,) but, *in the Fear of the Lord, to sanctify your Heart through this Truth.* Do not lose any more Time hereafter, and do not stand idle in the Market-place any longer, as if you were not hired: But improve your Time whilst you have it, and present your Bodies, a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. Strive to become every Day more careful, more fervent, and more zealous in proving, what is the
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good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. xii. 2. Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit you like Men, be strong. Let all your things be done with Charity. 1 Cor. xvi. 14. We beseech you, that ye increase more and more. 1 Thess. iv. 10. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things. Philip iv. 8. I conclude my Exhortation to you with the Apostle, from 1 Cor. xv. 58: My beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, (and now perhaps have learnt to understand it better) that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God; be Honour and Glory for ever and ever. Amen.