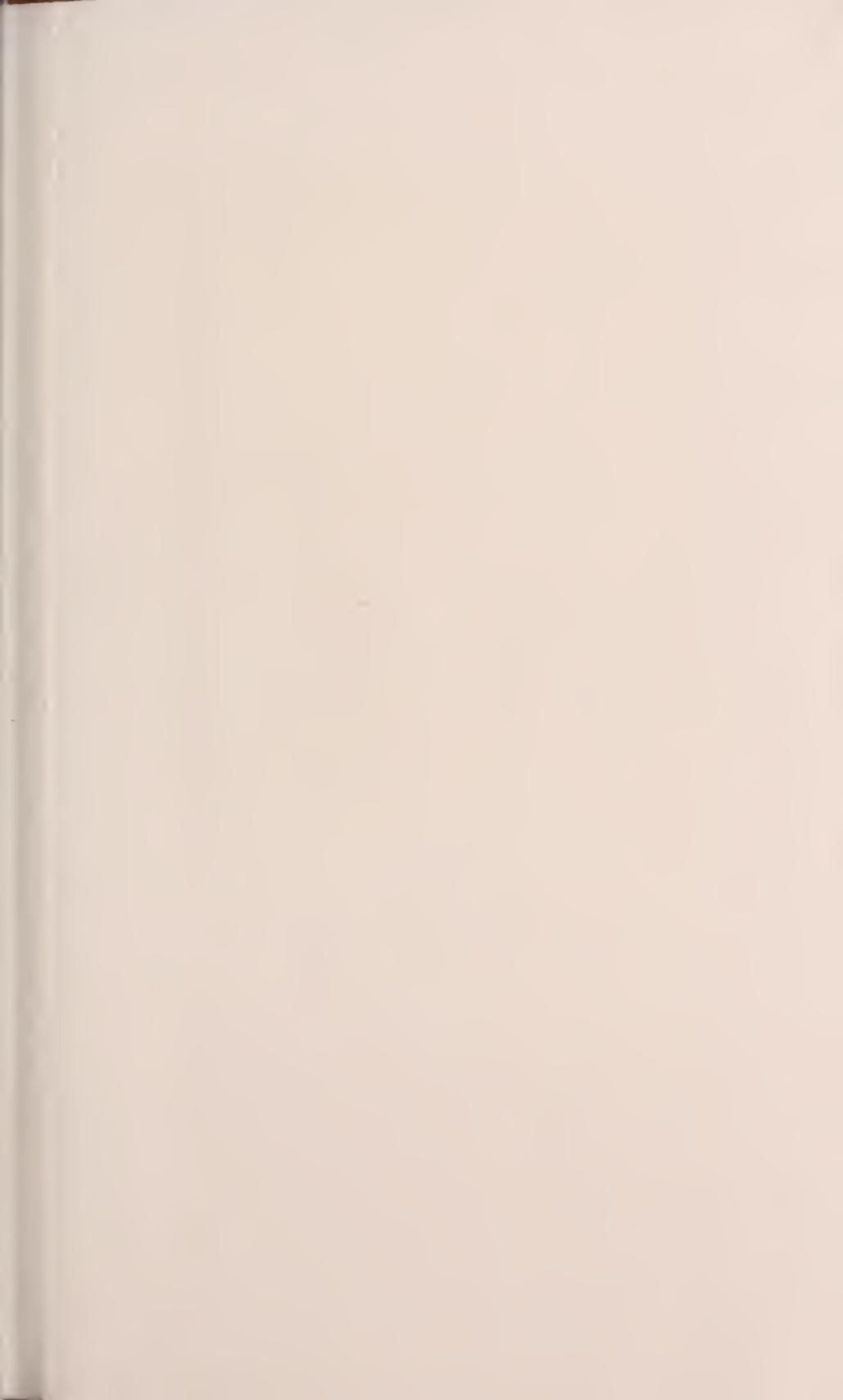
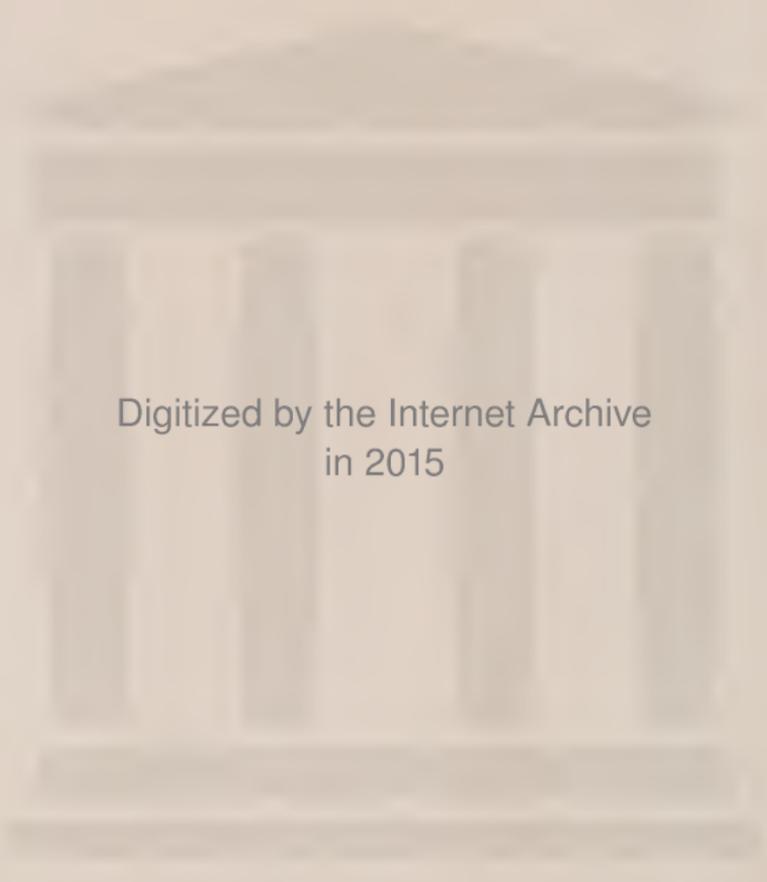


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Essays on some select parts
of the liturgy of the







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ESSAYS

ON SOME

SELECT PARTS OF THE LITURGY

OF THE

Church of England,

THE SUBSTANCE OF

A COURSE OF LECTURES,

DELIVERED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. WERBURGH, BRISTOL.

BY THOMAS T. BIDDULPH, A.M.

Late of Queen's College, Oxford.

ADAPTED TO THE

LITURGY OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA.

....

Hold fast the form of sound words.—2 *Tim.* i, 13.

....

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

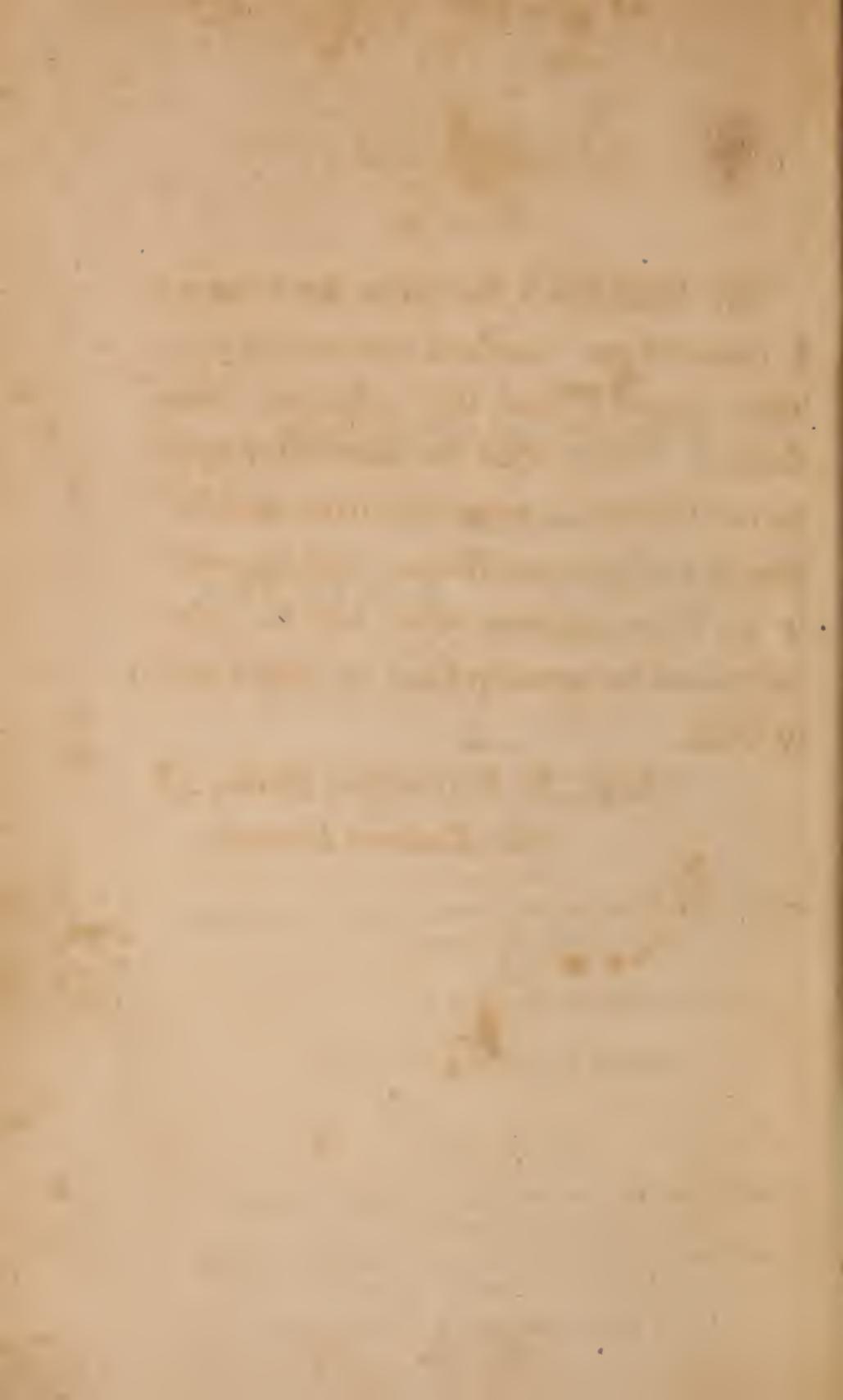
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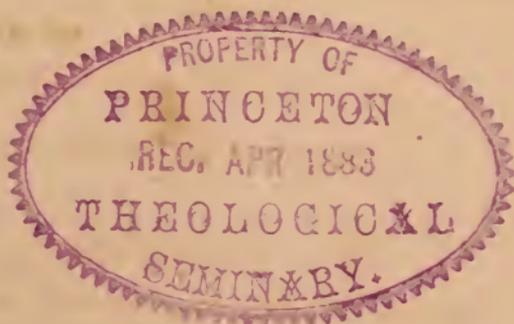
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Mr. Biddulph's *Essays on the Liturgy*

I consider as excellent and useful in a high degree ; and this selection from them is commended to all who would be established in sound doctrine, and the practice of true godliness : and especially to Episcopalians, who will be here instructed to worship God in Spirit and in truth.

ALEX. V. GRISWOLD, *Bishop of
the Eastern Diocese.*



THE [illegible] OF [illegible]
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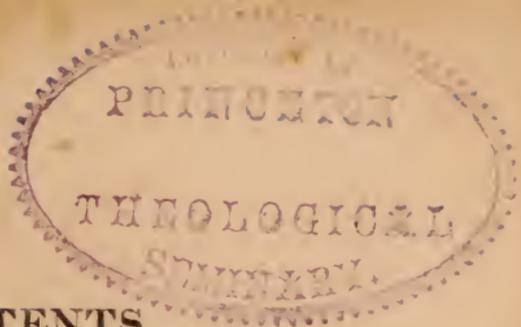
ADVERTISEMENT.

It may not be improper here to observe, that it has been the design of the **American Editor**, only so far to alter the following **Essays**, as their local reference might seem to require.

AUGUST, 1818.

1857

Received of the Treasurer of the
County of ... the sum of ...
for ...
This receipt is valid for all purposes
and shall not be subject to audit
by any other authority.
Witness my hand and seal this ... day of ...
1857.
Attest my hand and seal this ... day of ...
1857.
The Treasurer of the County of ...

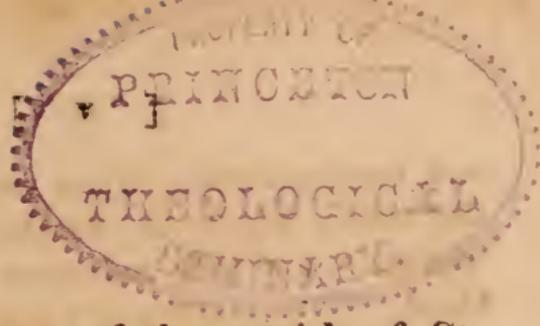


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ERRATUM.

The reader is requested to correct with his pen the following :
page 168, 13 lines from top for *Church of England* read our Church,
in some copies.



To the Inhabitants of the parish of *St. Werburgh* in the city of BRISTOL, and the congregation which usually assembles for Divine worship in their parish-church, on the evening of the Lord's day.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

AS a desire to promote your everlasting salvation gave rise to that Course of Lectures, of which the following pages contain the substance ; it seemed, on mature reflection, that you were the persons to whom I should with the greatest propriety address these humble fruits of my labor. Permit me to say, in imitation of the Apostle, that God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ ; and that my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved. And if the adorable Head of the church should condescend to render the use of so mean an instrument effectual to the furtherance of your spiritual happiness in this world, and to the preparation of your souls for that rest which remaineth to the people of God in the world to come ; great will be our mutual joy

and congratulation, when we meet together in the courts above to worship the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood.

Great is the honor and regard, which I entertain for you, Men, Brethren, and Fathers, the worthy Rector, the Vestrymen, and other inhabitants of the Parish, to which I have lately been appointed the Lecturer. The general respectability of your characters, as members of society, secures to you public esteem ; while the pious example of many among you, founded on Christian principles, attracts the cordial affection of all who truly fear God. But that which more peculiarly on the present occasion demands a due acknowledgment, is that instance of your conduct when, rising superior to vulgar prejudices, and sincerely wishing to glorify God in the advancement both of your own spiritual welfare and that of your fellow-citizens, you unanimously unfolded the doors of your church for Divine worship on the evening of every Lord's day, and some other select occasions ; and also those of your pews for the accommodation of such extra-parishioners as might wish to attend the lecture. The utility of such an institution will be denied by no persons, but such as are blinded by ignorance, prejudice, or disaffection to religion. A Sunday-Evening lecture has numerous advantages. At such a season the wretched inhabitant of the garret,

whose pride and rags prevent an appearance in the house of God during the open day, will often descend under the veil of twilight ; and creep, unobserved by every eye, except His, “ who beholdeth all the dwellers upon earth,” to some obscure corner of the hallowed dome, where to the poor the gospel is preached. And who can say, whether through your zeal in opening your church for general instruction, many of these may not be brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus ; and at the great day, when they shall have exchanged their sordid raiment for the splendid robe prepared to be worn at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, bless you as the instruments under God of their rescue from ignorance, sin, misery, and destruction ? Besides persons of the above description, there is a numerous class of servants in every large town, whose employers either from necessity or a preference of their own sensual gratifications to the salvation of their dependents, detain them at home during either one or both the usual services of our church. Such persons must rejoice, if the least concern about religion prevail in their minds, that you have afforded them an opportunity of hearing the blessed word of God, and joining in His worship, of which privileges they were before destitute. Moreover some of the unprincipled and unhappy vagrants of both sexes, who spend the sacred hours of the Lord’s-day Evening in the streets of

our city, may be expected, either attracted by the novelty of the scene, or feeling the salutary touch of compunction, to drop in among us. And however hardened they may be at present, and hackneyed in the ways of vice, yet the word of God, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, may happily reach their hearts, so as to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. How ecstatic will be your delight, should any such persons, meeting you in the realms of bliss, address you in expressions like these : ‘ Well do I re-
 ‘ member the time, when wandering through the
 ‘ streets of Bristol on the evening of the sabbath-
 ‘ day, unconscious of the value of my soul, and
 ‘ insensible of my state of sin and danger, I was
 ‘ seeking rest, but found it not. In the midst of
 ‘ my career of wickedness and folly, my attention
 ‘ was arrested by the light, which beamed from
 ‘ the windows of your church, and by the sound
 ‘ of your voices, when singing the praises of your
 ‘ redeeming God. I thought, as I had no other
 ‘ way of filling up the vacant hour, I would enter
 ‘ the doors which you had opened. I yielded to
 ‘ the impression of the moment : and there, within
 ‘ those hallowed and ever gratefully to be remem-
 ‘ bered walls, the sound of salvation by grace
 ‘ reached my ears, and engaged my heart. Glad-
 ‘ ly I embraced the message of reconciliation, and
 ‘ began to find religion’s ways to be ways of plea-

‘ santness, and all her paths to be peace. From
 ‘ thence forward I devoted myself to the Lord,
 ‘ and was trained up among you for that incon-
 ‘ ceivable happiness, which I am now brought to
 ‘ enjoy. Come let us approach the throne, and
 ‘ magnify His name together, declaring the won-
 ‘ ders which He hath wrought for the children of
 ‘ men!’ If such an address should ever salute
 your ears, how richly will the pleasing sensations
 excited in your breasts recompence this your work
 of faith and labor of love !

There is a variety of other considerations,
 which claim attention ; the inability or unwilling-
 ness of many masters and parents to read to their
 families at home, and so employ the evening of
 the Lord’s-day in a proper manner ; the certain-
 ty which exists, that many persons, who now at-
 tend a place of worship, would otherwise employ
 their time in an unprofitable vacuity of thought,
 if not in idle conversation or secular concerns ;
 and the advantages accruing to the interests both
 of church and state, which evidently stand in con-
 nection with such institutions. But, apart from
 these considerations and many more that might
 be mentioned, it seems unquestionable that, if
 people will hear, the churches ought to be open,
 and ministers ought to preach. And that people
 are ready to hear the Gospel at their vacant
 hours, needs no other proof than that of ocular de-

monstration, which the numerous congregations that attend your lecture afford.

That the ministers and inhabitants of other parishes may follow your laudable example, and that every spiritual blessing may be your portion both in time and in eternity, shall be the constant prayer of your faithful servant in the gospel,

T. T. B.

PREFACE.

THE following Essays are submitted to the public eye without any idea that the sentiments, which they contain, deserve attention on account either of elegance or novelty ; or that they have any superiority in style or arrangement to other numerous publications on the same subject, as a recommendation to general acceptance. But, since the truths, which this little volume is designed to exhibit, are of unspeakable importance to all persons in every age ; since the writings of a cotemporary are in general more likely to be perused than books, (however excellent) which have long been sleeping on the shelves of our libraries ; and since every writer hath his circle of friends and acquaintance, who, either from curiosity or partiality, will be induced to look into his productions ; the author has been persuaded to put his thoughts into print, praying, that the blessing of the great Head of the Church may attend this small labor of love. He is conscious, how inadequate his abilities are to the undertaking ; but is convinced at the same time that “ the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ;” and therefore presumes humbly to hope that He,

who often chooses for the manifestation of his glory to employ means apparently the most unlikely to produce the intended effect, will be pleased to smile on this humble attempt to promote the interests of his holy religion, and the benefit of his church and people.

Two objects are kept in view throughout the subsequent pages, neither of which can be considered as destitute of importance. *First*, the confirmation of those members of our church-establishment in the precious truths, which our liturgy, articles, and homilies inculcate, who in these “perilous times” are in danger of being “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Many are the agents, whom the Prince of darkness has enlisted and commissioned in the present age for the subversion of those venerable bulwarks, which have hitherto proved so effectual an impediment to the exercise of that unlimited dominion over the minds of men, which he has been always aiming to obtain. Though the author most sincerely wishes success to the gospel of Christ in every channel, through which it is likely to be promoted ; yet he must be allowed to express his persuasion that the sacred walls of the establishment are, under God and in subservience to His most holy word, our strongest barrier against that inundation of infidelity, which threatens to overwhelm the land. A *second* object, no less momentous, is a display of the character of a

true Churchman. For, as the moral law is a *speculum*, which discovers on inspection our likeness or dissimilitude to the image of God ; so the liturgy of the church of England may produce a parallel effect, and represent us in our true colours ; either as dissemblers with God, whilst we profess to embrace doctrines, which at bottom we reject ; use prayers, from which our hearts recoil ; and openly avow an attachment to God and His service, which our lives demonstrate to have no existence ; or else as sincere worshippers of the Triune Jehovah, in whom there is no guile ; and who wish every day to be animated more and more by that spirit of vital Godliness, which our liturgy breathes through all her varied forms of devotion.

Whether the plan of this work will be extended to other parts of the service of our church, will in a great measure depend on the reception which awaits the present volume, and the consequent probability of the usefulness that may attend a farther prosecution of the subject.

As some readers may not be in possession of any of those authors, who have given an historical account of the original compilation and subsequent improvements of our liturgy ; it may be proper for their sakes to subjoin the following short narrative, extracted from “ Wheatly’s rational illustration of the book of common prayer, &c.” — ‘ Before the Reformation, the Liturgy was only

‘ in Latin ; being a collection of prayers made up
 ‘ partly of some antient forms used in the primi-
 ‘ tive church, and partly of some others of a later
 ‘ original, accommodated to the superstitions
 ‘ which had by various means crept by degrees
 ‘ into the church at Rome, and from thence deri-
 ‘ ved to other churches in communion with it ;
 ‘ like what we may see in the present Roman Bre-
 ‘ viary and Missal. And these being established
 ‘ by the laws of the land, and the canons of the
 ‘ church, no other could publicly be made use
 ‘ of ; so that those of the laity, who had not the
 ‘ advantage of a learned education, could not join
 ‘ with them, or be any otherwise edified by them.
 ‘ And besides, they being mixed with addresses
 ‘ to the saints, adoration of the host, images, &c.
 ‘ a great part of the worship was in itself idola-
 ‘ trous and profane.

‘ But when the nation, in King Henry the
 ‘ Eighth’s time, was disposed to a reformation ;
 ‘ it was thought necessary to correct and amend
 ‘ these offices ; and not only have the service of
 ‘ the church in the English or vulgar tongue
 ‘ (that men might *pray not with the spirit only,*
 ‘ *but with the understanding also,* and that he,
 ‘ who occupied the room of the unlearned, might
 ‘ understand that, unto which he was to say,
 ‘ *amen,* agreeable to St. Paul’s precept, 1 Cor. v.
 ‘ 15, 16) ; but also to abolish and take away all
 ‘ that was idolatrous and superstitious, in order

‘ to restore the service of the church to its prim-
 ‘ itive purity. For it was not the design of our
 ‘ reformers, nor indeed ought it to have been, to
 ‘ introduce a new form of worship into the church,
 ‘ but to correct and amend the old one ; and to
 ‘ purge it from those gross corruptions which had
 ‘ gradually crept into it, and so to render the Di-
 ‘ vine service more agreeable to the scriptures,
 ‘ and to the doctrine and practice of the primi-
 ‘ tive church in the best and purest ages of Chris-
 ‘ tianity. In which reformation they proceeded
 ‘ gradually, according as they were able.

‘ And first, the convocation appointed a com-
 ‘ mittee A. D. 1537, to compose a book, which was
 ‘ called, *the godly and pious institution of a Chris-
 ‘ tian man* ; containing a declaration of the
 ‘ Lord’s prayer, the ave Maria, the creed, the
 ‘ ten commandments, and the seven sacraments,
 ‘ &c. which book was again published A. D. 1540,
 ‘ and 1543, with corrections and alterations, un-
 ‘ der the title of *A necessary doctrine and erudi-
 ‘ tion for any Chrysten man* : And, as it is ex-
 ‘ pressed in that preface, was set furthe by the
 ‘ King, with the advice of his clergy ; the Lordes
 ‘ bothe spirituall and temporall, with the nether
 ‘ house of Parliament, having both seen and liked
 ‘ it well.

‘ Also in the year 1540, a committee of Bishops
 ‘ and Divines was appointed by King Henry
 ‘ VIII. (at the petition of the convocation) to

‘ reform the rituals and offices of the church.
 ‘ And what was done by this committee for re-
 ‘ forming the offices was reconsidered by the con-
 ‘ vocation itself two or three years afterwards,
 ‘ viz. in February, 1542-3. And in the next year
 ‘ the King and his clergy ordered the prayers for
 ‘ processions, and litanies to be put into English,
 ‘ and to be publickly used. And finally, in the
 ‘ year 1545, the King’s Primer came forth ;
 ‘ wherein were contained not only the Lord’s
 ‘ prayer, creed, and ten commandments, but also
 ‘ the whole morning and evening prayer in Eng-
 ‘ lish, not much different from what it is in our
 ‘ present common prayer ; the venite, Te Deum,
 ‘ Lord’s prayer, creed, &c. being in the same
 ‘ version in which we now use them. And this
 ‘ is all that appears to have been done in relation
 ‘ to liturgical matters in the reign of King Henry
 ‘ the Eighth.

‘ In the year 1547, the first of Edward VI.
 ‘ December 2, the convocation declared their
 ‘ opinion, *nullo reclamante*, that the communion
 ‘ ought to be administered to all persons under
 ‘ both kinds. Whereupon an act of parliament
 ‘ was made, ordering the communion to be so ad-
 ‘ ministered. And then a committee of Bishops,
 ‘ and other learned Divines, was appointed to
 ‘ compose an uniform order of communion, accord-
 ‘ ing to the rules of scripture, and the use of the
 ‘ primitive church. In order to this, the commit-

' tee repaired to Windsor-Castle ; and in that re-
 ' tirement, within a few days, drew up that form,
 ' which is printed in Bishop Sparrow's collection,
 ' p. 17. And this being immediately brought into
 ' use the next year, the same persons being im-
 ' powered by a new commission, prepare them-
 ' selves to enter upon a yet nobler work ; and in
 ' a few months' time finish the whole liturgy, by
 ' drawing up publick offices, not only for sun-
 ' days and holidays, but for baptism, confirma-
 ' tion, matrimony, burial of the dead, and other
 ' special occasions ; in which the forementioned
 ' office for the holy communion was inserted, with
 ' many alterations and amendments : and the
 ' whole book being so framed, was set forth *by the*
 ' *common agreement and full consent both of the*
 ' *Parliament and convocations Provincial ; i. e.*
 ' the two convocations of the provinces of Canter-
 ' bury and York.

' The committee appointed to compose this lit-
 'urgy, were, 1. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of
 ' Canterbury ; who was the chief promoter of
 ' our excellent reformation ; and had a principal
 ' hand, not only in compiling the liturgy, but in
 ' all the steps made towards it. He died a mar-
 ' tyr to the religion of the reformation, which
 ' principally by his means had been established
 ' in the church of England, being burnt at Ox-
 ' ford in the reign of Queen Mary, March 21,
 ' 1556. 2. Thomas Goodrick, Bishop of Ely.

3. Henry Holbech, alias Randes, Bishop of
 Lincoln. 4. George Day, Bishop of Chiches-
 ter. 5. John Skip, Bishop of Hereford. 6.
 Thomas Thirlby, Bishop of Westminster. 7.
 Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of Rochester, and af-
 terwards of London. He was esteemed the
 ablest man of all that advanced the reformation,
 for piety, learning and solidity of judgment.
 He died a martyr in Queen Mary's reign, being
 burnt at Oxford, October 16, 1555. 8. Dr.
 William May, Dean of St. Paul's, London, and af-
 terwards also Master of Trinity College in Cam-
 bridge. 9. Dr. John Taylor, Dean, afterwards
 Bishop of Lincoln. He was deprived in the be-
 ginning of Queen Mary's reign, and died soon
 after. 10. Dr. Simon Hayns, Master of Queen's
 College in Cambridge, and Dean of Exeter.
 11. Dr. John Redman, Master of Trinity Col-
 lege in Cambridge, and Dean of Westminster.
 12. Dr. Richard Cox, Dean of Christ-Church
 in Oxford, Almoner and Privy-Councillor to
 King Edward VI. He was deprived of all his
 preferments in Queen Mary's reign, and fled to
 Frankford: from whence returning in the reign
 of Queen Elizabeth, he was consecrated Bishop
 of Ely. 13. Mr. Thos. Robinson, Archdeacon
 of Leicester.

Thus was our excellent liturgy compiled by
 martyrs and confessors, together with divers
 other learned Bishops and Divines; and being

' revised and approved by the Archbishops, Bish-
 ' ops, and Clergy of both the provinces of Can-
 ' terbury and York, was then confirmed by the
 ' King and three estates in Parliament, (A. D.
 ' 1548, 2d. and 3d. of Edward VI. chap. 1.) who
 ' gave it this just encomium, viz. *Which at this*
 ' *time by the aid of the Holy Ghost, with uniform*
 ' *agreement is of them concluded, set forth, &c.*

' But about the end of the year 1550, or the be-
 ' ginning of 1551, for the removal of some objec-
 ' tions, Archbishop Granmer proposed to have a
 ' new review ; and to this end called in the assis-
 ' tance of Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr, two
 ' foreigners, whom he had invited over from the
 ' troubles in Germany ; who, not understanding
 ' the English tongue, had latin versions prepared
 ' for them. At this time the sentences, exhorta-
 ' tion, confession, and absolution were added, at
 ' the beginning of the morning and evening ser-
 ' vices ; (which in the first common prayer book
 ' began with the Lord's prayer) and the com-
 ' mandments at the beginning of the communion-
 ' office. Some rites and ceremonies were also re-
 ' moved, such as the use of oil in confirmation,
 ' the unction of the sick, prayers for souls depart-
 ' ed, both in the communion-office, and in that for
 ' the burial of the dead : the invocation of the
 ' Holy Ghost in the consecration of the Eucha-
 ' rist was omitted, and the prayer of oblation that
 ' used to follow it ; also the rubrick, that ordered

‘ water to be mixed with wine ; with several oth-
 ‘ er less variations. The habits also that were
 ‘ prescribed by the former book, were ordered by
 ‘ this to be laid aside ; and lastly a rubrick was
 ‘ added at the end of the communion-office, to ex-
 ‘ plain the reason of kneeling at the sacrament.
 ‘ The book thus revised and altered, was again
 ‘ confirmed in Parliament, A. D. 1551. But both
 ‘ this and the former act made in 1548, were re-
 ‘ pealed in the first year of Queen Mary, as not
 ‘ being agreeable to the Romish superstition, which
 ‘ she was resolved to restore.

‘ But upon the accession of Queen Elizabeth,
 ‘ the act of repeal was reversed ; and in order to
 ‘ the restoring of the English service, several
 ‘ learned Divines were appointed to take another
 ‘ review of King Edward’s liturgies, and to frame
 ‘ from them both a book for the use of the church
 ‘ of England. The alterations made at this time
 ‘ were not many. The habits enjoined by the
 ‘ first book of King Edward, and forbid by the
 ‘ second, were now restored. The prayers for
 ‘ the Queen and clergy were added at the end of
 ‘ the litany, &c.

‘ And in this state the liturgy continued till the
 ‘ first year of King James I. when there were
 ‘ some forms of thanksgiving added at the end of
 ‘ the litany : and an addition made to the Cate-
 ‘ chism concerning the sacraments.

‘ And in this state it continued to the time of
 ‘ King Charles II. who immediately after his
 ‘ restoration issued out a commission for another
 ‘ review, dated March 25, 1661. The principal
 ‘ alterations then made were, that several lessons
 ‘ in the Calendar were changed for others more
 ‘ proper for the days ; *the prayers upon particular*
 ‘ *occasions* were disjoined from the *litany*, and the
 ‘ two prayers to be used in the *Ember weeks*, the
 ‘ prayer for the *parliament*, that for *all conditions*
 ‘ *of men*, and the general thanksgiving were ad-
 ‘ ded : several of the *collects* were altered, the
 ‘ *epistles* and *gospels* were taken out of the last
 ‘ translation of the bible, being read before ac-
 ‘ cording to the old translation : the office of *bap-*
 ‘ *tism of those of riper years*, and the forms of
 ‘ prayer to be used at sea, were added. In a
 ‘ word, the whole liturgy was then brought to
 ‘ that state in which it now stands, and was unan-
 ‘ imously subscribed by both houses of convoca-
 ‘ tion of both provinces, on Friday the 20 of De-
 ‘ cember 1661. And being brought to the house
 ‘ of Lords the March following, both houses very
 ‘ readily passed an act for its establishment ; and
 ‘ the Earl of Clarendon, then high Chancellor of
 ‘ England, was ordered to return the thanks of
 ‘ the Lords to the Bishops and Clergy of both
 ‘ provinces, for the great care and industry shewn
 ‘ in the review of it.”

ESSAY I.

ON THE PREFATORY SENTENCES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE, WITH WHICH THE MORNING AND EVENING SERVICE OF THE CHURCH IS INTRODUCED.

THE liturgy of our church has been considered by able judges a composition of great excellence. It has now stood the test of examination both of friends and enemies for several centuries : and there yet remains a numerous host of persons endued both with sense and piety, who admire the venerable structure. Tho' no argument, drawn in favor of any work from the character of an uninspired author, can be absolutely conclusive ; yet when the subject is religion, the known piety of a writer will naturally bias a candid reader in behalf of his productions. The compilers of our liturgy were men eminent for Godliness. Many of them were persons of high attainments in human literature ; and distinguished by the soundness and strength of their

faith, and the purity of their lives : nor ought it to be forgotten, that some of them sealed the truth with their blood, “ not loving their lives unto the death,” that so they might glorify God their Saviour, and transmit to posterity the truth, as it is in Jesus, freed from the leaven of popish superstition,* with which our church

* It has been objected, (says a later writer on ecclesiastical history,) “ that the liturgy or common prayers were chiefly taken from the offices of the church of Rome.” This is become a pretty general opinion ; but assuredly unfounded. For the agreement, between some parts of our public service, and some parts of the Romish missals, is far from proving the point. We use *the Lord’s prayer* (for example,) in common with the Papists : yet we receive it, not from Rome, but from the New Testament. A pen, not altogether contemptible, affirms that the compilers of the liturgy examined not only the Popish forms, but likewise ‘ *all other* ‘ service books then in use. These they compared with the *primitive* ‘ liturgies : and whatever they found in them consonant to the ‘ *Holy Scriptures*, and the doctrine and worship of the *primitive* ‘ church, they retained and improved ; but the modern corruptions ‘ and superstitious innovations of later ages, they entirely discharged and rejected.’ See *Downes’s* lives of the compilers, p. 150. To this may be added the following observations from an authority incomparably more decisive and respectable. ‘ Our church of *England*,’ says Bp. *Stillingfleet*, ‘ hath omitted none of those offices, in which all the *antient churches* were agreed : and where the [primitive] *British* or *Gallican* [church] differed from the *Roman*, our [present] church hath not followed the *Roman*, but the other. And therefore our dissenters do unreasonably charge us with taking our offices from the church of Rome.” *Stillingfleet’s* *Origines Britannicæ*, chap. iv. p. 237.---The *Gallican Liturgy* (extremely different from the *Roman*) was introduced, it seems, into England, in the beginning of the *fifth* century : and is said to have been originally framed by *Polycarp* and *Irenæus*. The learned Bp. gives a large account of this antient form of worship ; proves it to have been the basis of that now established,

had been unhappily defiled. The names of Cranmer, Ridley, &c. are known and beloved among us ; and will be had in honor so long as protestantism remains the religion of Englishmen.

But tho' this excellent book has been so long in use, there is reason to fear that it has received, and still receives the approbation of thousands, who understand it not ; or at least do not clearly perceive in what its real excellence properly consists. Should the following essays be the means of throwing any additional light on the subject in the minds of any persons, who shall favor them with a perusal : should any, who have hitherto rested in the form, be brought to enter into the spirit of our service ; should the ignorant find instruction ; gainsayers be silenced ; or the flame of devotion in any sincere worshippers be raised to an higher pitch, the author will have his reward. The following essays, however, are not designed as polemical pieces. The author has no desire to enter the field of controversy. There are too many men of war already in the world, and he is determined not to increase the number. All that he requests from his reader is a candour of judgment, and a permission to express in public his own approbation of the services of that church, of which he is an unworthy

and points out a great variety of particulars, in which it differed from the form imposed by the Roman Bishops. See *ibid.* from p. 216, to p. 237.

member. While he feels himself cordially disposed to embrace in the widely extended arms of Christian charity, all those of whatever denomination, ‘ who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ;’ he may surely be allowed, without offence, to give a preference to that establishment, to the doctrines of which he has solemnly subscribed his hand.

The orthodoxy of our public services will be considered by every friend to truth one of its strongest recommendations, if it should appear (as the author devoutly wishes it may in the course of the following essays) that our forms of worship harmonize with the truth of God, as revealed in the bible. Our liturgy is not like a nose of wax, that may be adapted to every face. It is not contrived, like Mr. Pope’s universal prayer, to suit the taste of infidels and heretics. But its language on all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity is clear and decisive. This circumstance indeed will not recommend it to those, who have imbibed the spirit of the present day ; in which indifference to all religious truth, misnamed charity and candour, has overflowed, like a deluge, almost every rank and order of men. Our reformers sought not to please men, but God. They sought not to gratify the pride of philosophy. They took care not to open a passage, whereby man’s fallen reason might be exalted to

the throne of judgment, while ‘ the oracles of God,’ in a state of degradation, are placed at the footstool. Ease of conscience in those persons, who, while they pretend respect for Divine revelation, trample them under their feet, was no part of their concern. But the decisive language of our liturgy will endear it to those, who believe, ‘ that there is no other name under heaven given ‘ among men, whereby we must be saved, but the ‘ name of Jesus Christ.’ Therein the doctrines of the fall, the Trinity, the atonement and saving merit of Christ, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit are asserted in pointed and energetic terms. On these topics it is needless to enlarge at present, as abundant opportunities will hereafter offer themselves of exhibiting the agreement of our church with the one unerring standard of all Divine truth. So clear and defined are the sentiments contained in the book of Common Prayer on these cardinal points ; that every person in our assemblies, who verbally adopts and yet inwardly disbelieves them, is condemned out of his own mouth. And should such a monster of duplicity ever arise, as an Arian, Socinian, or Pelagian clergyman ; continuing such, he would be restrained by his own subscriptions and confession from ever venting his heretical opinions, and thereby poisoning the minds of others, or would be obliged every time he appeared in the congregation of the faithful to proclaim his

own dishonesty. Let the enlarged minds of unbelievers condemn as much as they will, the narrowness of our creed, those, who are concerned for the honor of God and the welfare of mankind, will rejoice that we have such a barrier erected against the admission of those into the fold of Christ, whose business it is 'to steal, to kill and to destroy.' Blessed be God, for the Liturgy of our church !

The variety of forms which occur in our Liturgy and their judicious accommodation to all our spiritual necessities, constitute another characteristic of its excellence. The compilation proves that the authors of it were well read in the present state of human nature. They were well acquainted with the fallen, guilty, corrupt, and helpless state of man, and with the glorious provision which the gospel makes for our present and eternal comfort. Is the christian worshipper oppressed in spirit from a recollection of his sins ? Here are confessions of sin, and deprecations of the anger of God, that will adequately express his feelings : here are promises of pardon, that will approve themselves to his heart, by their exact correspondence with his wishes. Is he joyful in spirit ? Here he is furnished with hymns of praise, that will describe in lively terms the grateful emotions of his breast. We shall find it difficult to point out any situation of a public or private nature, relative either to our

souls or bodies ; but it is comprehended in our admirable forms. But these things will more conspicuously appear as we proceed in the farther elucidation of our subject.

The spirituality of our liturgy is another of its excellences. Nothing is to be found therein to satisfy the conscience of the formalist and Pharisee ; but, on the contrary, every thing that is calculated to awaken attention to the necessity of the worship of the heart, communion with God, and real delight in His service. Herein we are taught that ‘ God is a spirit, and that they who worship Him aright, must worship him in spirit and in truth.’ The absurdity of the language of mere compliment, when addressed to Him, who searcheth the heart, is plainly pointed out : and the worship of our church is adapted exclusively to the use of those, who desire and expect to enjoy on earth, in the courts of the Lord’s house, that which may afford them a foretaste of, and fit them for more refined and exalted pleasures at God’s right-hand for evermore. Much more might be said to the same purpose, were it not an anticipation of what may be with greater propriety introduced hereafter.

Therefore, leaving this general view of the subject, it will be time now to give our serious attention to the preparatory sentences at the commencement of our public worship ; which

exhibit to us the necessity of a solemn preparation of heart for an appearance in the presence of God. When* Moses was preparing to prostrate himself before the dread majesty of God, who ‘appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush,’ he was commanded to put off his shoes from off his feet, and informed that the place whereon he stood was holy ground, being consecrated by the peculiar presence of Him, in whose smile is heaven, and in whose frown is hell. What was the meaning of this injunction? Was it merely an external act of respect that was required? Surely not. The putting off his sandals was designed to be an outward and visible token of an inward and spiritual frame of mind; a reverential disposition of soul suited to a creature, when standing in the presence of his Creator; to a sinner, standing in the presence of his Saviour and Judge. So let it be observed, that the answerable modern custom of uncovering our heads at our entrance into the church, or of placing our hats before our faces previous to taking our places in the pews, is not sufficient to characterize us as true worshippers of God, or real members of our church; but a flagrant mockery of Him whose presence we only pretend to reverence, unless the outward token of respect be accompanied by suitable feelings of heart. When we recollect what God is, even

* Exod. iii. 5.

‘ the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity,
 ‘ who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and is
 ‘ of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ;’ when,
 on the other hand, we consider ourselves as vile
 reptiles of the dust, as ‘ born in sin and shapen
 ‘ in iniquity ;’ we shall perceive the propriety of
 a reverential awe, when we venture to tread His
 courts ; for surely this ‘ God is greatly to be
 ‘ feared in the assemblies of His saints, and to be
 ‘ had in reverence of all that are round about
 ‘ Him.’ When we reflect on the wretched state
 to which the fall has reduced us, the vanity of
 our minds, and the sad indisposition of our souls
 to every thing that is Divine and spiritual, we
 shall see the necessity of exerting all our powers,
 as preparatory to the solemn worship of God ;
 and after all our efforts, confess our inability to
 ‘ quicken our own souls,’ and that ‘ the prepara-
 ‘ tion of the heart in man is from the Lord,’ from
 whose almighty grace alone we can derive the
 power to offer Him acceptable service.

The compilers of our liturgy were sensible of
 these things ; and therefore have wisely appoint-
 ed, that at the opening of public worship the min-
 ister should read, according to his discretion,
 some one or more of the sentences, which they
 have chosen and prefixed to the morning and
 evening prayer. These preparatory sentences
 they have copied from the book of God, in order
 that their authority may be incontestable, and

their influence on the minds of those who hear them, more powerful than any thing of merely human invention or authority could be expected to be.



‘ When the wicked man turneth away from his
‘ wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth
‘ that which is lawful and right ; he shall save
‘ his soul alive.’ Ezek. xviii. 27.

‘ I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin
‘ is ever before me.’ Psal. li. 3.

‘ Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all
‘ mine iniquities.’ Psal. li. 9.

‘ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a
‘ broken, and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt
‘ not despise.’ Psal. li. 17.

‘ Rend your heart, and not your garments, and
‘ turn unto the Lord your God : for He is gra-
‘ cious and merciful, slow to anger and of great
‘ kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.’ Joel
ii. 13.

‘ To the Lord our God belong mercies, and
‘ forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against
‘ Him : neither have we obeyed the voice of the
‘ Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He
‘ set before us.’ Dan. ix. 9, 10.

‘ O Lord correct me, but with judgment, not
‘ in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.’
Jer. x. 24. Psal. vi. 1.

‘ Repent ye for the kingdom of Heaven is at
‘ hand.’ Matt. iii. 2.

‘ I will arise and go to my Father, and will say
‘ unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heav-
‘ en, and before Thee, and am no more worthy
‘ to be called Thy son.’ Luke xv. 18, 19.

‘ Enter not into judgment with Thy servant,
‘ O Lord ; for in Thy sight shall no man living
‘ be justified.’ Psal. cxliii. 2.

‘ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive
‘ ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we
‘ confess our sins, He is faithful and just to for-
‘ give us our sins, and to cleanse us from all un-
‘ righteousness.’ 1 John i. 8, 9.



It would take up too much time to analyse these several well chosen passages : we must therefore content ourselves with taking a general survey of their object, as here introduced. They are evidently selected with a view to the different classes of those, who may be supposed to appear in the house of God ; and are designed to excite in them emotions suitable to the refined nature of His worship. It would be extending charity beyond all the bounds of probability, were we to suppose that all our worshippers are such as worship God in spirit and in truth.

A considerable portion of our congregations may be supposed to consist of persons unacquaint-

ed with ‘the first principles of the oracles of God.’ Many, we have reason to fear, who have a competent knowledge of other things, know but little of their Bibles, and the information therein contained respecting the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding all the means of grace, with which in this highly favored land we are indulged, there are many, alas ! who continue strangers to themselves and Jesus Christ, ‘Whom to know is life eternal.’ There would be no difficulty to find in every parish some unhappy persons, who are even in theory ignorant of the doctrines of the fall and its consequences, and the necessity of salvation by the cross of Christ ; and many more, who, while the theory of these doctrines floats lightly on their understandings, have no real experience of the truth of them in their hearts, and exhibit none of their practical effects in their lives. Such persons then are here instructed in the necessity of self-knowledge, by being led to consider, that ‘if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ And oh ! what an awful deception it is for a dying man to fancy himself in perfect health, and on this groundless presumption reject the only remedy that can save life ; not the life of the body, for that would be of little consequence, but the everlasting life of the precious soul. By the example of David in the 51st Psalm, such persons are

put in mind of the necessity of contrition and humble confession before God. His language will suit us all, ‘ I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.’ ‘ Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.’ Every hope of acceptance by the works of the law must be relinquished, for ‘ in God’s sight can no man living be justified.’ What an awful proof it is of the blindness of our understandings and the perversity of our wills, that any persons should come, and join in our confessions and professions, and yet continue strangers to themselves and Christ.

But a considerable number of those, who join in our assemblies, may be supposed to be persons of a formal and pharisaic stamp : for Pharisees did not cease to exist with the extinction of the Jewish state. No, they are to be found in every age and in every place. We are all naturally such. We pride ourselves in some comparative excellence we suppose ourselves to possess ; and we place all religion in externals, forgetting that God claims the heart. It is not the confession of sin made with the lips, but an inward conviction of sin, accompanied with a real sorrow for and hatred of it, that constitutes a true penitent : for, ‘ the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : It is the broken and contrite heart, that God will not despise.’ How strange that we should mistake the shadow for the substance, that creates it.

Let it be remembered, that it is not rending the garment but the heart, that is acceptable to God. Perhaps some one or more persons, who may condescend to cast an hasty glance over these pages, may be ready to say in the true spirit of the Pharisee of old. ‘ I thank God, that I am ‘ not as other men are :’ I am no drunkard, no swearer, no sabbath-breaker : I go to church and sacrament, and give alms. Alas ! my brother, you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity : for, unless you feel yourself to be ‘ a miserable sinner,’ you are proved an hypocrite by your own confessions. Perhaps in the spirit of proud boasting, like the Jews of old, you may be saying, because you are a member of our excellent church, ‘ The temple of the ‘ Lord, the temple of the Lord are we :’ as if an outward relation to the best visible church on earth would intitle you to the privileges of Christianity. The temple of the Lord was the place where confession of sin was made, where prayer and praise were offered, and Christ was glorified. Is your heart the temple of the Lord ? Is it the seat of contrition, prayer, and praise ? Vain otherwise is your boast of membership in any visible church whatsoever.

But many also of our congregations are Antinomians ; persons, who are practical enemies to the law of God and the holiness it enjoins. They feel not the necessity of purity of heart and con-

duct, and of giving up their ‘souls and bodies to
 ‘be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice to
 ‘God.’ While they profess themselves members
 of our church, and join in her worship, they take
 no care to conform their hearts and lives to the
 precepts of the gospel. Such pitiable persons are
 here shewn the necessity of repentance, in order
 to salvation. The solemn words of the Baptist
 (Matt. iii. 2.) are laid before them, ‘Repent ye,
 ‘for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Re-
 pentance implies a change of heart and life. He
 is not a Christian, who is one outwardly, neither
 is that † Baptism, which is outward in the flesh ;
 but he is a Christian, who is one inwardly, and
 baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit and not
 in the letter. ‘The wicked man must turn away
 ‘from his wickedness which he hath committed,
 ‘and do that which is lawful and right, if he
 ‘would save his soul alive.’ While living ‘after
 ‘the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of
 ‘the flesh and of the mind,’ what proof have we
 to give that our faith is ‘the faith of God’s elect?’
 Ask yourselves therefore, Brethren, dearly be-
 loved and longed for, are your confessions of sin,
 and professions of faith in the Son of God, ac-
 companied with resolutions of devoting yourselves
 to Him without reserve or delay ; and with earn-

† How many parts are there in a sacrament? Answer. Two :
 the outward visible sign, AND the inward spiritual grace.---See
Church Catechism.

est desires after that grace, which alone can enable you to prove your sincerity, and adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things ?

Once more : a large portion of our congregations, we would charitably hope, often consists of those, who come to His house with a Divinely wrought desire of worshipping God in an acceptable manner. 'These are often oppressed with fear and harassed with doubt, lest their persons and sacrifices should be rejected. When they consider into whose presence they are come, and with whom they have to do, they 'stand afar off, 'smite upon their breasts and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner.' While others trifle, they are serious : while others can enter the house of God with levity and indifference, 'they tremble 'at his word' and presence. Their sins are many, and they feel them ; 'the remembrance is 'grievous to them, and the burden intolerable.' They are unworthy to enter into the house of God. They dare not absent themselves, because God is only to be found in the instituted means ; yet they tremble to appear before Him. Esther's language is their's, 'If I perish, I perish.' For the encouragement of such persons several comfortable passages are adduced. The language of David, Psal. li. 3, 9. they can in sincerity adopt : therefore they are informed, that their present state of mind is most acceptable to God, Psal. li. 17. For their comfort, the character of God is

drawn, Joel ii. 13. ‘He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.’ By a quotation from Dan. ix. 9, 10. they are assured, that ‘to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, tho’ we have rebelled against him.’ They are exhorted to follow the example of the Prodigal, and ‘arise and go to their Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.’ To all this a gracious declaration is annexed, that ‘if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’

ESSAY II.

ON THE EXHORTATION THAT FOLLOWS THE SENTENCES, AT THE OPENING OF MORNING AND EVENING SERVICE.

TO the passages adduced from Holy Scripture, with which the morning and evening service of our church begins, succeeds an exhortation, addressed by the minister to the people, on the proper frame of spirit, which becomes them to cultivate and maintain during the season of solemn worship.

‘ Dearly beloved Brethren, the scripture mov-
 ‘ eth us in sundry places to acknowledge and
 ‘ confess our manifold sins and wickedness, and
 ‘ that we should not dissemble nor cloak them
 ‘ before the face of Almighty God our heavenly
 ‘ Father, but confess them with an humble, low-
 ‘ ly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end that
 ‘ we may obtain forgiveness of the same by His
 ‘ infinite goodness and mercy. And altho’ we
 ‘ ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our
 ‘ sins before God, yet ought we most chiefly so
 ‘ to do, when we assemble and meet together, to
 ‘ render thanks for the great benefits which we
 ‘ have received at His hands, to set forth His

‘ most worthy praise, to hear His most holy
 ‘ word, and to ask those things which are requi-
 ‘ site and necessary, as well for the body as the
 ‘ soul. Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as
 ‘ many as are here present, to accompany me
 ‘ with a pure heart, and humble voice, to the
 ‘ throne of the heavenly grace.’

Our church supposes her ministers to be in-
 fluenced by an ardent affection to the souls of
 men. If this were not the case, the language
 we are directed to use would be the language of
 hypocrisy. With-respect to numbers of persons,
 who compose our congregations, we can have no
 personal attachment to them. Human friendship
 therefore cannot authorize us to call them our
 ‘ dearly beloved Brethren.’ But Divine charity
 comprehends within the circumference of its
 wide embrace, all mankind. That they are re-
 deemed by the blood of Christ, is sufficient to re-
 commend them to the benevolence and benefi-
 cence of those, who are partakers of their Mas-
 ter’s spirit. Similar to this in our Liturgy was
 the style of address adopted by the first ministers
 of Christ. St. Paul calls the Romans his ‘ dearly
 ‘ beloved.’* He expresses himself to the Corin-
 thians in the same endearing terms.† The man-
 ner in which he writes to the Philippians, is still
 more remarkable, and deserves to be quoted at

* Chap. xii. 19. † 1 Epist. x. 14.

large : ‘ Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved
 ‘ and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand
 ‘ fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.’‡ Our
 church could never intend on an occasion so sol-
 emn, or in a place so sacred, to put the language
 of idle unmeaning compliment into the mouths of
 her ministers. No, she supposes all her sons to
 be partakers of the spirit of Him, who died to
 save sinners : and the conclusion, which she
 seems to draw, is just, that all who are ‘ moved
 ‘ by the Holy Ghost to take upon them an office
 ‘ and ministration to serve God for the promot-
 ‘ ing of his glory, and the edifying of his peo-
 ‘ ple,’§ are by the same Holy Ghost endued with
 an hearty zeal for God’s glory, and an affection-
 ate regard for the souls of men. Surely there-
 fore, our ‘ dearly beloved brethren,’ that compose
 our congregations, should receive the word at
 our mouths with meekness. Do we reprove ?
 our reproof is the voice of a friend. Do we re-
 buke ? it is in love. Do we exhort ? it is be-
 cause we are solicitous for the eternal welfare of
 those, who are the objects of our exhortations.
 We try to conciliate their esteem, that we may
 do them good. While flatterers and dissemblers
 ‘ daub with untempered mortar,’ because they are
 indifferent, whether the important building stand

‡ Chap. iv. 1. See also 1 Pet. ii. 11.

§ Common prayer book, *ordering of Deacons.*

or fall ; we feel ourselves bound by the law of love to deal faithfully with the consciences of our hearers, and not shun to ‘ declare to them the ‘ whole counsel of God.’

Our church directs us to put the congregation in mind of the authority under which we act. We come not in our own name, nor speak our own words, when we openly declare the necessity of making confession of our sins ; but ‘ the ‘ Scripture moveth us in sundry places’ to the performance of this duty. To the law and the testimony we appeal. To the book of God we direct the attention of our people. O that all the members of our church would imitate the example of the noble* Bereans, and search the Scriptures daily, that they might be enabled to determine for themselves, whether the words they hear are the ‘ words of truth and of soberness !’ If the Minister speak the truth in love, let it be remembered, that ‘ he who despiseth, despiseth ‘ not man, but God.’†

The necessity of a full and ingenuous confession of our sins is pointed out to us by a reference to Scripture. ‘ The Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our ‘ manifold sins and wickedness.’ On this subject the word of God is very clear and decisive : ‘ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but ‘ whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have

* Acts xvii. 11.

† 1 Thes. iv. 8.

‘ mercy.* Were it necessary, a variety of other passages might be produced. The matter of confession is ‘ our manifold sins and wickedness ;’ those of the heart, as well as those of the life, with all their respective aggravations. On this subject we shall speak more fully, when we come to consider the excellent form of confession that follows. At present we shall only remark that ALL sin must be confessed, so far as we are brought to an acquaintance with it. Not that it is possible for us to make the catalogue complete, or recall to mind one of a thousand of our ‘ manifold’ transgressions. They are only fully known to Him, ‘ who telleth the number of the ‘ stars,’ and the grains of sand, that cover the shores of the ocean. But we must become willing to see and acknowledge its utmost deformity, and to feel our own defiled and degraded state in consequence of it. ‘ It is a vain thing to think ‘ of being accepted of God, while we spare one ‘ sin. One sin is sin, and the wages of all sin ‘ is death. What better then would you be, sup- ‘ posing that all others were confessed, if there ‘ is one still standing out against you to condemn ‘ you ? Though you are not an adulterer, a for- ‘ nicator, or profane swearer ; yet if you are a ‘ drunkard, or an evil-speaker, or a sabbath- ‘ breaker, or so bent upon the gain of this world ‘ as to keep your heart from God ; you are an

* Prov. xxviii. 13.

‘ unrighteous person, the sentence upon all such
 ‘ singly is, they shall not inherit the kingdom of
 ‘ God. The enemy of your souls, the Devil him-
 ‘ self, will suffer you, or (if it be possible) help
 ‘ you to confess all your sins but one, if he could
 ‘ be sure you would keep that one.’* It is not
 the multitude or enormity of our sins that pre-
 vents our participation of Divine mercy, but the
 impenitence of our hearts.

The motives, with which our church enforces
 her exhortation, are drawn from the character of
 that God, with whom we have to do. He is
 ‘ Almighty God, our heavenly Father.’ He is
 ‘ Almighty’ to save the penitent, and to punish
 those who reject His mercy. Since He is ‘ Al-
 ‘ mighty to save even to the uttermost through
 ‘ the plenteous redemption’ that is in Christ Je-
 sus, there is no reason to fear His displeasure, if
 the disposition of Nathanael† be found in us : if
 in our spirits ‡ there be no guile ; if, ‘ in simplic-
 ‘ ity and Godly sincerity, we confess our sins,
 ‘ He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and
 ‘ to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’§ But
 He is also ‘ Almighty’ to punish those, who re-
 ject His counsel. ‘ There is no darkness nor
 ‘ shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity
 ‘ may hide themselves,’|| so that His Omniscient

* Adam’s Posthumous Works, vol. i. p. 263. † John i. 47.

‡ Psalm xxxii. 2. § 1 John i. 9. || Job. xxxiv. 22.

eye shall not follow them : nor is there any place so strongly fortified, that His ‘Almighty’ arm cannot drag them thence, to plunge them in perdition. To those, who approach His mercy-seat, He is a ‘Father’ in Christ to pardon and accept, for ‘as a Father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth those that fear’ † His wrath, and deprecate His vengeance. O what motives then are these to enforce the necessity of an immediate and undisguised confession !

But we shall not do justice to the wisdom of the compilers of our Liturgy, if we neglect to notice the ample variety of words and phrases, which they have used on this subject. They not only put us in mind of the duty of confession, but also of the folly and danger of neglecting it. They pathetically warn us ‘not to dissemble nor cloak our sins before the face of almighty God.’ This is wisely added, on account of our natural propensity to endeavour to hide our sins from God and from ourselves. Foolish as this conduct is, it is general. It seems to be an effect of that darkness, which the fall brought on our understandings. So soon as Adam had broken the law of God, and had thereby brought guilt on his conscience, we perceive that ‘his foolish heart was darkened.’ For when God came down into the garden to inquire into the conduct of His creature, instead of hastening to the feet of his

† Psalm ciii. 13.

Maker with humble confession and earnest supplication for mercy, the sacred historian informs us that he ‘hid himself from the presence of the ‘Lord God among the trees of the Garden.’* Poor unhappy Adam, where is that clearness of understanding, in which thou wert created?—What, hide thyself from Him, who is Omniscient and Omnipresent! How is the fine gold become dim! How are thy faculties at once impaired by the admission of sin into thy heart!—This unhappy propensity to self-delusion has Adam intailed on all his children. We are all foolish enough to think, that we can hide our sins from God. How shall we account for it, but by the considerations that follow? Man, till brought to an acquaintance with the person and work of the Mediator Jesus, is afraid to see and acknowledge the exceeding sinfulness† of sin, lest by the discovery hope should be excluded from his mind: for when sin is seen in the full dimensions of its malignity and demerit; the sinner must despair, if ignorant of the virtue of that ‘blood, ‘which cleanseth from all sin.’ But there is yet another consideration, which may serve to account for this strange folly of the human breast. Till the sinner’s heart be changed by grace; till the love of sin be eradicated, and the love of holiness implanted in its room; he is afraid to con-

* Gen. iii. 8.

† Rom. vii. 13.

fess his sins, because then his conscience would enforce the necessity of a separation between him and his beloved lusts : and to a man that is un-renewed, nothing is so dreadful as a divorce from sin. He will rather risk the salvation of his precious soul on a vague, groundless hope of unpromised mercy, than confess and forsake his favorite iniquities. How often do we hear poor deluded criminals dissembling and cloaking their offences by excuses, which betray at the same time the weakness of their understandings, and the corrupt state of their hearts ; and by pretended extenuations, which only aggravate their guilt. One man thinks to screen himself from justice by alledging, that it is the first time he has been guilty of the offence, with which his conscience upbraids him ; or, if this cannot with truth be asserted, that he does not live in the habitual practice of it ; as if the just desert of every single act of sin were not eternal death.* Another urges, that he was surprised by a sudden gust of temptation ; tho' the facility, with which the Tempter finds access to our hearts, is full proof of our fallen and guilty estate. All that a third has to propose in his own defence, is that his crimes have not been detrimental to society ; as if the very essence of sin did not consist in its contrariety to the nature and will of

* Rom. vi. 23.

God ; † ‘ Sin is the transgression of the law.’ A fourth flies for refuge to the comfortless idea, that others are worse than he has been : as though companions in torment would be able to alleviate the mutual sufferings of each other : for God has declared, ‘ that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.’ ‡ Others have some personal good, as they suppose, to throw into the opposite scale ; as if freedom from the guilt of murder would atone for the commission of adultery ; or the love of any one sin did not as fully prove a man to be in an unconverted and unpardoned state, as the love of ten thousand.

† ‘ The Christian life comprehends two great branches of duty : the first towards God, the second towards our neighbour. God has an undoubted claim to the first place ; our neighbour has the next ; and we are to love him, and help him, from a sense of our duty to God who has commanded us so to do. But if I stumble in the beginning of my duty and offend against God himself, what reason have I to expect his favor, for what I do to any body ? Will acts of kindness towards a fellow subject excuse me for an act of rebellion against my prince, or stop the execution of a statute against treason ? What was the offence which brought death into the world ? Not an offence against society ; for there was none ; but only against a positive command of God. It was revealed, that to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, would be attended with a deadly effect.---This revelation was disputed ; the truth of God was called in question ; the lust of pride prevailed, and the sentence of death followed. Therefore if Adam destroyed the whole world, by sinning against the truth of God, certainly any single man may destroy himself by the same means ; though he should give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned for the good of society,’ &c.---
Preservative against socinianism. p. 5.

‡ Prov. xi. 21.

Thus man, blinded by sin, fatally imposes upon himself. But it is not so with the awakened soul. He has no excuses to make, but confesses his sin with every aggravating circumstance, searching for it through all the recesses of his heart, as a man would search his house for a thief, that was come to rob and murder him. Sin, suffered to remain unconfessed, unpardoned, and unmortified, will rob us of eternal felicity, and destroy both body and soul in hell. This the contrite sinner is well persuaded of, and therefore examines himself daily, that sin, being discovered, may be confessed and pardoned : and not content with his own exertions, and moreover suspecting his own heart as ‘deceitful above all things,’ he makes this his continual prayer, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ Dissimulation doubles the guilt of sin, and effectually prevents the Divine communication of pardoning mercy. Of this we have a clear proof in the experience of David.* ‘When I kept silence,’ says he, while I withheld a full confession of my sin, ‘my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me ; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.’ I found no comfort, but the agony of

* Ps. xxxii. 3. &c. See also Job xlii. 5, 6.

my soul was inexpressibly great. Then ‘ I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid : I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.’ Confession is essential to a participation of mercy.

Having shewn the necessity of confession, our church proceeds to direct us how to perform this duty in an acceptable manner : for confession must be made with ‘ an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.’

‘ An humble and lowly heart’ is an essential requisite in every part of God’s worship ; but it is so, in an especial manner, when we come before His footstool ‘ to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness.’ The lips may utter words, in which the heart is uninterested. It was one of the charges brought against the Jews that they drew near to God with their mouth, and honoured Him with their lips, while their heart was far from Him.* Would God, the charge were not applicable to professing Christians also ! But it is possible that the heart may be engaged in the utterance of confession, and yet in a very improper manner : the heart may be destitute of humility and lowliness. A man may even propose to himself his own reputation in the confession he makes. He may speak degradingly of himself, that others may consider

* Is. xxix. 13.

him as a pattern of humility. There is reason to fear, that this is not infrequently the case. Humility is the characteristic of a Christian ; and therefore pride often conceals itself under the garb of repentance. But when men truly know the evil of sin, their confessions will be made with an heart truly ‘ humble and lowly.’ It was with such an heart that the prodigal returned to his father’s house, saying, ‘ Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.’ It was with feelings of deep self-abasement that the contrite publican smote upon his breast, crying, ‘ God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ There were no witnesses of his humiliation present, in whose opinion he could hope to raise himself by the lowly language he used. It was enough for him, that the Searcher of hearts saw his ‘ godly sorrow.’ Perhaps it would be useful to inquire, whether the confessions of our closets coincide with those we make before men : whether the language we adopt in the church, harmonize with our feelings and expressions in secret ; when no eye seeth us, and no ear heareth us, but that of our Father, who is in heaven. Are we really ashamed of sin ? Can we in sincerity adopt the language of Ephraim, whom God heard bemoaning himself thus, ‘ Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I

‘ smote upon my thigh : † I was ashamed, yea,
 ‘ even confounded, because I did bear the re-
 ‘ proach of my youth.’ ‡ O how many are ashamed
 of ragged garments, or an empty purse who
 never felt one emotion of shame on account of
 sin ; though there is nothing but sin, that is pro-
 perly a cause of shame !

Penitence is another concomitant of all true
 confession. Repentance includes an hatred of
 sin, and a full purpose to forsake it : ‘ He that
 ‘ confesseth and forsaketh it shall have mercy.’
 The promise is exclusively to such. Our sorrow
 for it must arise from godly, not from worldly
 motives ; for ‘ the sorrow of the world worketh
 ‘ death.’ Our dereliction of sin must not be par-
 tial but universal. No reserves must be made.
 How horrible would be such a prayer as this !
 ‘ Lord such and such sins trouble me, I freely
 ‘ confess them to be sins, and am willing to be
 ‘ delivered from them ; but there is one or more,
 ‘ which I cannot part with, at least not now,
 ‘ though perhaps I may, some time or other.’

+ ‘ *Smiting on the thigh* is mentioned as a gesture of *violent*
 ‘ *grief*, not only in the sacred, (see also Ezek. xxi. 12.) but like-
 ‘ wise in the profane writers. See *Homer* Il. xii. lin. 163. Il. xv.
 ‘ lia. 397. So in *Xenophon* (*Cyropæd.* lib. vii. p. 390. Edit.
 ‘ *Hutchinson*, 8vo.) When *Cyrus* heard of the death of *Abrada-*
 ‘ *tas*, and the sorrow of his wife on that account, *επιστατο απα τον*
 ‘ *μηρον* he smote his thigh.’

‡ Jer. xxxi. 19.

Do you start at such language? O take heed, lest it should prove to be that of your own hearts.

Once more ‘An obedient heart’ is also necessary to be brought with us to the throne of grace. By ‘an obedient heart’ our reformers meant an heart fraught with holy desires, and stedfast purposes, formed in the strength of Divine grace, of walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. A readiness to submit to whatever God enjoins is inseparable from genuine confession. With the great Apostle of the Gentiles, every awakened sinner inquires, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’* or with the Psalmist prays, ‘Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth, unite my heart to fear thy name.’†

The object, which a contrite sinner proposes to himself in making confession of his sins, is ‘that he may obtain forgiveness of the same by God’s infinite goodness and mercy.’ Remission is ‘the one thing needful’ to an awakened mind. Go to the dying traveller stretched on the burning sands of Nubia; offer him gold and silver and gorgeous apparel; and, if he has sufficient strength left, he will express his astonishment at your folly, or his abhorrence of the insult shewn him. The refreshing draught is the boon he wants. Present the pitcher to his lips, and

* Acts ix. 6.

† Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

his eyes will speak the gratitude of his soul. So when a sinner is Divinely convinced of sin, the pleasures, profits and honours of the world become tasteless as the white of an egg. The lectures of the Philosopher, and the exhortations of the moralist, are insults to his misery. † Forgiveness of his sins is the object of his fervent wishes, and this he hopes for only as the effect of ‘infinite mercy and goodness.’ Nothing short of infinite compassion can reach his case ; but he has heard that ‘with God there is mercy, and that with him there is plenteous redemption ;’ and this report, like a sovereign cordial, cheers his spirit and preserves him from despair. The boundless compassion of Jehovah, and the all-cleansing virtue of Emanuel’s blood are the only ground of hope to a conscious sinner. Erase these consolatory truths from the book of God, and he must lie down in black despair and everlasting sorrow.

There is no circumstance of time or place, that renders the performance of the duty of confession unseasonable. For ‘we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God.’ There are those, who think that religion should

‡ The simplicity of the following lines in *the Lamentation of a Sinner*, is very beautiful :

- ‘ Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
- ‘ This is the total sum :
- ‘ For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,
- ‘ O let thy mercy come.’

be confined to the church, or at least to the sabbath-day : but these are persons, who do not think that the business of the world is to be confined to the remaining six. For those, who do not carry their religion with them through the six days, on which God has allowed them to attend to their worldly business, will be sure to employ the little portion of time, which God has reserved to himself, in worldly thoughts and conversation, and even carry the world in their hearts to the house of God. These, however, are not true members of our church ; which makes it a part of her Creed, that ‘ we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God.’ ‘ In season and out of season,’ is her motto. Religion with her is daily work. Not that we are bound to be always repeating the confession that follows ; but we are bound to live habitually in the spirit which it breathes, the spirit of self abasement and contrition. Whether we are alone in our closets, or enjoying the society of Christian friends, or engaged in the necessary business of our lawful callings ; self-renunciation and self-abasement are always necessary, and never unseasonable. His own unworthiness and God’s mercy, are subjects suitable for a sinner through every hour of the day. ‘ Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way ; and when thou liest down and when thou risest

‘ up.’ David could say, ‘ my sin is ever before me ;’ not on the Sabbath only, or during the hours of public worship. Therefore feeling his constant need of mercy, he makes the following resolution, ‘ at evening and morning and at noon day will I pray.’ Would you blame a sick man for employing much of his time in the use of means for the recovery of his health ? Or a criminal lying under sentence of death for a too frequent employment of the opportunities afforded him of presenting petitions to his Sovereign for mercy ? A sinner, who is alive to the importance of the salvation of his soul, needs no comment to explain the Apostle’s injunction, ‘ pray without ceasing.’

But there are certain seasons, when this duty is peculiarly indispensable ; even those ‘ when we assemble and meet together’ for the purposes of public worship. The several parts of public worship, as here described, we shall have occasion more minutely to consider hereafter. They are here introduced to shew, that confession is essential to a right performance of each of them. ‘ We meet together to render thanks for the great benefits, which we have received at the hands of God :’ But in this we shall fall short, unless a conviction of our demerit stimulate our hearts to gratitude. ‘ We meet to set forth His most worthy praise :’ but we can never sing with melo-

dy in our hearts unto the Lord, until our hearts have been prepared to make melody by conviction of sin. It is fabled of the Nightingale, that she sings most sweetly with her breast upon a thorn. The sinner, who has felt most deeply the effects of the fall, will celebrate most gratefully the riches of the grace of God. The new song, mentioned in the Revelation of St. John, could only be sung by those, who were *redeemed* from the Earth. But redemption can only be duly celebrated by the captive, who has felt the galling chain, who has tasted and remembers the bitter taste of the wormwood and the gall of sin ; and who has experienced deliverance thro' grace. ' We assemble and meet together to hear God's most holy word,' the sanctifying Gospel of His grace ; which we can never relish, till we feel our need of the blessings it proposes. We also meet ' to ask those things, which are requisite ' and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.' But an unawakened sinner, however sensible he may be of his corporeal maladies or infirmities, knows not what is requisite and necessary for his soul. He has no desire after pardon, holiness, and communion with God. And even with respect to his body, though he feels its wants, yet he looks for a supply to chance, or merely to his own endeavors, and not to God. So that contrition is an essential ingredient in every part of worship.

The persuasive to confession is followed by an earnest invitation to prayer, the necessity of which arises from the former act of duty. ‘ Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me, with a pure heart and humble voice, to the throne of the heavenly grace.’ Who will refuse the invitation? None but the man, who is so proud and ignorant as to conclude that he has no sins to be forgiven, no wants to be relieved. In the subsequent confession, the congregation is directed to accompany the minister with an audible but ‘ humble voice’ expressive of inward compunction. But ‘ a pure heart’ is that which God respects, without which the act of an Automaton would be as acceptable as our’s. Purity here is synonymous with sincerity. A man is then sincere, when the language of his lips harmonizes with the feelings of his heart. O what a mercy it is that there is ‘ a throne of heavenly grace’ erected for the free access of returning sinners to their offended God! The expression alludes to the mercy-seat, on which God sat in glory between the Cherubim; and towards which all the prayers of His people, during the continuance of the Jewish œconomy, were directed to be offered. As that mercy-seat was sprinkled with the typically atoning blood of bulls and goats, this ‘ throne of heavenly grace’ has been sprinkled with blood of infinitely greater value. Fear

not, conscious sinner, to draw near, to confess and supplicate : It is not a Being of inexorable wrath, displaying the terrors of His justice in the consuming fire of Sinai, but a God reconciled in Christ, whom thou art invited to approach. Come, lay thine hand upon the head of the (true) sin-offering, and it shall be accepted for thee, as a full atonement for all thy sins.*

* Levit. i. 4.

ESSAY III.

ON THE GENERAL CONFESSION.

PRAYER is the motion of the heart towards God. It is the breath of the regenerate soul, the result of Divine life communicated from above. The language of the lips is not essential to it. That Omniscient Friend of sinners, to whom it is addressed, discerns the secret and yet unformed desire. But various reasons may be given, why on certain occasions, and for certain persons, it is expedient to clothe the desires of the soul in words, even when in secret they appear before the throne of grace. In the public assembly it is absolutely necessary; otherwise the great end of our religious associations would be frustrated. There an individual must be the mouth of all, for the prevention of confusion, and the promotion of edification. In a general confession of sin, however, it seems proper that every private worshipper should accompany the minister 'unto the throne of the heavenly grace,' not only 'with a pure heart,' but also 'with an humble voice,' saying after him,

‘ Almighty and most merciful Father ; we
 ‘ have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost
 ‘ sheep. We have followed too much the devices
 ‘ and desires of our own hearts. We have of-
 ‘ fended against Thy holy laws. We have left
 ‘ undone those things, which we ought to have
 ‘ done ; and we have done those things, which
 ‘ we ought not to have done ; and there is no
 ‘ health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy
 ‘ upon us miserable offenders : Spare Thou them,
 ‘ O God, which confess their faults : restore
 ‘ Thou them that are penitent ; according to Thy
 ‘ promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu
 ‘ our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father,
 ‘ for His sake, that we may hereafter live a god-
 ‘ ly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of
 ‘ Thy holy name. Amen.’

The titles, by which God is addressed in Scrip-
 ture, are not used promiscuously and at random ;
 but are adapted to the subject, with which they
 are connected.* It would be easy to shew the
 truth of this remark, by a reference to a variety
 of passages. Probably the same observation will
 hold good with respect to the service of our
 church. When we use the confession before us,
 we come before God, as criminals that deserve
 punishment. What then are those attributes of

* Thus Jehovah is never used in connection with a relative pro-
 noun. But the relatives are always joined to some name that re-
 fers to the covenant of grace.

Deity, to which on such an occasion it becomes us to have recourse? Does not the Omnipotence of Jehovah prove that He has no need of us, and can suffer no loss by our annihilation? That He is able, on supposition that the whole race of mankind were according to their just deserts to be ‘punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power,’† to bring into existence in a moment, by a single act of Omnipotence, another race of reasonable creatures, who should shew forth His praise? It certainly does. The mention of this perfection of the Godhead also puts us in mind that it is not through want of ability, if He delay or forego the fulfilment of those threatenings in His word, which are pointed against transgressors of His law. ‘Almighty’ therefore is properly introduced here with a view to promote holy fear and trembling in the sinner’s bosom. But then the recollection of this attribute is also absolutely necessary to an hope of pardon. For were not our God ‘Almighty,’ the atonement of Christ could never have been consummated by His resurrection; and, apart from this consideration, finite power could never have created us anew, that so by the merit of His death we might be ‘made meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’* And, since His mercy is equal to His

† 2 Thess. i. 9.

* Col. i. 12.

power, our hope of acceptance is built on a firm foundation, when we address Him as ‘ Almighty ‘ and most merciful ;’ especially when we add to these most gracious and glorious appellations that peculiar relation, in which He condescends to stand to penitent sinners in Christ Jesus. God was our ‘ Father’ by creation : but we have unhappily forfeited the relationship, and are ‘ no ‘ more worthy to be called His children.’ In Christ He renews the connection ; and, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, becomes our ‘ most merciful Father,’ also.† Coming to an ‘ almighty God,’ who is also our ‘ most merciful Father,’ we may comfortably indulge the hope of forgiveness, and be encouraged to make a free and undisguised confession of all our sins.

We open the first prayer of our public liturgy with a general acknowledgment of sin ; ‘ We ‘ have erred and strayed from Thy ways, like ‘ lost sheep.’ Beautiful and energetic is this scriptural illustration of our wretched state. Folly is a striking characteristic of the class of animals, here mentioned, which appears in their proneness to wander from the shepherd, under whose care they remain in safety, and the pasture that supplies their wants. The Apostle Peter has noticed this, and applied it to the disciples of

† It was a wise saying of Martin Luther, ‘ Nolo Deum absolutum.’

Christ ; ‘ ye were as sheep going astray.’* David in his confession declares that the propensities of his fallen nature resembled those of the silly tenants of the fold ; ‘ I have gone astray, ‘ like a sheep that is lost : seek thy servant.’† Isaiah in the name of the whole church of Christ says, ‘ all we like sheep have gone astray, we ‘ have turned every one to his own way.’‡ On this resemblance between sinners and sheep, our Lord builds His most beautiful parable.§ Had we not wandered into the wilderness, there had been no necessity for the good Shepherd to follow us. Could we have found our way back, He need not have come to shew it to us. Had we been able, on a discovery made to us of our sin and danger, to return by our own strength, He need not have laid us on His shoulders, and have encumbered himself with a weight, which nothing but Almighty power could have supported.|| May not every individual take up the humiliating language of our church with a personal

* 1 Epist. ii. 25 † Ps. cxix. 176. ‡ Chap. liii. 6. Math. xviii. 12. § Luke xv. 3.

|| The Xth Article of our church may be considered as a striking comment on this beautiful and instructive parable. ‘ The ‘ condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot ‘ turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good ‘ works to faith and calling upon God ; wherefore we have no ‘ power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have ‘ a good will ; and working with us, when we have that good ‘ will.’

application to himself, and say, ‘ I have erred
 ‘ and strayed from Thy ways, like a lost sheep ?’
 When God had created Adam, He placed him in
 Paradise, and fed him in green pastures, through
 which the waters of holy delight flowed in rich
 abundance. But where are we now ? Is not our
 present state pathetically described by that of
 Israel in the desert, ‘ a great and terrible wilder-
 ‘ ness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions,
 ‘ and drought ; where there is no water ?’*
 Alas, what strange event has brought us into the
 awful situation, in which we find ourselves ?
 The scripture informs us that our first parent,
 who was constituted by his Creator the federal
 head and representative of all his posterity, trans-
 gressed the gracious law, which was given him
 as the condition of life ; and thereby involved
 himself and all his children, to the latest genera-
 tions, in guilt, misery, and ruin. Will any, in
 concurrence with Pelagius and his followers, ob-
 ject to the justice and equity of this proceeding ?
 Sufficient for them is the answer of the Apostle ;
 ‘ Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest
 ‘ against God ?’ If it be the appointment of a
 righteous God that Adam should represent all
 mankind, and that they should stand or fall in
 him, His will proves it just ; for His will is the
 result of the most perfect equity. The only ques-
 tion to be resolved is, whether this matter be re-

* Deut. viii. 15.

vealed in Scripture? For if it be, all controversy is at an end with respect to those, who receive the Bible as a revelation from God. Let the reader consult the fifth chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, and try to explain it on any other hypothesis. A few passages from that chapter it may not be improper to introduce here. (ver. 12.) 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'† (ver. 14.) 'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them, who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come.' (ver. 15.) 'Through the offence of one many are dead.' (ver. 16.) 'The judgment was by one to condemnation.' (ver. 17.) 'By one man's offence Death reigned by one.' (ver. 19.) 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.‡ The parallel throughout the chapter, between Adam and our Lord Jesus Christ, shews that we were made sinners through our connexion with, and relation to the first Adam, after the same manner in which any of us are made righteous through our connection with the second; and that is by imputation. Therefore in another epistle the Apostle speaks of all men, as being 'by nature the chil-

† Marg-Reading. ἐφ' ᾧ, in whom.

‡ Κατεσθίσαν ἀμαρτωλοὶ were constituted sinners, (viz.) by the Divine appointment.

‘dren of wrath.”§ This is clearly the doctrine of the church of England, as appears by her baptismal service, where she instructs us to pray that the child brought to be baptized may be delivered from the wrath of God.∥ She believes that all mankind are liable to that wrath, so soon as they are born into the world ; before actual sin can have been committed. But this cannot be, unless there be some preceding act of sin, which has rendered them guilty. No reasonable account can be given of the propagation of corruption (considered as a punishment) without presupposing the imputation of the original offence as its meritorious cause. The second homily on the misery of man speaks decidedly on this subject : ‘ In ourselves (as of ourselves) we find nothing, whereby we may be delivered

§ Eph. ii. 3.

∥ See the first prayer in *the public baptism of infants*. The advocates of the doctrine of original sin, and of those doctrines which are inseparably connected with it, have been rendered odious by their adversaries through wilful misrepresentation of their creed. They have been charged with asserting the damnation of infants. The author of these essays is glad of this opportunity of avowing his belief that all infants, dying before the commission of actual sin, will be saved. But this belief he builds not on any supposed innocence, which such children may be imagined to possess, intitling them to the favour of God ; but on the redemption effected by the blood of Christ. ‘ Infants being baptized, and dying in their infancy, are by this sacrifice (of Christ) washed from their sins, brought to God’s favour, and made His children, and inheritors of His Kingdom of Heaven.’ See the first part of the homily of *Salvation*.---See also the rubric after the form of *Baptism*.

‘ from this miserable captivity (of sin,) into the
 ‘ which we are cast through the envy of the devil,
 ‘ by breaking of God’s commandment in our first
 ‘ parent Adam.’ The homily on the Nativity
 speaks the same language : ‘ As in Adam all
 ‘ men sinned universally, so in Adam all men
 ‘ universally received the reward of sin.’ And
 again, ‘ Oh, what a miserable and woeful state
 ‘ was this, that the sin of one man should destroy
 ‘ and condemn all men !’ All this is exactly in
 unison with the ninth article, the title of which
 is very remarkable ; ‘ of original or birth-sin.’
 To be born a descendant of Adam, and to be a
 sinner, are things inseparable. Whatever oppo-
 sition may be made to this humiliating doctrine,
 either by professed infidels or impious gainsayers,
 none can arise from those persons, who have
 honestly subscribed to the truth of the 39 articles
 of our church, therein declaring that both the
 books of Homilies ‘ contain a Godly and whole-
 ‘ some doctrine.’*

* ‘ An appeal to the 39 articles has unhappily the less weight
 in the modern times, because an ingenious device has been fabri-
 cated, to elude the force of conviction from that quarter. Ac-
 cording to the title prefixed to them by the convocation of 1562,
 in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, ‘ They were agreed upon for the
 ‘ avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing con-
 ‘ sent touching true religion.’ And afterwards in the declaration,
 which was set forth by King James the First, ‘ order was given,
 ‘ that no man thereafter should put his own sense or comment to
 ‘ be the meaning of the article, but should take it in the *litera* &

Our personal wanderings are in our general confession, traced up to their proper source, the corruption of our nature : ‘ We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.’ Are our hearts full of evil devices and desires ? Who will deny it ? The evil is not adventitious, but natural to us. The fountain is corrupt, therefore the streams are filthy. The tree is bad, therefore the fruit is sour. On this subject the scripture is very plain ; and volumes might be filled with evidence drawn from thence, and from matter of fact. ‘ Adam begat a son in his

‘ and *grammatical* sense.’ Of late it hath been said, that they who subscribe to the articles, are permitted to put on them a *liberal* construction. But from whom do they derive this permission ? Or, who has authority to sanction so flagrant an act of duplicity ? Besides this, a liberal construction, being once permitted, will subject the articles to as many thousand different senses, as there are persons, both ecclesiastical and civil, who by oath subscribe to them ; and will also annihilate the solemnity and moral obligation of every oath, which is administered in our courts of Judicature.

‘ Nor will this refinement prove a safe refuge to those, who have recourse to it ; for it will not, in many instances, set aside the literal and grammatical sense. Let its patrons, for instance, try their critical powers, and employ all the arts of sophistry, in endeavouring to reconcile unitarianism or arianism with the first of the articles ; or to make justification by faith only, as maintained in the eleventh, to signify either justification by works, or justification by works and faith together.’---*The Rev. Mr. Hart’s Church of England’s test of religious sincerity.* p. 5.

Should the pious reader wish for farther information on the doctrine of original sin, he will peruse with pleasure *Bishop Beveridge’s Exposition on the 39 articles ; Archbishop Usher’s body of Divinity ;* and particularly *Dr. John Edward’s Veritas redux.*

‘ own likeness, after his image.’* And this was not the image of God in which Adam had been created, because that was lost ; but the image and likeness of the fallen spirit, to whose temptation he had yielded. ‘ What is man that he should be clean ? And he, which is born of a woman that he should be righteous ? † That, which is born of the flesh, is flesh.’ Therefore ‘ ye must be born again. ‡ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me !’ || Before the flood ‘ every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually.’ § After the flood things remained in the same state, ‘ the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’ †† The wicked ‘ are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.’ †† All ‘ have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ ||| In me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth ‘ no good thing.’ §§ In perfect harmony with these declarations of scripture our church expresses herself in her articles, liturgy, and homilies. In the introduction to the baptismal service the congregation is put in mind that ‘ all men are conceived and born in sin :’ and this is made the ground of the baptismal institution. In the 9th article, already referred to, she speaks still

* Gen. v. 3. † Job. xv. 14. ‡ John iii. 6, 7. || Ps. li. 5.

§ Gen. vi. 5. †† Gen. viii. 21. †† Ps. lviii. 3. ||| Rom. iii. 23.

§§ Rom. vii. 18.

more fully ; ‘ Original sin standeth not in the
 ‘ following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly
 ‘ talk,) but it is the fault and corruption of the
 ‘ nature of every man, that naturally is ingender-
 ‘ ed of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is
 ‘ very far gone* from original righteousness,
 ‘ and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that
 ‘ the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit ;
 ‘ and therefore in every person born into the
 ‘ world it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.’
 I shall only add two quotations from the homilies,
 which will fully shew what the doctrine of our
 church is, and may serve as a comment on that
 part of the confession, which we are considering.
 ‘ As before he (Adam) was most beautiful and
 ‘ precious ; so now he was most vile and wretch-
 ‘ ed in the sight of his Lord and Master. Instead
 ‘ of the image of God, he was now become the
 ‘ image of the devil ; instead of the citizen of
 ‘ heaven, he was now become the bond-slave of
 ‘ hell ; having in himself no one part of his form-
 ‘ er purity and cleanness, but being altogether
 ‘ spotted and defiled, insomuch that he now seem-
 ‘ ed to be nothing else but a lump of sin, and
 ‘ therefore by the just judgment of God was con-
 ‘ demned to everlasting death. This so great
 ‘ and miserable a plague, if it had only rested on
 ‘ Adam, who first offended, it had been so much
 ‘ the casier, and might the better have been

* In the Latin copy it is, ‘ quam longissime.’

' borne. But it fell not only on him, but also on
 ' his posterity, so that the whole brood of Adam's
 ' flesh should sustain the self-same fall and pun-
 ' ishment, which their forefather by his offence
 ' most justly had sustained.' In the first part of
 the homily for Whitsunday our reformers say,
 ' Man, of his own nature, is fleshly and carnal,
 ' corrupt, naught, sinful, and disobedient to God ;
 ' without any spark of goodness in him, without
 ' any virtuous or Godly motion, only given to
 ' evil thoughts and wicked deeds. As for the
 ' marks of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, chari-
 ' table and Godly motions, if he have any at all
 ' in him, they proceed only of the Holy Ghost,
 ' who is the only worker of our sanctification,
 ' and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus.' It
 would be easy to multiply quotations on this sub-
 ject : but the state of the case is so evident, that
 it seems unnecessary. Our natural condition is
 that of ignorance in the understanding, and re-
 bellion in the heart. The universal corruption
 of manners, both in countries that enjoy the bles-
 sings of civilization and those that are destitute
 of it, proves the cause that produces it to be uni-
 versal also. It requires a large measure of cre-
 dularity to believe that effects, so general, can
 spring from temptation or example. Were not
 the whole mass corrupted, assuredly some part
 of it would be found, in some age or country, free
 from the effects of the general contagion. The

necessity of education and restraint from human laws, affords no mean argument in proof of our position. Were man an innocent creature, much of the labor of legislators might have been spared, and the buildings, allotted to the reception of criminals, be converted to purposes more honorable to human nature. While heathen philosophers of modern times, who are favored with the light of revelation, unreasonably argue against matters of fact, principally perhaps, because those matters of fact confirm the doctrines of the Bible, their elder brethren, who had no such advantages plainly perceived the melancholy state of man; and justly concluding that man, in his present condition, could not proceed from the hands of a wise and good God: and endeavouring to explain what was evident to their senses as to the fact, though inexplicable by reason as to its cause; invented the strange but ingenious fable of the metempsychosis; which shews that they considered man as a degraded spirit, shut up in the body, as in a prison, for some crime committed in a former state of existence, from the guilt and pollution of which purification was to be effected by its transmigration through several successive states of penance in the bodies of inferior animals. It is strange to conceive how any reasoning being can cast his eye over a list of the diseases, to which the body of man is subject; read a page of history; or look into an hospital, without

joining with our church in her confession that ‘we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.’ A wise and holy Being could not have made us what we are : some cause must be assigned, posterior to the creation, for all the misery we see and feel. The universality of natural evil, proves the unlimited extent of moral evil. And all moral evil originates in the heart ; for ‘out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.’* Have any of us been hitherto preserved from these enormous acts of sin ? Let us not pride ourselves on a supposed superiority of nature, in which we differ from others. Were the ancient heathens ‘filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents : without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful ?’† And do we in our moral conduct differ from them ? It is the effect of education, civilization, and restraint ; not of nature. For the latent seeds of all these evils are in our hearts. If the branches have been lopt, and the fruit prevented from coming to the horrible per-

* Matt. xv. 19.

† Rom. i. 29---31.

fection mentioned by the Apostle ; we have nothing whereof to glory on this account. Our thanks are due to Him, who appointed the time and bounds of our habitation, in consequence of which we were not born under those disadvantageous circumstances. The difference is not internal but extrinsical. Let it not be supposed that these awful truths are matters of doubtful disputation ; for the belief of them is essential to our existence as real Christians. Unless we have within us a Divinely wrought conviction of the natural corruption of our hearts ; our humiliation will be imperfect, and our confessions the language of hypocrisy ; and we cannot see the need, either of an atoning Savior or a sanctifying Spirit. Like one, who has slightly injured his skin, we shall apply a plaister of our own contrivance ; instead of going with a mortal wound to the only Physician who has power to heal it.

From this fatal fountain of original sin, streams of actual iniquity continually proceed : therefore it becomes us to add, ‘ we have offended against Thy holy laws.’ Here it might be supposed that no difficulty would arise in bringing home the charge to every conscience : that no man, who had the ten commandments in his hand, and had ever read them with attention ; especially, if he had considered them in connection with our

Lord's exposition of them ;* would hesitate to acknowledge, that either in thought, word, or deed, and in respect of omission or commission, he hath broken them all. ' Who can tell how oft ' he offendeth ?' Who will deny that he hath ' left undone those things which he ought to have ' done ?' Our duty towards God is summed up in that excellent body of Divinity, the catechism of our church. ' Our duty towards God is to believe in ' Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all our ' hearts, with all our minds, with all our souls, ' and with all our strength,' &c. All our faculties and powers, both of body and mind, should be intirely devoted to Him without any reserve or limitation, and this in every moment we live. But this ' we have left undone,' more or less thro' every moment of our whole existence. ' Our duty towards our neighbour is to love him as our- ' selves, and to do to all men, as we would they ' should do unto us.' Where is the perfect man ? There is no such character in this our fallen world. But our iniquity has not been confined to omission ; for ' we have done those things, ' which we ought not to have done.' Our conduct is marked not merely with negative, but also with positive evil. We ought not to have set up idols in our hearts ; but we have ' loved ' and served the creature more than the Crea-

* Matt. v.

‘tor.’ The holy name of God ought never to have passed irreverently over our lips, nor even an idea of Him have arisen in our hearts without holy awe and supreme regard. Not a moment of His sabbath should ever have been unoccupied by sacred and grateful meditations of love to His name, and delight in His service. It would be easy to extend the catalogue of our transgressions to the second table ; but a farther enlargement on the subject would swell the present essay beyond the intended limits.

The conclusion of the confessional part of the form, which we are considering, is concise, but very comprehensive. ‘There is no health,’ (i. e. ‘no spiritual health) in us.’ How sad would be the state of the body, if wholly destitute of health ! Behold that wretched object ! The unhappy person, to whom your attention is requested, has fallen down a tremendous precipice. He has not only broken his legs and arms, though that were terrible ; but he has shattered every bone in his poor mangled carcase. Your heart bleeds for him, and well it may. If his fall had not stunned him, so as to produce a temporary delirium, he would fill the air with lamentations, and mourning, and woe. O sinner, thou art the man ! A complication of diseases, though but of two or three, is grievous : but what would be the situation of a man, who laboured under all the diseases at once, to which human nature is sub-

ject. This is the state of the soul of man: 'there is no health in it.' The understanding is darkened; the will is perverted; the affections are carnalized; the conscience is defiled. 'From the sole of the feet, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores.'†

If we have felt the truth of the preceding confession, we shall heartily join in saying, 'But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders!' If a recollection of our offences has made us miserable, whither shall we go for relief from our burden? 'Thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; our first born given for our transgression, the fruit of our bodies for the sin of our souls' would be insufficient to obliterate one single offence. We have deserved all the threatened punishment, and must acknowledge that God would be justified in our eternal condemnation. But the question returns upon us: to whom shall we go? An attempt at concealment or resistance would be equally the fruit of folly. To our offended Lord, therefore, we must make confession. But what plea shall we employ to deprecate His wrath? Shall we promise future amendment? This we cannot do; and if we could, it would not avail to the annihilation of past criminality. There is no way left;

† Is. i. 6.

but to throw ourselves upon His ‘mercy.’ If He pardon us, it will be such an act of grace, as none but God could bestow.

We must utterly despair, when a discovery is made to us of our fallen, guilty, polluted, and helpless state, were not that discovery accompanied by a revelation of God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. But this encourages us to hope, and excites us to cry, ‘spare Thou them, O God, which confess their faults!’ To a criminal, who has forfeited his life, it is a great favor, if that life be spared: how much greater to a sinner, who perceives that he has merited the damnation of hell, to be plucked as a brand from the everlasting burnings! But such are the riches of the grace of God in Christ, that we are emboldened to ask for more than mere exemption from punishment. The Gospel affords us reason to believe that we do not conceive too largely of Divine mercy, when we add, ‘restore thou them that are penitent!’ A restoration to the Divine favor and the Divine image is essential to the happiness of the awakened mind. The language of Absalom is also that of the penitent sinner, ‘let me see the King’s face!’* The first dawn of hope in God’s mercy through Christ begets love; and love can be contented with nothing short of an entire reconciliation. The deeper we search into

* 2 Sam. xiv. 32.

this unfathomable mine, the riches of the grace of God ; the firmer the foundation appears, on which we build our hopes. For what we ask is ‘ according to God’s promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Christ has purchased for us all that we want ; and ‘ for His sake’ God has promised to bestow it on us.

Every one, who has heartily joined in the preceding confession of sin, and deprecation of the anger of God, at the same time that he desires deliverance from guilt and punishment, will feel a strong solicitude to be saved from the dominion of those sins, which have hitherto reigned over him, and are now become his plague and torment. Our confessions are insincere, and our supplications are a mockery of God, unless accompanied with an anxious desire after Divine grace to enable us to conform our future lives to His holy law. If this desire really prevail in our minds, we feel likewise our own imbecility to do the will of God : and then, filled with this ardent longing after holiness, and possessed at the same time with a full conviction that we must be indebted to Almighty power for our sanctification, as well as to Divine grace for our justification ; we shall come before the throne and say, ‘ Grant, O most merciful Father, for Christ’s sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and so-

‘ber life to the glory of Thy holy name. A-
‘men.’

The description of a Christian’s life, which our church here exhibits to our view, is quoted from the lively oracles of God. St. Paul informs us, that ‘the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us ‘that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, ‘we should live soberly, righteously, and godly ‘in this present world.’* It has been said, that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness of conduct. This objection to the truth is as old as the days of the Apostles : for even in the course of ths ministry of St. Paul, he found some unhappy persons, who drew a perverse conclusion from the evangelic premises he laid down ; which occasioned his asking with holy indignation, ‘shall ‘we continue in sin that grace may abound ? ‘God forbid.’† And again, ‘Do we then make ‘void the law through faith ? God forbid ; yea ‘we establish the law,’§ our doctrines make full provision for its honor. If such an objection was started in the days of primitive Christianity, when a practice eminently holy usually attended a profession of these doctrines ; it is no wonder that it should still continue to be made in our own day, when a profession of the true faith is attended with none of those painful consequences, to

* Titus ii. 11, 12.

† Rom. vi. 1.

§ Rom. iii. 31.

which the friends of the gospel, during the first centuries of its promulgation, were sure to expose themselves. "The grace of God," however, continues the same; and the effects it produces, so far as the belief of it prevails in the heart, are also the same. Objectors to the scripture scheme of salvation usually overthrow their own batteries, spike up their own cannon, and save its friends the trouble of defending themselves. For, on the one hand, the advocates for justification by faith are charged with being "righteous overmuch,"* and unnecessarily precise, which is accounted for on the score of pride; and, on the other, the principles they hold are represented as naturally leading to a careless and irreligious life. If two

* Eccles. vii. 16. That this abused text cannot be a prohibition of earnestness, in seeking after conformity to the law of God, is very clear: for the scripture frequently sets forth the impossibility of attaining to the perfection, which the law requires, (see Ps. liii. 1. and Rom. iii. 9, 10.) And our Lord assureth us that, after we have done all (if possible) that is commanded us, it becomes us to consider ourselves as unprofitable servants. Luke xvii. 10. With this the 14th article of our church directly coincides. The sense of the passage will be easily settled, if it be considered, that verbs in Hithpael often denote to *pretend* to be or do that, which the verb signifies. The misapplied words of the wise man in Eccles. vii. 16. may be therefore thus rendered and paraphrased: "Do not pretend to great righteousness; neither do thou pretend to superior wisdom: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" Do not make pretensions to that, which is unattainable, even righteousness by the law, nor justify thyself: take heed also that thou dost not exalt thine own wisdom; for "the wisdom of men is foolishness with God," lest thereby thou shouldst deceive, and so destroy both body and soul in Hell.

persons, intending to overthrow a wall, were on opposite sides and with equal strength, to exert themselves, they would defeat their own design. Thus it fares with the enemies of revealed truth, who do nothing by the opposition they make to it, but prove their own prejudices, and the enmity of the carnal mind against God.

The grace of God is His free and undeserved kindness in the redemption of man. The very word implies its independence on any worthiness in the objects of it; for a thing ceases to be a favor, so far as it is deserved. The payment of the wages of an hireling is not an act of grace, but of debt. We had sinned, and thereby had incurred the curse of the righteous law. God might justly have left us to perish; for He was under no obligation to provide a vicarious sacrifice. He has shewn the severity of his justice in leaving the fallen angels without a remedy, ‘re- served in chains of darkness to the judgment of ‘the great day.’ But glory be to His holy name, respecting sinners of mankind He has said, ‘Deliver them from going down into the pit, I ‘have found a ransom.’* This grace then is the sole and all-sufficient cause of our salvation. By it we are pardoned; † by it we are justified; ‡ by it we are called to the knowledge of the truth; § by this grace we are sanctified; || thereby we are

* Job. xxxiii. 24. † Eph. i. 7. ‡ Rom. iii. 24. § 2 Tim. i. 9.

|| 1 Cor. vi. 11.

preserved;* and when the top-stone is put upon the edifice, the cry will be ‘grace, grace unto it.’† The holy practice, which a contrite sinner is desirous of maintaining, can only spring from evangelic motives. Reason and moral suasion are weak barriers against our natural love of sin, and aversion to real Godliness. A man might as well think of stopping the course of the Ganges by means of an insignificant cockle-shell, as of resisting the more furious current of his own vile affections by any arguments drawn from the fitness of things. No principles, but those exhibited in the Gospel, can change the heart.‡ The Gospel acts powerfully on the understanding, and produces a rational conviction that it is our interest, as well as our duty, to ‘live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world.’ It produces demonstration in the conscience that sin is the cause of present torment, and leads to eternal ruin; that holiness brings present happiness, and is an essential preparative for, though not the meritorious cause of, eternal life. It acts with an invincible energy on the will, supplying effectual motives to produce obedience; for the love of Christ, when experienced in the soul, has a constraining power, as much superior to the

* 1 Pet. i. 5.

† Zach. iv. 7.

‡ Where are the advocates for justification by works to be found, who *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?*

motives of Philosophy, as the light of the meridian-sun is to the feeble glimmering of the glow-worm; which is just sufficient to attract the notice of the traveller, but leaves him to pursue his journey in the dark. The influence of Gospel-truth turns duty into pleasure; and proves, to the sinner's full conviction, that "God's service is perfect freedom."

Godliness, as the word implies, has God for its object. It includes obedience to all the precepts of the first table. Our church has explained her meaning, in the use of this word, by the answer she gives to the question, proposed in her catechism, respecting our duty towards God.* *Faith* in God is an essential part of Godliness. 'To believe in Him' is not merely to acknowledge His existence; for this a man may do, and yet continue destitute of Godliness. 'The devils believe and tremble.' But it is a belief of His goodness, as well as His Being; accompanied with such a trust in Him as leads to an expectation of happiness from Him. God, absolutely considered as an holy and just Being, cannot be to a sinner an object of confidence. To Adam, before the fall He was: but now, without a Mediator, it is impossible for us to approach Him. The *fear* of God is another ingredient in true Godliness. The generality of mankind fear the

* 'My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him.'

reproach of the world more than the displeasure of God ; and the loss of sensual gratification more than the loss of His favor. But true Godliness supposes such a fear of God, as outweighs all other considerations. It includes also a supreme *love* to God. What we love, in that we delight. In the company of a friend we experience pleasure ; and, if that friend be absent from us, a correspondence with him is ardently desired, and carefully maintained. The lovers of God labor to maintain ‘fellowship with the Father and the Son thro’ the Spirit;’ and consider the intercourse, which they enjoy with heaven by prayer and praise, as their inestimable privilege, dearer than life and all its other enjoyments.

Righteousness is the duty we owe to our neighbour, and has respect to all the precepts of the second table. It is excellently summed up by the compilers of our liturgy in a few words, when they inform us in answer to a question put to a catechumen on the subject that ‘our duty towards our neighbour is to love him as ourselves ; and to do unto all men, as we would they should do unto us.’ How comprehensive a rule ! We act so far in a way becoming the Christian character, as we put it in practice. In every situation and relation of life this Divine epitome of ethics, if closely attended to, will direct us how to ‘walk and to please God.’ It will unravel a thousand

intricacies, and afford a satisfactory answer to almost every case of conscience that may occur.

Sobriety respects ourselves.—It is soundness of mind in opposition to distraction or madness.* Man, in his natural state, is distracted or mad. He is so represented in our Lord's beautiful parable of the prodigal son; in which the unhappy spendthrift, when brought to a resolution of returning to his Father, is said to 'come to himself,' or to be restored to the use of his reason. Madness is the loss or perversion of reason. Every unconverted man acts irrationally. He prefers the baubles of time to eternal realities. Like one in a delirium, he is in the utmost danger, yet perceives it not. If we saw a man loaded with ignominious chains, and unwilling to part with them, we should pity his condition, and conclude him to be divested of reason. The love of sin is the heavy and ignominious chain, with which we are tied and bound; yet are we by nature pleased with it, and unwilling to have it removed from us.—Sobriety is also modesty or humility of mind

* The Greek word *σωφροσυνή* is used in a threefold sense.

1. *To be of a sound mind* in opposition to distraction or madness, Mark v. 15. Luke viii. 35. 2 Cor. v. 13.

2. *To be of a modest, humble mind*, in opposition to pride. Rom. xii. 3.

3. *To be of a sober, recollected mind*, as opposed to intemperance or sensuality. Tit. ii. 6 1 Pet. iv. 7. PARKHURST.

Each sense may have a place here.

in opposition to pride ; which is as contrary to the state of mind, for which our church teaches us to pray, as rioting and drunkenness. It would be an act of insobriety for a pauper, supported by the parish, to consider himself and act as a person of independent fortune. It is equally so for a poor bankrupt sinner to justify himself before God. We then ‘think soberly of ourselves as we ought to think ;’ when, renouncing our own righteousness, we adopt the language of the confession of our church, as expressing the genuine feelings of our own hearts.—Sobriety also signifies a sober, recollected mind, as opposed to intemperance or sensuality. It consists in a denial of worldly lusts. It is opposed not only to drunkenness, gluttony, and lewdness ; but to all intemperate use of present things. Very awful are our Lord’s words, ‘Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.’* A man may be intoxicated with the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, who is otherwise sober, temperate, and chaste. A man of true sobriety has his ‘affections set upon things above, not on things on the earth.’† ‘His treasure is in heaven, and there is his heart also.’‡ He is instructed to make it his main ob-

* Luke xxi. 34.

† Col. iii. 2.

‡ Matth. vi. 21.

ject 'so to pass through things temporal, as
' finally not to lose the things which are eternal.'

A true penitent is cordially desirous of living
'a godly, righteous, and sober life.' He is con-
scious that his own strength is perfect weakness ;
and therefore applies earnestly to Him for grace,
who has promised to bestow it. 'Having much
' forgiven, he loves much ;' and therefore is solici-
tous to spend his time, and employ his talents
'to the glory of God's most holy name.' O that
every member of our communion may thus mani-
fest the sincerity of the confessions he makes !

The use, which our Church makes of Jesus
Christ, must not be omitted. To Him she con-
tinually leads the attention of her children. When
she teaches us to pray for sanctifying grace, we
are put in mind that it is 'for His sake' only,
that we can expect a favorable answer to our
prayers. His death is represented as the only
ground of hope to a guilty sinner ; to whom an
offended God can shew mercy only 'thro' Jesus
'Christ our Lord.' Every humble soul will say,
'Amen.'

ESSAY IV.

ON THE ABSOLUTION.

THE act of ministerial absolution has been the subject of much warm, and contentious disputation. On the one hand, it has been asserted that the power of forgiving sins, conferred by our Lord on His Apostles, was personal with respect to them, and with them expired; their successors in the ministry being destitute of the proper qualifications for so high and important an office. On the other hand, it has been argued that, the wants of the church being the same, there is no more reason to confine this part of the sacred function, to persons acting under immediate inspiration than any other. Controversy is not the business of these essays. There is happily neutral ground, on which we may stand in safety, without engaging with either of the contending parties. Surely on such a subject, if it be possible, all disputation should be silenced: and if any sound be heard, it should not be the din of war-

like debate, but the groan of penitence or the murmur of joy, occasioned by the gracious sentence of acquittal from the guilt of those sins, which, without a pardon, would have changed the unhappy noise of religious controversy into weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. There is nothing in the absolution of our church, that needs defence. It makes no pretensions, that border on the arrogant claims of the chair of St. Peter. It is merely declaratory and conditional. As Ambassadors for God, His ministers therein proclaim His readiness to receive all those, 'who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him.'

'Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; and hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins: He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel. Wherefore let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance, and His Holy Spirit; that those things may please Him, which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to His eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

While the consciences of sinners remain in a state of torpid insensibility, they are easily satisfied with respect to the pardon of their sins, of which they have never seen the evil, nor felt the burden. A stupified devotee to papal infallibility acquiesces without difficulty, in the supposititious right of the holy see, to remit by its own authority sins that are past, present, and yet to come. Lulled by this siren song, he suffers his days to glide on in careless security, without any serious inquiries, whether the great Judge of all will confirm the sentence of his pretended vicar. A protestant formalist, from the same cause and with the same facility, quiets the clamors of conscience, if at intervals conscience become clamorous, with proposed intentions of making atonement for past miscarriages by future amendment. The generality of nominal Christians pacify themselves with undefined notions of God's mercy, without any warrant whatever from the word of God. But it is not so with those, who know that 'the wages of sin is death;' who feel the value of their souls to be so great, that the loss of them could not be compensated by gaining the whole world; and who realized that tremendous day, when 'the dead small and great shall stand before God, when the books shall be opened, and the dead be judged out of those things which are

‘ written in the books according to their works ;*
 ‘ when every work shall be brought into judgment,
 ‘ with every secret thing, whether it be good, or
 ‘ whether it be evil.’† Vague and indeterminate
 ideas of the mercy of God will not satisfy those,
 whose consciences are quickened by the Spirit
 of God to a perception of the holiness and righ-
 teousness of the Divine nature, the spirituality of
 the Divine law, and the truth of the Divine
 threatenings. The sinner, who has described
 the corrupt state of his own heart, the iniquities
 of his life, and his apprehensions of God’s dis-
 pleasure in the terms of our confession, without
 duplicity or mental reservation, must have some
 decisive views of the scripture-doctrine of abso-
 lution, before he can abandon himself to repose.
 Our reformers have therefore judiciously indica-
 ted, at the commencement of the form of absolu-
 tion, the source from which the minister derives
 his authority for the declaration that follows.
 ‘ Who can forgive sins but God only ?” But if
 almighty God had specified, in His own oracles,
 the way, in which He communicates pardon ;
 and the persons, who may safely take the com-
 fort of it ; the conscience may well rest therein,
 and every feeling of the soul be tranquillized,
 like the sea of Tiberias, when Jesus had com-
 manded, “ peace, be still.” If God be “ Al-

* Rev. xi. 12.

† Eccles. xii. 14.

mighty,' He has a supreme and indefeasible right over all creatures and things. He, who made the law and enacted the penalty, may, if He please, and it be consistent with His own glory, dispense with the obligation to punishment, restore the rebel to His favor, and reinstate him in every privilege. The creditor only has power to cancel a bond. Blessed be His name! He, to whom we owe ten thousand talents, with His own hand tears the hand-writing that is against us.* That God, against whose supreme authority our rebellions have been pointed, Himself proclaims our pardon. Very remarkable are the consolatory words, which He speaks by His prophet, 'I, even I am He that blotteth out thy ' transgressions for mine own sake, and will not ' remember thy sins.†

A conscious sinner, so soon as he hears the intimation of forgiveness, will be led to inquire, how can God absolve a wretch like me, without exposing His own glorious attributes of holiness and justice to an impeachment? And surely it might be expected that ten thousand such guilty worms, as I am, should be left to perish, rather than that a stain should be affixed to the character of the ever blessed God. Must not His justice find satisfaction? Must not the dishonor done to His holy law by my transgressions be re-

* Col. ii. 14.

† Isai. xliii. 25.

paired? Must He not be just, as well as merciful, in all his acts? Such inquiries must be acceptable to the Searcher of all hearts, since they manifest an enlightened mind, and a concern for His glory. Blessed be God, we are not left to our own conjectures for an answer to them: for, while we are assured that ‘without shedding of blood there is no remission;’* we are also informed by our church from the word of God, that He is ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Here ‘mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.’† In the covenant of grace provision is made for the honor of every attribute of Deity; so that God, considered as ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ can be ‘just,’ and at the same time ‘the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to

* Hebr. ix. 22.

† Ps. lxxxv. 10. ‘When Christ appeared in our nature the promise was fulfilled, and *truth sprang out of the earth*. And now *righteousness, looking down from Heaven*, beheld in him every thing that she required; an undefiled birth, an holy life, an innocent death, a spirit and a mouth without guile, a soul and a body without sin. She saw, and was satisfied, and returned to earth. Thus all the four parties met again in perfect harmony: *truth ran to mercy*, and embraced her. *Righteousness to peace*, and kissed her. And this could only happen at the birth of Jesus, in whom *the tender mercy of our God visited us*, and who is *the truth; who is made unto us righteousness*, and is *our peace*. Luke i. 78. John xiv. 6. 1 Cor. i. 30. Eph. ii. 14.’---Bishop Horne’s Comment on the Psalms.

‘ cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ The only begotten Son of God has paid the utmost farthing of our debt. Forasmuch as the children of God are ‘ partakers of flesh and blood, He also took ‘ part of the same ;’ that, as our elder brother, He might restore them to the family of heaven. Through our relation to Him, His Father is become our Father. Let the scrupulosity of the sinner’s conscience be ever so great ; though his mind be tumultuously agitated, like the ocean in a storm, this view of absolution is enough to remove every doubt, and reduce the tempest in his bosom to a perfect calm. O what ample provision does the gospel make for our security from condemnation, and for our comfort in a heartfelt persuasion of it ! Well might Jehovah say by His prophet, ‘ Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation ; he that believeth shall ‘ not make haste.’* This is a basis, on which too much weight cannot be laid. O with what feelings of heart should the sinner receive the message, which the minister brings to his ears, since it is derived from ‘ the Father of our Lord ‘ Jesus Christ !’ Surely the language of every

* Isai. xxviii. 16. comp. 1 Pet. ii. 6. לא ימהר שׂוֹמֵר shall not hurry hither and thither, as persons in perplexity, ‘ shall not be confounded.’

penitent soul must be, so soon as his ears have welcomed the joyful tidings, ‘ what shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me ? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.’†

Lest the conscience of a sinner should still be distressed through fear of a mistake, and apprehension of its consequences in a matter of such high and everlasting importance, a most confirming declaration is added ; that ‘ God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.’ This is a quotation from the word of God by the prophet Ezekiel.* Mercy is the darling attribute of God, in which he seems most to delight. He is said by David to be ‘ full of compassion.’ When Moses desired to behold the Divine glory, memorable is the answer that was given him : ‘ I will make,’ not all my power, my holiness, my justice, but ‘ all my goodness to pass before thee ; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.’‡ It may be asked, what is it that excites Divine compassion ? This inquiry may be resolved in one word ; it is

† Psa. cxvi. 12, 13.

* Ezek. xviii. 23. and xxxiii. 11.

‡ Exod. xxxiii. 19. and xxxiv. 6.

misery, We esteem, we love our rich and prosperous fellow-creatures, if there be any thing in them which challenges our esteem and love ; but we do not pity them. Our compassion is reserved for those, who are ‘ in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or some other adversity.’ The great Author of all being loves His angels, and ‘ the spirits of just men made perfect ;’ but He does not pity them, because they have no miseries to call His compassion forth. Men therefore, considered as fallen and miserable, are the objects of this Divine attribute. Let us employ a moment in contemplating the present state of man, as rendering him the object of Divine commiseration.—He is such, if considered with respect to his *bodily miseries*. Many, very many are the distresses of human nature, even of an external kind. Sin has introduced diseases, dangers, and wants without number. Well might Seth call his first-born son by a name expressive of our present sad condition.* It might be supposed,

* Gen. iv. 26. ‘ אָדָם a man, thus veiled from the *infirm*, ‘ *wretched* state, into which he fell by sin. This the believing ‘ Seth acknowledged in the name of his first-born. Comp. Job ‘ ix. 2, and xv. 14. Ps. viii. 4, and ix. 19, 20, Isa. li. 7. In Gen. ‘ v. 1, 2, we read, “ in the day that God created man, בְּדִמְיוֹת ‘ *in the likeness* of God made He him: male and female created ‘ He them, and called their name אָדָם Adam in the day when ‘ they were created.” This name importing their being created ‘ *in the likeness of God*, as to holiness, happiness, and immortali-

were we to judge of God by ourselves, that ‘the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity,’ would not condescend to notice the miseries of poor worms of the dust. Who would not be surprised to see the Monarch descending from his throne to visit the mansions of poverty, disease, and wretchedness. Yet the great God deigns to frequent the cottage of the destitute, the bed of disease, and the abode of guilt. When ‘God manifest in the flesh,’ walked on this earth, His chief delight was among objects of distress. We do not find Him attending the levees of Herod, or courting the acquaintance of his nobles. But we find Him surrounded by a circle of the maimed, the deaf, the halt, and the blind. ‘He wept with those that wept.’* ‘He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.’—Moreover man, considered as a *guilty creature*, is the object of Divine compassion. Who can look into the dungeon of guilt, and for a moment contemplate the wretched criminal loaded with chains, without dropping a tear of sympathizing sorrow? Such persons are the proper objects of human pity. But there is one respect, in which Divine pity differs from

‘ty. But by sin man became עֲנָנִי *a wretch*, and this is the name by which the species is most commonly called in scripture.’ PARKHURST’S Lexicon, p. 37, 3d edit.

* John xi. 35.

our's. If the miseries of the object have been occasioned by offences committed against ourselves; were we to behold a criminal under sentence of punishment for injuries done to our own persons, fortune, or reputation; our tender feelings would be in danger of suppression from the opposite principles of indignation and resentment. But 'God's thoughts are not as our thoughts.' He compassionates those, who have broken His own laws, rebelled against His own authority, crucified His own Son, and done despite to his own Spirit; nay, those who have proudly and disdainfully, and perhaps for a long season, rejected the overtures of reconciliation, which He has made them. O the depths of the riches of the grace of God! The sin of man, however complicated, however heinous, is no obstacle to the exercise of Divine mercy; which, like some mighty torrent, swelled by descending rains overflows all bounds, and with irresistible impetuosity breaks down all impediments, in the course which it is appointed to take.—Man also, considered as *an helpless creature*, is the object of Divine commiseration. We feel in our bosoms peculiar emotions towards the new-born infant, because of its helpless state. Were we to discover a fellow-creature, who, by some dreadful accident, had dislocated all his bones, our com-

passion would be excited to a degree beyond the power of our present conception. The good Samaritan beholds us all in this disabled situation. 'He willeth not the death of a sinner.' Abandoned to ourselves, we must spend the miserable remains of life in unavailing groans, and then make our bed in Hell. But

'He saw, and O amazing love!

'He flew to our relief.'

Every attribute, which we ascribe to Jehovah, He possesses after an infinite manner. What an amazing thought is an infinite mind, 'full of compassion!' The great and wide sea, and unmeasurable space afford ideas, that overwhelm our staggering faculties: yet these are limited. But the bosom of our God is higher than heaven, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea;† and is 'full of compassion.' Our grandest ideas of it are as inadequate to the subject, as a drop of water to the ocean, or a single ray of light to the flux of radiance from the orb of day. Whatever God's compassion dictates, His arm is able to effect. What ground have we then for faith, since our very guilt and misery is that, which attracts the regard of Divine pity? Perhaps it may be asked, when does our heavenly Father feel these emotions towards His redeemed ones? He is always the same, knowing 'no variableness, nor shadow of turning.' What

† Job xi. 8.

He was in the beginning, that He is now, and ever will be world without end. But those, who feel a keen sensibility of their own miseries through sin, may be certain that it is occasioned by what passes in the bosom of their God concerning them. If you are of a broken and contrite heart, and tremble at His word; if you are sighing after pardon and salvation; be assured that ‘the Lord is looking down from the height of His sanctuary, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loose those that are appointed unto death.’ ‡

But in what way does God shew mercy? He manifests His loving-kindness in the only way, that could be really advantageous to the sinner. He gives the longing desire to ‘turn from our wickedness,’ and thus proves His willingness that we should ‘live.’ He does not take away the guilt of sin by absolution, and leave us under its tyrannical dominion. This would not be an act of kindness; since the love of sin would effectually exclude us from felicity,* even if there were no burning lake to receive transgressors. But He leads us in spirit to the garden at the

‡ Psa. cii. 19, 20.

* The word rendered ‘*avenger*’ in Psa. viii. 2. literally signifies ‘*the self avenger,*’ or ‘*self-tormentor,*’ and is a proper appellation of Satan, and of all those, who follow him in his enmity to God and holiness. See also Psa. xlv. 16, where the same word occurs in the same sense.

‘Myself am Hell.’

MILTON.

foot of the mount of Olives, and from thence to Golgotha; and there presents to our view a bleeding, dying Saviour. We behold in Him the malignity of sin, and the curse that is annexed to it; and turn from our wickedness with abhorrence, as a tender mother would turn from the sight of the reeking blade, which had just been plunged into the bosom of her darling child. ‘I will pour ‘out’ (says He, who desireth not the death of a sinner) ‘the spirit of grace and of supplication, ‘and they shall look upon ME, whom they have ‘pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one ‘that mourneth for his only son; and shall be in ‘bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness ‘for his first-born.’* Thus sin is exhibited to the mind as ‘exceeding sinful;’ and from thenceforth it becomes the business of life to ‘crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.’ Now every man, who thus turns from his wickedness, has the witness in himself that God ‘willeth not his death, but rather that he should ‘live;’ since conversion is the work of God. But am I effectually turned from it? Or, am I not in league with some known sin? Should I choose, were it possible, to be secured from hell, without any experience of deliverance from the love and power of sin? Or, can I say that I should prefer any sufferings, which God may see necessary for my purification, rather than continue under the accursed thralldom of sin and Satan?

* Zech. xii. 10.

This being the gracious mind and will of God, 'He hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins.' Oh! How does pity beautify the Saviour's face, when we behold Him commissioning His Apostles to 'go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:' and what is the gospel, but a declaration of pardon? The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is the principal characteristic of the message from heaven; it is that which makes it 'good tidings of great joy.' They therefore do greatly err, who make the gospel to be nothing more than a refined system of morality. What comfort could a code of laws afford to rebels, whose lives are forfeited? What reception could a King's messenger expect, carrying to persons in such circumstances a perfect delineation of their duty without any intimation of mercy? Few would attend the lecture; and those few would hear with indifference, or sullen discontent, his disquisitions on the propriety of submission to an authority, that doomed them to an ignominious death. But behold the ambassador of peace, approaching with a proclamation of unmerited favor! From the windows of their prison-house they see him drawing nigh; and in raptures of

astonishment, mingled with joy, cry out, ‘How
 ‘beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him
 ‘that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth
 ‘peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that
 ‘publisheth salvation!’ O most pleasant office!
 Most delightful employment! Well might the
 Apostle speak of his appointment to it as an in-
 estimable privilege. ‘To me, who am less than
 ‘the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I
 ‘should preach among the Gentiles the unsearch-
 ‘able riches of Christ!’

Having produced his credentials, the minister
 executes his commission by declaring that ‘God
 ‘pardoneth and absolveth all them, that truly
 ‘repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel.’
 The steward mentioned in our Lord’s parable,*
 fraudulently forgave the debts, that were due to
 his lord, without his consent. The Ministers of
 Christ, in their declarations of mercy, bear no
 resemblance of him. They have their Lord’s
 express consent and positive command. They
 produce His commission signed with His
 own hand and sealed with his own sig-
 net. Therefore what they do in His name
 He will most surely ratify. ‘Blessed is the man
 ‘whose transgression is forgiven, and whose
 ‘sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the
 ‘Lord imputeth not iniquity!’† Is this blessed-
 ness mine? Then the chain that bound me for

* Luke xvi. 5, 6. † Psa. xxxii. 1, 2.

everlasting punishment is knocked off. If the debt be remitted, the prison doors are thrown open, and I may walk at liberty. As, when the Jubilee trumpet sounded,* all forfeitures were rendered void; so it is, when this 'joyful sound'† reaches a sinner's afflicted heart. All forfeitures are instantly at an end, whether of life, liberty, or estate. All condemnation ceases, and the believing soul passes from death to life. He, who was tied and bound with the chain of his sins, is brought into the liberty, wherewith Christ makes His disciples free; a liberty of loving, serving, and praising God. The heavenly inheritance, of which by sin he had deprived himself, is freely and fully restored to him; so that it is his privilege to 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' At the jubilee was proclaimed a cessation from labor. There was to be no sowing nor reaping that year; but every Israelite was to eat of that, which cost him no toil. So when the message of absolution enters the conscience, the favoured sinner ceases from his own works. No longer, like a galley-slave instigated by fear of the lash, does he obey under the influence of the Spirit of bondage, as if his obedience were to be the condition of salvation; but, receiving a pardon, as free as it is valuable, he now renders a willing obedience to Christ as the

* Lev. xxv. 8---10. † Psa. lxxxix. 15, 16.

fruit of 'faith working by love.' O precious benefit!

' And what is this?---Survey the wond'rous cure :
 ' And at each step let higher wonder rise!
 ' Pardon for infinite offence, and pardon
 ' Thro' means, which speak its value infinite !
 ' A pardon bought with blood ! with blood Divine !
 ' With blood Divine of Him, I made my foe!
 ' Persisted to provoke ! tho' woo'd and aw'd,
 ' Bless'd and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still !
 ' A rebel midst the thunders of His throne !
 ' Nor I alone ! a rebel universe !
 ' My species up in arms ! not one exempt !
 ' Yet for the foulest of the foul He dies,
 ' Most joy'd for the redeem'd from deepest guilt !
 ' As if our race were held of higher rank ;
 ' And Godhead dearer, as more kind to man !'*

For whom is the comfort of this act of grace designed? The proposal is made to all, who hear the joyful sound ; but none reap the advantage, or enjoy the comfort of it, but those ' who truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel.' Yet repentance and faith are not conditions performed by us, for the merit of which God bestows the pardon. To assert this, would be to destroy the very nature of the act of grace, and to convert the gospel into a bargain, made between God and the sinner. Faith and repentance are the gifts of God, and flow from the same ocean of mercy, from which forgiveness itself springs.

‘ Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour
 ‘ to give repentance to Israel and remission of
 ‘ sins.’* ‘ Faith is not of ourselves, but it is the
 ‘ gift of God.’† How strange would it be for a
 person, who wished to get possession of some val-
 uable commodity, to say to the proprietor, ‘ if
 ‘ you will supply me with the money, then I will
 ‘ purchase of you the article I want ?’ The na-
 ture of repentance has already been considered.
 Concerning faith in the gospel something remains
 to be said, since this also is declared to be es-
 sential to salvation ; for ‘ the unbelieving,’ as
 well as ‘ the abominable, and murderers, and
 ‘ whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters,
 ‘ and all liars, shall have their part in the lake,
 ‘ which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which
 ‘ is the second death.’‡ Gospel-faith then is a
 habit wrought in the soul by the power of the
 Holy Ghost, by which it renounces every thing,
 which it can call its own, as a ground of hope to-
 wards God ; and places all its trust on the Di-
 vine declaration that ‘ Jesus Christ came into the
 ‘ world to save sinners.’ ‘ Dost thou believe in
 ‘ the Son of God ?’§ How weighty an inquiry !
 Do you acknowledge that all men, as sinners, are
 under a sentence of condemnation ; and that, had
 not the Saviour been provided, all must have per-

* Acts v. 31.

† Eph. ii. 8.

‡ Rev. xxi. 8.

John ix. 35.

ished? Let us endeavour to realize the thought; the conviction is essential to the being of faith: for in proportion to the sense we entertain of the reality and magnitude of our danger will be our joy at the prospect of escape, and the cordiality, with which we shall embrace the salvation of God. Self-despair must necessarily precede and accompany every act of believing on the Son of God. Is a Physician valuable in his official character? It is only to the sick.* Faith is a venturing of the soul on the narrative of facts, and those deductions from them, of which the gospel is composed. The Gospel, considered not as a system of ethics, but as a revelation of Divine mercy, is the foundation, on which the believer builds. Take this away, and he has nothing left to support the fabric of his hopes and prospects. As the Israelites, when dying in torment through the venom of the fiery serpents that had bitten them, looked to the brazen effigy erected by Moses on a pole, and by looking derived life and health to their bodies; so the awakened sinner, through looking by faith unto Jesus on the cross, obtains salvation for his perishing soul. If you are a believer, you have a habitual acquaintance with your own guilty, helpless, and undone condition: you perceive the imperfections of your prayers, tears, repentance, and faith; and renounce it all, considered as a basis for confidence

* Matt. ix. 12.

before God. For as the magnifying powers of the microscope discover imperfections in the finest works of human art, which the unassisted eye could not discern ; and perfections in the works of God, which were also invisible without its aid : so faith perceives innumerable and gross defects in the most polished productions of man's righteousness, where reason saw nothing but excellence ; and glories in the Person and obedience of Jesus, where reason could espy nothing worthy of admiration or love. If you are a believer, you know the difficulty of believing, and daily cry, ' Lord, help mine unbelief !' For, while the person, whose faith is only the result of education or national tradition, and consists in a cold, uninfluential assent to certain propositions, considers the work of faith easy to be performed ; the sinner, who is convinced of unbelief,* who apprehends the value of his soul, and perceives its lost condition, is persuaded from experience, that genuine faith is the effect of the operation of God ; and that truly to believe on Jesus is an act of the Divine life, which none can perform, but through the influence of the Holy Ghost. On what ground then may one, who hears the declaration of absolution, safely build an hope that he is interested in it? Some risk their eternal all on an unfounded conclusion that, since sin is so common, God will not punish such multitudes of

† John xvi. 9.

His creatures. Many compare themselves with others, and found their claim on a comparative innocence of manners, and an exemption from grosser pollutions. Others conclude favorably for themselves on the score of God's forbearance of executing His threatenings, forgetting that this is not the world of judgment. These are sandy foundations. An inference of the favor of God, drawn from outward prosperity, is of the same kind: it receives no support from scripture. They 'who unfeignedly repent, and believe His holy Gospel,' are the only persons, on whom a pardoning God will smile with approbation. If you are truly sorry for sin, and earnestly desire to forsake it, this is repentance. If, renouncing all hope from the law and your own obedience to it, you cordially embrace the gospel, and lie at the foot of the cross, covered with holy confusion, crying, 'Lord, save or I perish;' this is faith: and the trembling sinner may rest assured, that it is not the high perfection, but the reality of faith, that gives an interest in the gracious promise, 'he that believeth shall be saved.'

Many perhaps, on hearing this comfortable declaration, will immediately say, 'would to God, I could repent and believe! But I find, by experience, that I might as easily form an aqueduct, that should convey to England the waters of Jordan, as force one tear of Godly

sorrow from mine own eyes ; that to cleanse the Augean stable of my heart is not work for human ability ; and that I could with equal facility touch the planet Saturn with my finger, or by a chain of my own fabrication bring it into contact with the earth, as believe on Jesus Christ, so as to pacify my conscience, or quiet my dreadful apprehensions of the consequences of my sins.' Happy, thrice happy conviction ! This is a lesson you did not learn in the schools of Philosophy, but at the feet of Jesus, from the secret instructions of His Spirit. 'Flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but our Father which is in Heaven.'* Come then, and 'let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance, and His Holy Spirit.' If you feel your own weakness, you are in a right temper for prayer, and will heartily 'cry to the strong for strength.' Since 'Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live :' Since 'He hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins ;' since repentance and faith are necessary to salvation, and are both the gifts of God ; with what holy

* Matt. xvi. 17.

boldness may we approach the mercy-seat to ask for the influence of the Holy Spirit of promise, that, by His Divine agency upon us, we may be enabled to repent and believe. ‘God giveth His ‘Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.’ How encouraging are our Lord’s words, ‘Ask, and it ‘shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: ‘knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For ‘every one, that asketh, receiveth: and he, that ‘seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it ‘shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of ‘any of you, that is a father, will he give him ‘a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish ‘give him a serpent? Or, if he ask an egg, will ‘he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, ‘know how to give good gifts unto your children: ‘how much more shall your heavenly Father ‘give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?’*

Every true worshipper of God wishes to please Him. To such the attainment of His approbation is the great object of sedulous endeavour. The good opinion of the world, even of the virtuous part of it, is a matter of indifference, compared with the smile of heaven. This will compensate amply for toil and labor, obloquy and reproach, if met with in the path of duty. With them the grand inquiry is, not how may I make a conspicuous figure in the world; but how may I

* Luke xi. 9---13.

demean myself so that my conduct may please Him? To this question a direct answer is given in the form of absolution. When repentance and faith are the inmates of our hearts, then, and then only will 'those things please Him, which we do at this present.' If these are wanting, the most splendid acts of charity, and our worship, whatever appearance of devotion it may have, are an abomination in His sight. Unless self-renunciation and self-abhorrence, accompanied by faith in the great atoning sacrifice, be the spring of action, and the source whence our confessions, prayers, and praises flow; we can have no 'testimony that we please God.' Jesus is 'the beloved Son of God, in whom He is well pleased;' and nothing of our's can be pleasant to God, but what is honorable to Christ. 'The sacrifices of God,' acceptable to Him, 'are a broken and contrite spirit.' A man may build and endow hospitals, and rear stately and magnificent edifices for God's worship; and yet hear at last the tremendous words, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.' It is the motive that is regarded by the Great Searcher of hearts, rather than the act. It is the principle, that sanctifies the gift. Were I to bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned; it would not recommend me to God, unless in the performance of these acts, I refused to ground on them any hope of acceptance with

Him ; and, as a poor sinner, rested my plea on the atonement of Jesus Christ. ‘Without faith it is impossible to please God.’*

The awakened soul is solicitous ‘that the rest of his life hereafter may be pure and holy.’ The time past of his days he accounts more than sufficient to be devoted to the service of sin. But he knows that he can only become holy, in proportion as God the Sanctifier makes him so ; and therefore he earnestly beseeches God to ‘grant’ him ‘His Holy Spirit’ for this end. But perhaps it may be objected that if pardon, faith, repentance, and even eternal life be freely bestowed on the undeserving ‘without money and without price ;’ then there is no need of any anxiety about a ‘pure and holy life.’ In answer to this, let us endeavour to illustrate the Apostle’s position that ‘faith worketh by love.’† Your house has taken fire, and the flames are kindled all around you. No probable way of escape appears. You give yourself up for lost, and, in your own apprehension, you must perish. Just at the critical moment, when despair has seized your mind, one, who was under no obligations to you, undertakes your rescue ; rushes through the surrounding flames ; and, after suffering severely himself in the attempt, is success-

* Heb. xi. 6.

† Gal. v. 6.

ful in effecting your deliverance. Ask yourselves, what would the feelings of your heart be towards that person? This act of kindness is more than realized to the redeemed sinner. Must not he, who knows that he has been ‘redeemed’ from endless ruin ‘with a price, not of ‘corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but ‘with the precious blood of Christ,’ love God, and labour to keep His commandments? Will not gratitude operate on the ingenuous mind more powerfully than slavish fear? ‘We love Him, ‘because He first loved us.’*

Thus ‘at the last we shall come to His eternal ‘joy.’ Blessed be God, there is a state before us, in which the tear of repentance will be wiped away from our eyes, the sigh of sorrow be suppressed, and the conflict of faith be changed for everlasting triumph! For ‘they, that sow in ‘tears, shall reap in joy: he, that goeth forth ‘and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubt- ‘less come again with rejoicing, bringing his ‘sheaves with him.’† The husbandman ploughs his ground, and scatters his precious seed over the soil, in expectation of a future increase: his pleasing hopes are, however, often chastised by fear of a disappointment. So the awakened sinner weeps, and prays; laments his past life, and

* John iv. 19.

† Ps. cxxvi. 5. 6.

corrupt nature ; struggles against ‘ sin that dwelleth in him ;’ fights the good fight of faith ; and labours hard to lay hold on eternal life. Many weary steps the industrious husbandman takes, while waiting for the time of harvest : but, when that season comes, his labours are amply repaid, while with joy and gladness of heart he carries the golden grain to his barns in safety. So shall it be with the humble believer. The present time is the time of sowing and waiting. We are now to live by faith : and that faith must be tried. Blighting winds and nipping frosts will threaten to destroy our pleasing prospects. The time of harvest may be long delayed. But there is a reaping season to come. Our utmost wishes will then be more than realized. ‘ We shall enter into his eternal joy.’ That joy will be greater than ‘ the joy in harvest, or ‘ that of those who divide the spoil.’* It will not be like the short-lived joy, which arises from worldly prosperity, and which resembles ‘ the ‘ crackling of thorns under a pot,’† a momentary blaze and nothing more. But it will be ‘ eternal.’ Our present comforts, even those of a religious nature, often leave us to regret their want of permanence and stability. But, when the day of the consummation of all our hopes arrives, our

* Isai. ix. 3.

† Eccles. vii. 6.

joy will be everlasting, and ever increasing, while we shall spend a happy eternity in casting our blood-bought crowns before the throne ; acknowledging that our felicity is not the fruit of our own merits, but that we receive it only ' through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

ESSAY V.

ON THE PSALMS, LESSONS, EPISTLES, AND GOSPELS.

AS the wisdom of the compilers of our Liturgy appears in many remarkable instances, so especially in the appointment of large portions of the Holy Scriptures to be read at every season of public worship. They have divided the book of Psalms into thirty parts, that so the Psalter might be read through in every month. ‘The old Testament is appointed for the first lessons at the morning and evening prayer; so as the most part thereof will be read over every year once, as in the calendar is appointed. The new Testament is appointed for the second lessons at morning and evening prayer, and shall be read over orderly every year thrice, besides the epistles and gospels; except the Apocalypse, out of which there are only certain proper lessons appointed upon divers feasts.’ This is the account which our Reformers themselves give of

their procedure in this matter in the Rubric, which precedes the Calendar in our common prayer books. O that, while we are reflecting on the wisdom with which they were endowed for the execution of their pious undertaking, our minds may be elevated to admiration of the goodness of God as apparent in the abundant means of grace, which we so richly enjoy !

The Bible contains a revelation from God to sinners of the human race, concerning matters, the knowledge of which is essential to their holiness and happiness, both in this world and in that which is to come. An inquiry concerning the Author of the sacred volume will discover to us its Divine excellency ; for ‘ all scripture is given ‘ by inspiration of God.’* We attribute the several parts, of which it consists, to the subordinate instruments, who were employed in conveying it to us, in order to facilitate a distinction between them : but one Divine Author indited the whole. Therefore it is dignified with the august title of ‘ the oracles of God ;’† because Jehovah-Sabaoth inspired the persons from whose pens we have received it. It is attributed equally to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, because therein these Three co-equal and co-essential Persons ‘ bear record, ‘ and these Three are One.’§ It is ‘ the word of ‘ Christ :’‡ and ‘ holy men of old spake as they

* 2 Tim. 3. 16.

† Rom. iii. 2.

§ 1 John, v. 7.

‡ Col. iii. 16:

‘ were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ † When the Scriptures are asserted to be written by inspiration, the least that can be intended is, that a Divine influence in the mind of the person employed as the Amanuensis of the Holy Ghost, so guided his pen, as to preclude all possibility of error. It was not necessary that, in all cases, the use of the natural faculties of the inspired author should be entirely superseded. For where past events are recorded, of which the writer was an eye-witness, it sufficed that his memory was strengthened to retain them, and his understanding assisted in the selection of proper terms, in which to express them. But, in passages of a prophetic nature, and those in which the sublime mysteries of our religion are revealed, it is farther necessary for us to conclude, that the Spirit of God dictated to the writer’s mind the very ideas which he was to describe : for a manifestation of future events is the prerogative of God only : and ‘ the things of God,’ § such as relate to His being, His mode of subsistence, and His purposes with respect to men or angels, these are things which ‘ no man knoweth but the Spirit of God ;’ and, if they are ever known by us, it must be by virtue of a revelation from God Himself. These pages are not designed to be a vindication of the truth of the

† 2 Pet. i. 21.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 11.

Bible. A variety of excellent and able men* have been raised up in every age of the church, who have been enabled to repel the insidious cavils or open attacks of its enemies. Our adorable Lord declared beforehand, that ‘the gates’ (i. e. all the power and policy) ‘of Hell should never prevail against it :’ and, blessed be His holy name, hitherto the prediction has been verified. The buckler of truth, more impenetrable than the fabled shield of the Grecian hero, has been found proof against the sharpest weapons, which infidelity could employ, though neither malice nor subtilty has been wanting on its side. The walls of salvation† still remain in all their lustre, strength, and glory ; though they have been so long besieged by numerous hosts of foes, that compared therewith, the famous siege of Tyre by the army of Nebuchadnezzar‡ shrinks

* See “Doddridge’s dissertation on the inspiration of the new Testament, as proved from the facts recorded in its history,” in the third volume of his Family Expositor : Leslie’s short method with the Deists : and Leland’s view of Deistical writers. The writings of Mr. Thomas Paine can only deceive those, whose minds are totally unfurnished with theological information. But as there are many such uncultivated minds, and as the subject is of inconceivable importance ; the Bishop of Landaff, Mr. Scott, and others, have seen it right to expose the fallacies of this daring blasphemer.

† Isai. lx. 18.

‡ Ezek. xxix. 18. The siege of Tyre, alluded to in the Prophet, lasted thirteen years.....*Prid. Connection*, vol. 1. p. 12.

into nothing. And surely as the blessed volume, on which all the hopes of fallen man are built, hath stood the test of the several attacks of its enemies for so long a period, we may safely conclude, not only with respect to the past, but also with respect to every future opposer of the truth of God, ‘that his mischief shall return upon his own head; and his violent dealings shall come down upon his own pate.’†

Though controversy with the various deistical writers, either of past ages or the present, is not the business of these pages; there is one observation that may here be properly introduced, viz. that the fortress of unbelief is seated in the human heart, and not in the head. It originates in the will and affections, not in the understanding, which is forced into the service of these tyrannical lords. Reason is made subservient to inclination. If the love of sin were destroyed from among the sons of men, every fibre of that deadly night-shade, Deism, would at the same moment be eradicated. The salutary precepts of the Bible are inimical to the peace and comfort of worldly men, while they continue such. Thereby their practices are condemned; and the state in which they live, is depicted as contrary to the will of God. The awful declarations of the scriptures clash with every principle of the corrupted mind

† Ps. vii. 16.

of fallen man. In the volume of inspiration it is plainly denounced that 'the wicked shall not be unpunished.' This being the case, an ungodly man must either forsake his sins, or abandon himself to desperation, or labour to prove that the book which occasions his uneasiness is false. From both the former parts of the alternative his corrupt and deceived heart revolts : the latter therefore is necessary to the establishment of his peace ; and in this he engages with so much zeal, as at last, when given up by God to a reprobate mind, almost to believe his own lie. If this consideration be duly examined, it may, perhaps, point out to us an essential feature of distinction between the believer under the lowest apprehensions of the truth of the gospel, and infidels of every description. The former, although through temptation and corruption he may be exercised with many doubts about the truth of the doctrines of the Bible, yet cordially wishes they may prove true : his hope, his comfort, his heaven depends on the solidity of the foundation. Whereas the latter (could the feelings of his heart be analyzed) hopes, that, like 'the baseless fabric of a vision,' they will prove false and fictitious. Between these two characters arises an important difference ; for that which is an object of hope to the humble believer, is an object of fear to the sensu-

al unbeliever. Oh ! that this consideration may prove a source of comfort to some of the weak followers of the Lamb ; and of conviction to those who are ‘ walking after the course of this world,’ and are therefore trying to persuade themselves that the Bible is false, because they wish it to be so ; ‘ loving darkness rather than light, because ‘ their deeds are evil !’ It is not to be expected that many of the latter unhappy class of persons (though its name be legion) will ever condescend to peruse these pages : but as some individual among them may possibly, during a vacant hour, take them into his hands ; an attempt to furnish an illustration of that which has been here asserted, will not be improper. We will for this purpose suppose that a young person in the midst of worldly enjoyment and carnal gratification is seized by the ruthless fangs of a consumption. The physician or his friends are honest enough to warn him of his danger. His own apprehensions, lest the disorder should prove fatal, at times occasion great uneasiness. He has seen the same alarming symptoms which he experiences in himself terminate in the death of several of his acquaintance. Yet in opposition to the opinion of his medical friend, his own fears, and matter of fact, he still flatters himself that he shall recover his wonted health and strength, and live many years to enjoy the delusive pleasures to which his foolish heart is wedded. The cause of

the groundless persuasion, which he entertains of his recovery is evident. He wishes to live ; he fears to die ; he is loath to quit the present world, and dreads to enter into that which is to come. Hence arise all his vain expectations : they originate not in the judgment, but in the heart. Let unbelievers make the inference and apply it to themselves.

If ‘ all scripture be given by inspiration of ‘ God,’ the necessity of an acquaintance with the truths it contains is indisputable : for God would not have revealed that, the knowledge of which is a matter of indifference, or of small importance. Could the information which it communicates, have been derived from any other source ;* or had it been unessential to the persons for whom it is designed, God, who does nothing in vain, would either have left us to the exertion of our own natural faculties for the discovery of Divine truth, or have suffered us to remain in ignorance of it. But so indispensably necessary is the blessed Bible to the life, comfort, holiness, and happiness of the human soul ; that a country devoid of light, heat, food and every accommodation of bodily life, affords but a faint emblem of what a fallen world would be without such a revelation from heaven.

* The scheme of natural religion, by an adoption of which many excellent men have opened the gates of our citadel to her enemies, has been shown to have no foundation, in an excellent work, intitled “ The knowledge of Divine things from Revelation, not from “ reason. By John Ellis, D.D.”

Go to the frozen shores of Greenland, where night for so many months of the year maintains her cheerless empire ; where ‘ the country is covered in most places with everlasting ice and snow ;’ where food is procured with the utmost difficulty ; and the once* wretched inhabitants are deprived of many of the comforts, which are enjoyed in other climates of the terrestrial globe. View these desolate people in the most affecting light you can ; and then turn your attention to the delightful islands, which ‘ spot the bosom of the Pacific ocean.’ In the latter almost perpetual summer reigns : every necessary and comfort of life is comparatively obtained without labour or difficulty ; and the favoured inhabitants enjoy a sort of Paradise, similar to that described by the pretended prophet of Mecca. Yet the latter are in a state that challenges our commiseration in a greater proportion than the former, as the soul is of greater value than the body, and its concerns of higher importance ; because the Greenlanders are favoured with the light of revelation, while the luxurious Islanders of the southern sea remain hitherto in darkness and the shadow of death. Yet, blessed be God, a hope is

* This word is inserted, because, through the labours of the indefatigable Moravian missionaries, the gospel has visited this benighted country ; and has been received, in the love and in the power of it, by many of the poor inhabitants. Merciful Father, Thy kingdom come !---See *Crantz's History of Greenland*.

excited in our bosoms, that on them also, ‘the
 ‘Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in
 ‘His wings.’ May we, who possess the precious
 depositum of heavenly truth, and thereby ‘the
 ‘means of grace, and the hope of glory,’ so prize
 the inestimable benefit, that an incessant tribute
 of praise may ascend from every part of our coun-
 try to that gracious Author of all good, who, by
 means of His holy word, hath made known to
 us the things that belong to our everlasting
 peace!

The perfection of scripture is a necessary con-
 sequence of its Divine original. When God had
 created the universe, He pronounced it to be ‘very
 good.’* In the best of human compositions there
 are some defects; but all God’s works are per-
 fect. Infinite wisdom undertook to make such a
 revelation to man, as should be sufficient to in-
 struct him in every thing with which, in his pre-
 sent state, it is requisite for him to be acquainted.
 This instruction is given us in the sacred volume;
 so that we have no reason to expect or wish for
 any further communication from above. All the
 pretences which have been made to an imme-
 diate inspiration, since the canon of scripture
 has been closed, have been the effects either of a
 disordered brain, or a dishonest heart. Yet a

* Gen. i. 31.

mediate or secondary inspiration of the Holy Ghost is still experienced by the faithful, and is essential to the very existence of Christianity in the heart of man. This our church recognizes in its full extent ;* while, at the same time, she takes care to crush that spirit of enthusiasm, by which Satan has always laboured to exhibit the solid effects of the influence of the Spirit of God in a ridiculous point of view. To this end in her sixth article she declares, that ‘ Holy Scripture
 ‘ containeth all things necessary to salvation : so
 ‘ that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be
 ‘ proved thereby, is not to be required of any
 ‘ man, that it should be believed as an article of
 ‘ the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary
 ‘ to salvation.’ Very awful are the words of our Lord at the conclusion of the sacred volume, ‘ I
 ‘ testify to every man that heareth the words of
 ‘ the prophesy of this book, if any man shall add
 ‘ unto these things, God shall add unto him the
 ‘ plagues that are written in this book : and if any
 ‘ man shall take away from the words of the book

* ‘ Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy
 ‘ Holy Spirit.’ Com. Service. ‘ Grant that thy Holy Spirit may
 ‘ in all things direct and rule our hearts.’ Collect for the nine-
 teenth Sunday after Trinity. ‘ Grant us by the same Spirit to
 ‘ have a right judgment in all things.’ For Whitsunday. ‘ Grant
 ‘ that we may in such wise hear (the Scriptures), read, mark,
 ‘ learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace,’ &c.
 --- For the second Sunday in Advent.

‘ of this prophesy, God shall take away his part
 ‘ out of the book of life, and out of the holy city,
 ‘ and from the things which are written in this
 ‘ book.’* Let every one take heed, lest by ad-
 dition or subtraction he incur these tremendous
 curses !

Forasmuch as the Scripture is a revelation
 from God, what an affront to Him is the neglect
 of it ! Even a fellow-worm would consider him-
 self contemptuously treated, if his letters were
 returned unopened. More especially, if those
 letters contained matters of importance, and of-
 fers of friendly assistance in a season of embar-
 rassment and distress ; how gross an affront
 would it be, what a proof of black ingratitude, to
 treat them with indifference, and to throw them
 aside without notice ! If letters from the kings

* Rev. xxii. 18, 19. Is there not reason to fear that some of
 the mystic writers by pretences to immediate revelation, which
 seem to put their unintelligible performances on a level with the
 book of God, have inadvertently committed the sin of adding to
 the things written in holy scripture ? And should not those, who
 so highly extol their productions, be afraid, lest they involve
 themselves in the same guilt ? Such persons would do well to con-
 sult an excellent paper on the subject by Dr. Horne, late Bishop
 of Norwich, inserted in the appendix to his life by the Rev.
 William Jones. On the other hand, is there not good ground to
 conclude, that those who will admit nothing as truth, though plain-
 ly revealed in Scripture, but what approves itself to their own
 understandings, are in danger of subjecting themselves to the con-
 sequences of that tremendous declaration, ‘ God shall take away
 ‘ their part out of the book of life ?’

of the East are received by their subjects with every token of respect and reverence, bending their bodies, and raising the packet to their lips; with what emotions of holy fear, and lively gratitude should we receive the precious Bible! But do we not slight this inestimable gift, unless we constantly read it, and diligently study it; unless we prize it,* like the dying martyr, who, after having taken a solemn farewell of his wife, children, and other earthly valuables, reserved his last adieu for the Bible, concluding his valediction with these memorable words, ‘farewell, thou blessed, blessed book of God.’ If we know the value of the Scriptures, we shall constantly pray over them, and make it our daily endeavour to reduce the doctrines thereof to constant practice.

The grand subject of the Bible is Christ crucified. He is the Alpha and Omega of all Divine revelation. Tho’ a variety of other subjects is spoken of therein, they have all a reference to Him. As the rays of a circle, though diverging to every quarter of the heavens, all concur in one central point: so, although the scriptures contain large portions of history, chronology, and ethics; and, though the diligent inquirer after truth may find

* History informs us, that in the time of Henry VIII. a countryman gave a cart-load of hay for one leaf of St. James’s Epistle in English. ‘The word of the Lord was precious in those days.’

therein some light diffused on every part of science ; yet Christ is that radiant centre, in which every line meets. This the Bible testifies of itself. ‘ Search the Scriptures,’ says our Lord to the Jews, ‘ for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of ME.’† When the adorable Saviour was walking with the two disciples, after His resurrection, on the road to Emmaus ; it is said, that ‘ beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning HIMSELF.’‡ When Peter was preaching to his countrymen at Jerusalem, he told them, that ‘ those things, which God before had shewn by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.’ The historical parts of Scripture afford in great abundance memoirs of persons and things, which illustrate the design of the coming of the promised Christ, and the loveliness of His character. The prophetic Scriptures describe His sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Does the Bible often allude to the natural history of the vegetable, mineral, and animal kingdoms ? These allusions are frequently employed to set forth the dignity and excellency of Christ. The very genealogies of the Bible are inserted to lead us to the Son of Mary, who was born in Bethlehem of Judea. The

† John v. 39.

‡ Luke xxiv. 27.

Chronological parts have all a reference to the times and seasons of Jesus Christ. The ceremonial law was throughout a shadow of Christ, exhibiting an outline of his mediatorial transactions and sufferings. The moral law also was given both to shew our need of Him and the perfection of His righteousness ; and also to teach us how to resemble Him. The promises of the Bible ‘ are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus :’ and even its threatenings are designed to render Him precious. Would you understand the Bible ? You must keep this clue in your hand, that it is ‘ the record, which God hath given concerning ‘ His Son.’ If you explore this sacred field, without making it your principal object to find therein the pearl of great price, you will lose your labour ; and (what is worse) you will lose your own soul. If you have never considered this blessed book as the supernatural star, which is to divert the attention of pilgrims from every inferior object, and guide their feet to Bethlehem in Judea ; it is no wonder that you have not judgment sufficient to ascribe to it its proper value ; that you can open it without pleasure, and then close it without profit. Happy, thrice happy are they who daily study the Scriptures with this prevailing desire, ‘ that they may know Him, and ‘ the power of His resurrection, and the fellow- ‘ ship of His sufferings, and be made conformable

‘ to His death.’ They know, by blessed experience, the attractive force of those ‘ cords of love,’ even the truths of Scripture, which the Holy Spirit of God, as the glorifier of Jesus, entwines around their hearts ; and by which he draws them off from ‘ the pomps and vanities of this wicked world,’ to Him ‘ who died and arose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.’

The end, for which the Scriptures were written, is nothing less than our salvation. We admire the philanthropy of those, who employ their pens with a view to promote the temporal welfare and happiness of mankind. The learned Physician, the wise Politician, and the benevolent friend to human nature in its lowest state of misery (the name of Howard needs not to be mentioned, for it will recur to every mind :) these claim from us no common share of esteem ; not only while engaged in active services for the benefit of society, but also while in their closets they are employed in transmitting to posterity the fruits of their researches and experience. To these a tribute of gratitude is not denied. But who can sufficiently admire the Divine Philanthropy, as it appears in the communication of the most gracious purposes of eternal love, by means of the precious book of God ? With respect to Him, the liveliest emotions and expressions of

gratitude, and the loftiest hymns of praise must fall infinitely short of giving Him the honor, which is due unto His name. How valuable are maps to travellers, who are necessarily obliged to traverse immense tracts of uninhabited regions, where no other information is to be procured, besides what is to be derived from that source ! How justly would that man perish, who, while in possession of a chart, that would enable him to direct his voyage to the desired port, should wilfully neglect to consult it ! Would any sensible person wonder, if this ship struck on a rock, or foundered on a quicksand ? Every human being has a voyage to make, in which his everlasting all is embarked in one bottom. From time to eternity he must sail, whether it be agreeable to his inclination or not. The sea, over which his voyage extends, is full of sunken rocks and dangerous quicksands. The Bible is given him as a chart, by consulting which, and attending to the information it conveys, he may pursue his voyage in perfect safety ; and, without doubt of a miscarriage, reach the desired shore. How highly culpable is that man, who permits his time to be so engrossed with trifles, as to neglect his Bible ! How would every one be surprised at the folly of a mariner, who should be engaged in decorating his cabin in the midst of a tempest, when he ought to be diligently looking into his chart, and attending to his compass ! How unpitied would be the

catastrophe, which would certainly follow ! O Sinner, Scripture knowledge is essential to thy salvation. That man is a fool, be his acquaintance with human arts and sciences ever so extensive ; yea, though his mind were a library containing more knowledge than either the Bodleian or Alexandrian, if ignorant of the contents of God's word. On the other hand, the simple peasant, who is a stranger to all the improvements of human learning, is truly wise, if he be experimentally acquainted with gospel-truth. Are you poor ? Here are riches, that may be attained ' without money and without price ; treasures which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and which thieves do not break through nor steal.' Are you sick ? Here are sovereign ' medicines to heal your sickness.' If you would enjoy comfort in life or death, in time or eternity ; read the book of God, ' which is able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

In the perfect exercise of the faculty of vision two things are indispensable. Light must be diffused on the object ; otherwise the eye, though exact in its construction, can be of no use. And, though light be diffused on the object to be contemplated, unless the eye be capable of seeing, no information is communicated to the soul. In

things of a spiritual nature the first of these is supplied by the Scriptures; in which ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ’ are laid open to us, if we were endued with spiritual discernment; but it is not sufficient that we have an open Bible before us, unless the Spirit of God doth graciously remove the natural blindness, which is on our understandings; for ‘the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’* This is true not only of the illiterate, but also of the wise and learned. By ‘the natural man’ the Apostle means every one, who is ‘sensual, not having the Spirit’† of God. Nicodemus was a man of learning himself, and a teacher of others, and yet understood not the sayings of Christ. The Scribes and Pharisees were possessed of much human erudition, and even understood much of the letter of the Old Testament: but were entire strangers to its spiritual meaning. Saul of

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. St. Augustine speaks admirably on this subject. ‘Nemo gloriatur se fidem ex proprio sensu genuisse; in se agnoscat tam ante legem, quam sub lege, et post legem, fidem, quæ est in Christo Jesu, per illuminationem gratiæ, quæ a Deo Patre est, unicuique revelatam ad salutem; conturbatus enim est animæ oculos per infectionem in sensualitate, per obnubilationem in inferiori ratione, per excæcationem in ratione superiori.’

† Jude 19.

Tarsus was brought up at the feet of the celebrated Gamaliel, yet ‘ignorantly’* opposed the truth of God. Indeed human literature, when rested in as all-sufficient for the discovery of Divine things, is so far from being advantageous, that it is highly injurious, which made our Lord say, ‘I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.’† Our church acknowledges this incapacity of man, without Divine grace, to understand the Scriptures, in her various excellent forms of prayer, for the illumination of the Holy Spirit.‡ The understanding is that to the soul, which the eye is to the body. When the eye is so diseased as to be incapable of performing its proper office, the body is in darkness ; and ‘he, that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.’ And, unless the eye receives it, light is shed in vain. So it is with the human soul : the admission of sin into it hath so affected the understanding, that, though light is diffused on

* 1 Tim. i. 13.

† Luke x. 21.

‡ See the note in p. 130.

‘Thou, celestial light,
 ‘Shine inward ; and the mind through all her pow’rs,
 ‘Irradiate : there plant eyes : all mists from thence
 ‘Purge and disperse !’

spiritual objects by Divine revelation, we are not benefited by it, till Christ opens our understandings, as He did those of His disciples, that we may understand the Scriptures. Till we experience this Divine illumination, we remain strangers to our state of danger and our true interest. A blind man would walk on the edge of a precipice, if uninformed of his perilous situation, without fear; so does the unawakened sinner. He might likewise walk amidst the blaze of diamonds, by which every other person is dazzled, without admiring them, or feeling any desire of possessing them; and, if they were delivered into his hand, he would put no value on them more, than on a common pebble. Thus we treat the precious blessings of the gospel, till the change alluded to has been produced in us. Yet, though the agency, necessary to produce this renewal in us, be the power of God; the effect is not to be considered, as the creation of a new faculty, but the restoration of one already given to its proper use; just as, when the eyes of the blind were opened by the omnipotence of our incarnate God, the optic nerve was not then created, but rendered capable of performing the office for which it was intended, and to which it was before inadequate. Lest the meaning of these assertions should be mistaken, it may be proper to remark, that the scriptures, when they treat on natural subjects, may be

comprehended by a due exertion of our natural reason ; but the principal subject of the oracles of God, the mysteries of redemption, is so deep and spiritual, and our minds are so carnal, that the book remains sealed, till the Lion of the tribe of Judah opens it and looses the seven seals thereof.

Though scripture and experience unite to confirm the certainty of these things, yet the mode of operation remains a secret to us. We are sensible of the effects, and therefore cannot doubt of the reality of the work. ‘The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.’* The man, whose eyes our Lord had opened, could not tell how it had been accomplished. All he could say was, ‘a man, that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, go to the pool of Siloam, and wash ; and I went, and washed, and I received sight.’ Of one happy circumstance, however, he was infallibly certain, even of the effect : ‘one thing,’ says he, ‘I know, that whereas I was blind now I see.’† As our Lord often worked by the intervention of means then, in the miracles he performed on the bodies of

* John iii. 8. † John ix. 11, 25.

men ; so he does still in the more stupendous acts of His Almighty power on their souls. He honors His own word by making it the instrument of salvation to sinners. And, though the word, if unattended by Divine teaching,* is insufficient to lead us to the saving knowledge of God ; yet that same word, when accompanied with unction from the Holy One, acts on the heart and conscience with irresistible power. ‘ Is not my word like as fire, saith the Lord ?’ † There is a remarkable and instructive anecdote in ecclesiastical history, which may serve to illustrate this beautiful comparison. The circumstance took place at the famous council of Nice. The following account of it is copied from Milner’s History of the Church of Christ. ‡ He says, ‘ Before the immediate business of the Synod was entered upon, their attention was engaged by the attempts of some Gentile Philosophers, who appeared among them ; some with a design to satisfy their curiosity concerning Christianity itself,

* Isai. liv. 13. † Jer. xxiii. 29.

‡ Vol. 2. p. 60. The mention of the name of this truly excellent man, will excite in the bosoms of all, who were acquainted with his value, as a Christian, a preacher, or a writer, the most pungent emotions of sorrow for the recent loss, which the church has experienced by his death ; especially as he has left the above judicious work in so unfinished a state.---The anecdote here related is mentioned by various other authors ; particularly by Baker, in his reflections on learning, who refers to Sozomen and Ruffinus, as the historians who have transmitted it to us.

‘ others wishing to involve the Christians in a
 ‘ cloud of verbal subtilties, and to enjoy the
 ‘ mutual contradictions of the followers of Christ.
 ‘ One of them distinguished himself above the
 ‘ rest by the pomp and arrogance of his preten-
 ‘ sions, and derided the clergy as ignorant and
 ‘ illiterate. On this occasion an old Christian,
 ‘ who had suffered with magnanimous constancy
 ‘ during the late persecutions, though unacquaint-
 ‘ ed with logical forms, undertook to contend with
 ‘ the Philosopher. Those who were more earnest
 ‘ to gratify curiosity than to investigate truth,
 ‘ endeavoured to raise a laugh at the old man’s
 ‘ expence; while serious spirits were distressed
 ‘ to see a contest apparently so unequal. Respect
 ‘ for the man, however, induced them to permit
 ‘ him to engage. And he immediately addressed
 ‘ the Philosopher in these words; ‘ Hear, Phi-
 ‘ losopher, in the name of Jesus Christ. There
 ‘ is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and
 ‘ of all things visible and invisible, who made all
 ‘ these things by the power of his Word, and
 ‘ confirmed them by the holiness of his Spirit.
 ‘ This Word, whom we call the Son of God,
 ‘ compassionating the sons of men involved in
 ‘ error and wickedness, chose to be born of a
 ‘ woman, to converse with men, and to die for
 ‘ them; and he will come again, the Judge of all
 ‘ things which men have done in the body. That
 ‘ these things are so we believe in simplicity: do

‘ not labor in vain, seeking to refute things which
 ‘ ought to be received by faith, and investigating
 ‘ the manner in which these things may or may
 ‘ not be : but, if thou believest, answer me, now
 ‘ that I ask thee.’ Struck with this plain autho-
 ‘ ritative address, the Philosopher said, ‘ I do
 ‘ believe ;’ with pleasure owned himself vanquish-
 ‘ ed, confessed that he embraced the same senti-
 ‘ ments with the old man, and advised the other
 ‘ Philosophers to do the same, swearing that he
 ‘ was changed by a Divine influence, and was
 ‘ moved by an energy which he could not explain.
 ‘ Men will draw their conclusions from this
 ‘ story according to their several tastes and
 ‘ views. A self-sufficient reasoner will despise
 ‘ the instruction it contains ; but he who thinks
 ‘ with St. Paul, will consider the whole story, as
 ‘ no mean comment on his words, ‘ that your
 ‘ faith should not stand in the wisdom of men,
 ‘ but in the power of God ;’ nor will he much
 ‘ regard the prudence of those, who labor to ac-
 ‘ commodate Christian ideas to the spirit of
 ‘ unbelievers, by which they only weaken them-
 ‘ selves, and abate not in the least the enmity of
 ‘ their opposers. They will think it better to go
 ‘ forth in simple dependence on God, trusting
 ‘ that He will bless His own word with victorious
 ‘ energy. Such know that even in our own
 ‘ times, there want not instances of conversions

‘ of the same kind ; and those, who are still disposed to object, should at least be told, that the story has all the proper marks of historical credibility, whatever inferences they may be pleased to draw from it.’

The attempt, which has been made in the preceding pages to exhibit the excellency and importance of the Scriptures, however rude and inadequate it may appear ; (and who can paint a sun-beam to perfection ?) is sufficient to shew the propriety of the daily and copious use, which our church makes of them. The custom of reading select portions from the Bible in the congregation of the faithful, is of great antiquity : It was practised in the synagogues of the antient Jews, and the assemblies of the primitive Christians. A few observations thereon seem necessary to shew the wisdom of the appointment at the present day.

This will forcibly appear, if we reflect for a moment on the state of those, who compose our congregations. Many of them cannot read for themselves. Their parents, profanely careless* about the eternal welfare of the offspring of their own bowels, took no pains to have them instructed in their childhood, so that they might be enabled

* The conduct of many parents speaks plainly, what one lately expressed in words : ‘ Jack, make a good lad for this world, and I shall not trouble myself about what becomes of thee in the next.’

to read the Bible. Many, who can read, are so engrossed by the labors of their several occupations in life, that they have but little time for the acquisition of scriptural knowledge. It is therefore highly expedient, that such persons should be furnished with frequent opportunities of hearing the blessed word of God rehearsed unto them. But it may be objected, that the custom of preaching renders the other unnecessary. This objection will be at once obviated, if it be considered, that much of the effects to be expected from preaching must be lost, unless the hearers are in some measure previously acquainted with the contents and phraseology of Scripture. As the Bible is the standard of all spiritual truth, how is it possible that one, who is an intire stranger to its doctrines and declarations, should be able to determine, whether the word which he hears, be consistent with it? But, apart from the consideration of the incapacity of many to read for themselves, there are persons, who are able, but are destitute of the inclination to read the Bible. Yet many of these, under the influence of custom, will come to the house of God. Either they are so engrossed by worldly business, that they find no leisure at home for reading, meditation, and prayer; or the Bible is to them so dull a book, and therefore they never open it: any other volume finds a preference in their esteem, and at their leisure moments, to that which came from heaven.

Though it is evident that the attendance paid to the ordinances of God's worship by those persons, who find no relish for the scriptures, proceeds entirely from improper motives, whether from custom, curiosity, or the unmeaning idea of the propriety of spending an hour or two on the Lord's day in such a manner ; yet it is well that any inducement brings them into a place, where the word of God is publicly read : because they may possibly at some season or other be convinced of the necessity of that internal change, without which no man can enter into the kingdom of God ; for as much as the impossibility of such admission, in an unsanctified state of soul, arises not merely from the express declarations of the Judge of quick and dead, but also from the very nature of the case. For how can it be supposed that the unrenewed sinner, who at present experiences no heart-felt delight in those heavenly exercises, the enjoyment of which is the chief distinction between men and brute-animals, can ever, without becoming a new creature, relish those pure and unmixed spiritual enjoyments, in which the very essence of their future happiness consists ? Take the person, who is born with an ear untuned to harmony, and let him be present at a concert of the most exquisite music ; though for a season the novelty of the scene, the gay dress of the company, or some other object, unconnected with the immediate design of the enter-

tainment, may attract his notice and employ his attention ; yet very soon his mind will be satiated with it, and he will wish himself where he might be conversant with pleasures more congenial to his taste. Just so it would be with an unconverted man, were it possible for him to be locally admitted within the gate of heaven.

The propriety of reading the scriptures in the church is evident also from the state of the clergy. No uncharitable reflections are here intended ; but surely it will be allowed to be possible at least, that some persons may assume the sacred office, who are too ignorant to be able, or too careless to endeavour to lead their people in the way of everlasting life. When it is considered that the reception of the Holy Ghost* is essentially necessary to enable a man duly to execute the awful functions of the ministry ; and that no man, who is not deeply concerned about the salvation of his own soul, can be expected to feel a solicitude for the salvation of others ; it will not be thought a groundless fear, that there may be some improper persons among those who minister in holy things. We have known some persons in the present century, who, after having spent many years in the performance of parochial duties, as they then thought in a due and proper manner, have been brought to confess that they have through carelessness of heart and life, and igno-

* See the service at the ordination of Deacons and Priests.

rance of the truth of God, nearly ruined their own souls, and the souls of those who have been committed to their trust.† Now if it be admitted to be possible that a man may put on the sacred garb for the sake of the emoluments annexed to the office, and without those qualifications either of grace or knowledge, which are indispensably necessary for a faithful and profitable discharge thereof; the wisdom of our church will appear in directing that large portions of the word of God be read at every season of public worship. Hereby she has made all the provision she could against an evil, which is in itself unavoidable. However heterodox the sentiments of the sermon

† As an instance of this, see the life of that truly excellent man, the Rev. Thomas Adam, late rector of Wintringham, prefixed to his posthumous works. The life of the Rev. Dr. Conyers, late rector of St. Paul's, Deptford, affords another proof of the assertion. The author of some short memoirs of this truly valuable man, says, that his parish being very extensive, and divided into several hamlets, he preached frequently in all of them, and encouraged his parishioners to come to his house for instruction. He distributed them also into small companies, that he might teach them with more convenience and familiarity; and met them in rotation by appointment. A general reformation soon began to take place: this made him still more indefatigable; but all this while he was ignorant of the gospel-way of salvation, in the exhibition of which he was afterwards so zealous. As a proof of this it will be sufficient to mention that he had imbibed the damnable errors of the Socinians, and had actually written a letter of thanks to a well known writer of that class for his blasphemous publications. But, before he could send it, the scales of ignorance began

may be, the people have an opportunity of hearing the uncorrupted word of God; whereby they may be enabled to judge what is true, and what is false. It is melancholy to admit the possibility, that any thing but the truth, and the whole truth of the doctrine of God our Saviour, should be delivered by those, who have subscribed their hands thereto; but, if the fact cannot be denied, it is a consolatory reflection, that the people in such a case necessarily hear the word of truth.

Before we conclude the present essay, it will be proper to inculcate on those, who may read it, the benefit of an intimate and extensive acquaintance with the oracles of God. ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.’ You cannot be wise to salvation without it.

to fall from his eyes, while he was reading the words of the Apostle, ‘that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.’ He began to consider that he was totally unacquainted with these unsearchable riches of Christ; and to ask himself, what have I been doing all my life? Thus the Lord by the instrumentality of his own word wrought powerfully on his heart, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ broke in on his soul. And from that day forward, like Saul of Tarsus, when the Lord had met with him on his way to Damascus, he preached Jesus. His biographer adds, that such was his uncommon and unaffected simplicity, that the very next Lord’s day, he told his people from the pulpit, that he had been misleading them during the whole course of his ministry, by building them up in a righteousness of their own, but that the Lord had now shewn him that both he and they stood in need of a Saviour: that he felt himself a poor sinner, and should in future lead them to Jesus, as the only ground of hope for their guilty, ruined souls.

Perhaps you object, that your dislike to hearing or reading the scriptures arises from the effect, which they produce on your mind. They make you unhappy, and therefore you treat them with neglect. Surely, if this be the case, it becomes you to inquire, whether the uneasiness, which a perusal of God's word occasions, be not needful to your salvation; as corporeal uneasiness is oftentimes needful for the recovery of health. Perhaps you are asleep in a fatal security and unconcern about futurity. The word of God disturbs your carnal repose; and therefore you put it from you, saying, with the sluggard, 'yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to sleep.'* Is it not better to suffer present pain than everlasting torment? There is not a word in the Bible that leads to despair, unless it be those, who obstinately determine to 'neglect the great salvation' which it proposes. But you say, the duties, which it enforces, I find myself incapable of performing. This is certainly true: but then it directs you to the blood of Christ for the pardon of every defect, and to the grace of Christ for ability to walk in every path of duty so as to please God. Perhaps, in consequence of the inveterate corruption of your hearts, you are deliberately resolved not to quit your sins, and live to God, and therefore con-

* Prov. vi. 10.

clude that it will be safer to remain in ignorance than to make yourselves acquainted with the truth, and afterwards slight it. If your ignorance be wilful, it will not in the least extenuate your guilt, or screen you from the indignation of insulted Deity ; and that it is wilful, is apparent from the mode of reasoning, which you adopt. There are some persons, who would fain persuade themselves that it is quite sufficient, if the clergy are acquainted with the doctrines of scripture. But why do the clergy employ themselves in study, but for them ? Are you not convinced that you must eat and drink for yourselves, or die ? And is not the scripture the bread of life ? Are not the truths thereof as essential to the life of your souls, as natural food to the support of your bodies ? But being unwilling to yield to the force of conviction, you are still ready to ask, whether a small share of scriptural knowledge be not sufficient for common Christians ? It is not perhaps easy to determine, what degree of information is necessary to salvation : but it is an easy matter to prove that the man, who has no solicitude after a deeper and more extensive acquaintance with Divine things, is wholly destitute of a saving acquaintance with the first principles of the gospel ; for the path ‘ of the just is as the shining light, ‘ which shineth more and more unto the perfect ‘ day.’ Are your memories treacherous and like a leaky vessel ? If you really lament this infirmity

you will see the greater need of constant reading and prayer : as a man, whose food passes too quickly off his stomach, will be constantly put in mind of the necessity of a more frequent supply. There is reason however to fear, that many persons, who complain of the defects of their memory, intend it as an excuse for wilful ignorance ; and that in fact their minds are so stuffed with the vanities of the world, that no room is left for the admission of Divine truth. Were it not so, the truth, tho' the memory be irretentive, would have a sanctifying influence on the soul ; as water passing through a vessel may cleanse, though it does not remain therein. Many persons complain of the difficulty of comprehending the Divine record. Surely there is enough therein, that is level to the meanest understanding. And perhaps much of the difficulty arises from the opposition made by the corruption of the heart to its holy tenets. Did we read in a dependence on Divine teaching ; and, at the same time, with an holy determination of reducing what we read to practice ; did we, in reading of the evil of sin, labor, through grace, to get our hearts deeply impressed therewith ; or, when the subject is the love of Christ, did we ardently long to taste it ; or, when duties are proposed, strive to fulfil them ; the difficulties objected to would be removed, and

every mountain become level as the open valley :
for ‘ My doctrine is not mine,’ said the adorable
Jesus, ‘ but His that sent me. If any man will
‘ do His will, he shall know of the doctrine
‘ whether it be of God, or whether I speak of
‘ myself,’*

* John vii. 16, 17.

ESSAY VI.

ON THE APOSTLES' CREED.

THAT part of our liturgy, which is commonly called the Apostles' creed, is a summary of the Christian faith, an epitome of those things, which 'a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.' It is confessedly a composition of very great antiquity, but whether the twelve inspired persons, whose names it bears, or any of them, were really the authors of it, or of any part of it, will not here be discussed; each side of the questions has had its advocates.* Whether this famous formulary be sufficiently comprehen-

* Dr. Comber, in his *Companion to the Temple*, (p. 132.) strongly asserts, and labors hard to establish the affirmative side of the question, referring the reader to the primitive Fathers from Clemens Romanus downwards to the time of Augustine, as having positively ascribed Apostolic authority to this creed. He cites also Luther, Calvin, Beza, P. Martyr, and Bullenger as uniting in opinion with himself. But it seems very questionable whether by 'Fides Apostolica,' and such like Phrases these antient

sive to include all the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, will be here left undetermined ; nor will it be the object of the present essay to comment at large on the several articles of the creed, and confirm them by apposite quotations from Scripture. This has been done repeatedly and copiously by various writers.* It will however, be proper to lay the creed itself before the reader, and cursorily to point out the particulars, of which it consists.

‘ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker
 ‘ of heaven and earth ; and in Jesus Christ His
 ‘ only Son our Lord : who was conceived by the
 ‘ Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered
 ‘ under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and
 ‘ buried : He descended into Hell,† the third day

Fathers of the church meant this or any other compendium of Divinity ; or, whether they did not thereby intend a general description of the Christian faith, as built on the foundation of the Apostolic writings. Bishops Burnet and Pearson consider this high claim, which some have made in favor of this creed, to be altogether indefensible. See Bp. Burnet’s Exposition of the 39 Articles, on Art. 8.

* Those, who are desirous of farther information on this subject, will find great satisfaction by reading Bishop Pearson’s Exposition on the creed ; and Mr. Walker’s (of Truro) lectures on the Church Catechism.

† As the article of the descent into Hell has offended the minds of many serious persons, it seems proper to remark that ‘ our English, or rather Saxon word *Hell* in its original signification (though it is now understood in a more limited sense) exactly answers to the Greek word *Hades*, and denotes a concealed or

‘ he rose again from the dead, He ascended into
 ‘ heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the
 ‘ Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to
 ‘ judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the
 ‘ Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic church, the
 ‘ communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the
 ‘ resurrection of the body, and the life everlast-
 ‘ ing. Amen.’

This compendious body of Divinity commences with the fundamental article of all true religion, the Unity of the Godhead. ‘ I believe in God.’ The importance of this part of our belief, our Lord points out in a conversation He held with a certain scribe, who came and asked Him, ‘ which
 ‘ is the first commandment of all ? Jesus answer-
 ‘ ed him, the first of all the commandments is,
 ‘ Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.’*

‘ *unseen place* ; and this sense of the word is still retained in the
 ‘ *eastern*, and especially in the *western* counties of *England* ; to
 ‘ *hele* over a thing is to cover it. See Lord King’s history of the
 ‘ *creed*. Ch. iv.” Doddridge on Rev. i. 18. It seems however
 a pity, that Hades and Gehenna, the former signifying in general
 the place of separate spirits, and the latter the place of torment,
 should both have been rendered, in the translation of our Bible,
 by the same word. Hell, considered as the place to which the
 disembodied Spirit of our Saviour went, must be synonymous with
 Paradise, since our Lord promised there to meet the penitent
 thief. Luke xxiii. 43.

* Mark xii. 49. Our Lord’s answer is a quotation from Deut.
 vi. 4. where the words of the original Hebrew are very remark-

The doctrine of the Trinity is not omitted, though it be not asserted and illustrated in those strong terms, which are used in the other creeds, which were drawn up after the rise of the various heresies, which soon began, and still continue to infest the church of Christ. We profess our faith in the first Person of the Godhead, as ‘the Father’ of us all by creation, and of his church by adoption and grace, and as ‘the Maker of ‘heaven and earth,’ and of all things therein contained. The second Person in Jehovah is also introduced as the object of faith: and though the assertion of His Divine nature be not so full and explicit, as what is given in the creed of St. Athanasius, and the other in our communion service, for the reason before assigned; yet enough is here said, if properly understood, to characterize our adorable Redeemer, as being ‘equal with the Father touching his Godhead, ‘though inferior to the Father touching his

able: “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Aleim (a plural noun regularly formed from its singular, and frequently used with verbs, ‘adjectives, and participles plural) is one Jehovah.’ In the compass of these few words the Doctrine of the unity of the Divine essence, and the plurality of the persons therein, is so clearly laid down, that the gates of Hell, with all its sophistry and power, can never prevail against this most valuable and consolatory truth.

‘Manhood.’* The several important and interesting particulars of our Lord’s incarnation, birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right-hand of God are then mentioned; in all which the worshipper of our church is directed to express his belief: for though the words, ‘I believe,’ are used but twice; they maintain a connection with every separate article of the creed. By the declaration, ‘I believe,’ every individual avows, not only his own assent to the truth of the proposition; but also his own reliance on it, as necessarily affecting his own personal salvation. How awful is it to consider, that many, who orally repeat our confession of faith, are found liars before God! ‘The Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth all the elect people of

* The name *Jesus* in Hebrew is a compound of יה Jah or Jehovah, a שׁוּ Saviour or salvation: So that He, to whom that name properly belongs, must be God. The name *Jesus* answers to ‘*Emanuel*, which is, being interpreted, God with us.’ It was foretold by the Spirit of Prophecy, that our Lord’s name should be Emmanuel. Matt. i. 22, 23. ‘Several ways.’ says Bishop Pearson, ‘have been invented to shew the fulfilling of that prophesy, notwithstanding our Saviour was not called Emmanuel; but none can certainly appear more proper, than that the sense of Emmanuel should be comprehended in the name of Jesus, and what else is *God with us* than *God our Saviour*? Well therefore hath the Evangelist conjoined the prophet and the Angel, (see Matt. i. 22, 23.) asserting Christ was therefore named Jesus, because it was foretold he should be called Emmanuel, the Angelical *God the Saviour* being in the highest propriety the prophetic *God with us.*’ See Pearson, 2d. Edit. Fol. p. 79.

‘God,’ is not omitted; and, while we profess our faith in His name, we must be supposed to acknowledge His Divinity, Personality, and office in the church of Christ. The other articles introduced are, the existence, holiness, and oneness of the catholic or universal church: ‘the communion of saints,’ which as members thereof they enjoy with God and with each other: the nature and necessity of ‘the forgiveness of sins:’ the certainty of ‘the resurrection of the body:’ and ‘the life everlasting.’ How important is the question, ‘dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith?’

The general outline of the doctrine of the creed being thus chalked out, the attention of the reader is requested to that, which is the more

The Hebrew name of *Joshua*, the son of *Nun*, exactly coincides in meaning with *Jesus*, the son of *Mary*; with this single difference as expressed by the Bishop, that, ‘*Joshua* saved Israel not by his own power, not of himself, but God by him; neither saved he his own people, but the people of God: Whereas *Jesus* Himself,’ (*αὐτός* He himself. Matt. i. 21.) ‘by His own power, the power of God, shall save His own people, the people of God. Well therefore may we understand the interpretation of His name, to be *God the Saviour*.’ Pearson *ibid*.

The view, which our church has of the doctrine of this creed may be collected from her Catechism. ‘Quest. What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief. Answ. First, I learn to believe in *God* the Father, who hath made me and all the world. Secondly, in *God* the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind. Thirdly, in *God* the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.’

immediate object of the present essay ; viz. the propriety of making a public profession of our faith, and the manner in which that profession must be made, if we expect to be partakers of the blessing annexed thereto in the word of God : ‘ if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord ‘ Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God ‘ hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be ‘ saved. For with the heart man believeth unto ‘ righteousness, and with the mouth confession is ‘ made unto salvation.’* That it is the indispensable duty of those, who are born in a Christian country, to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, needs not here be proved in an elaborate way, since it is positively declared in scripture, that ‘ he, who believeth, and is baptised, shall ‘ be saved ; and he, who believeth not, shall be ‘ damned.’† That the creed contains all the fundamental truths of the gospel, is here taken for granted. And all those persons in particular, into whose hands these essays may probably fall, are desired to remember that they have promised to believe all these articles in their baptismal covenant. Their guilt therefore will be indisputable, and their destruction inevitable, should they deny, or content themselves with a cold and formal assent to truths of such importance. The propriety of a public confession of sin has been

* Rom. x. 9, 10. † Mark xvi. 16.

proved in the preceding pages. That a public profession of religion is necessary to be made by all the followers of Christ in their respective situations and relations of life, cannot be doubted. ‘If the Lord be God, serve Him.’ In the great decisive day, ‘the fearful,’ i. e. those who shrink back though fear* from an open avowal of the Savior’s name and cause, will be ranked with ‘unbelievers, and have their portion in the lake, ‘that burneth with fire and brimstone.’† If you are the master of a family, therein you must maintain the worship of God, and manifest yourself to be the disciple of Christ. If you are a magistrate, you must consider yourself as placed in an official station of high importance by the King of kings, to promote His honour, and subserve the interest of His kingdom. Unless the love of Christ be the prevailing motive of your conduct, His word the rule by which you walk, and His glory the end of your conversation; the mark of the Lamb is not in your forehead, and you have reason to tremble for yourself, lest your ears should at last tingle with the awful sounds, ‘depart from me, I never knew you:’ for it is written ‘whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my ‘words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; ‘of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, ‘when He cometh in the glory of his Father, ‘with the holy Angels.’‡

* This is the exact import of the Greek: *Δειλος* is *one who shrinks for fear*. † Rev. xxi. 8. ‡ Mark xviii. 38.

But that, which is at present particularly to engage our minds, is the necessity of a public avowal of the truth in the congregation of the faithful. There has been such a custom as this established in the church from the earliest days of christianity; and it seems to be built on the soundest principles, both of scripture and common sense.

The glory of God is the great end, which every Christian has, or ought to have, continually in his view. In the common engagements of life this is the mark he aims at. St. Paul testifies of himself and his brethren in terms, that exhibit the real nature of true godliness; ‘none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.’* With respect to many, who now bear the name of Christ, this language might be exactly reversed; O reader, reverse it, and see, if it will not suit yourself; if it will not delineate your own principles and practice! But, as Christianity is still the same thing as ever it was; a prevailing concern for the glory of Christ must constitute an essential part of the Christian

* Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

character. To persons then of this description how grateful must be the opportunity of appearing in the assembly of the saints, and of joining in an harmonious avowal of their faith in Jesus ! A rehearsal of the creed is an open acknowledgment of our dependence on God ; as creatures, on His providence ; as guilty creatures, on His mercy in Christ ; as polluted creatures, on the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. Therein we express our inward feelings of gratitude to Him, as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Therein we proclaim aloud our obligations to love Him with all our hearts, and to serve Him with every faculty, both of body and mind. And is it not highly proper, nay indispensably necessary, that such a profession should be made by all those, whom He hath created, redeemed, and called to the knowledge of His blessed Self ? The essential glory of God is incapable of increase or diminution. The whole host of heaven cannot add unto it ; nor all the legions of hell, joined with all the infidel, profane, and ungodly men on earth, detract from it. But His glory is capable of external manifestation in an endless variety of forms and degrees. With a view to discover it, He created the heavens and the earth :* With the same intention He sent His Son into the world, that His glory may visibly shine in the Person of Jesus Christ.† If then we were created,

* Psa. xix. 1.

† 2 Cor. iv. 6. ἐν τῷ ἀποστόλῳ.

and endowed with all the faculties we possess ; and were also redeemed with the blood of an incarnate God, for this express purpose, that by us the glory of God might be reflected through the universe, as the moon reflects the light of the sun ; surely we should consider it as both our privilege and duty to dedicate our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, unto the Lord our God. We were endued with understanding, that we might employ it in contemplating His attributes, and His works. Memory was given us to be the repository of Divine truth. The will, that therewith we might chuse God for our portion and happiness, panting after Him, ‘ as the hart after the water ‘ brooks.’* The affections, that they may all point to God, as the needle to the pole, with unvarying aim. The body also is the Lord’s. Our feet were given us that, being ‘ shod with the ‘ preparation of the gospel of peace,’ they may run in the way of God’s commandments. Our knees, that they might bend in prayer and praise. Our hands, that they might be lifted up in holy adoration ; smite on our hearts in deep contrition ; or be stretched out to administer to the relief of the poor and afflicted. Our eyes, that they might be turned toward heaven in ardent hope ; or to the earth with a contempt of its gilded baubles ; shed tears of sorrow for sin ; or

* Psa. xlii. 1.

sparkle with lively joy at the prospect of beholding Him, whom they were created to admire : The ears, that they might listen to the truths of God, the voice of the heavenly Charmer. Nor is the tongue to be excluded from a participation in this delightful service : for it was designed to be the instrument of shewing forth ‘ the praises of Him, who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.’ This duty of manifesting the glory of God is of perpetual obligation. Soon will the tear of repentance be superseded ; and the voice of supplication no more be heard : but through eternity it will become our blessed employ to avow the principles contained in the Apostle’s creed. While repeating it on earth in the assembly of the saints, we may consider ourselves as joining in the same act of worship (though, alas, under impressions of a far inferior gratitude !) with those exalted spirits, who surround the throne ; and who ‘ rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come ; Thou art worthy, O Lord to receive glory, and honor, and power ; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.’

As a public profession of faith appears to be necessary for the manifestation of the Divine glory ; so, when duly made, it must certainly be of the greatest advantage to ourselves. It is

acknowledged that, when the creed is mechanically repeated, without attention and without devotion, no spiritual benefit can flow from it : but, when the heart accompanies the lips, the repetition will always be profitable. Whilst our tongues are engaged in the pious act of celebrating God's wonderful works of creation, and more especially in detailing the sublime history of our redemption, with all its important consequences ; must not this employment have an happy tendency to increase the humiliation of our hearts, to excite in us the languid emotions of Godly sorrow, and cause us to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes ? It is difficult to conceive it possible that the wonders of redeeming love can pass over the lips, without melting the heart. The captive, who has been delivered from cruel bondage, may, in the midst of the bustle of active life, find the emotions of gratitude, that is due to his deliverer, in a measure suppressed ; but, when called on to recite in the circle of his friends the various incidents of the interesting tale, surely his tears will begin to flow afresh. What more probable means than this can be pointed out, of maintaining in our bosoms a continual sense of our dependent state ? And do we not need continual admonitions on the subject ? Is not the practice calculated to strengthen our faith, to brighten our hope, to confirm us in the path of duty, and arm us against the fear of man ? Must

not a Christian, when tempted to sin, recollect that he has avowed himself publicly the servant of the Lord Christ? And will not such a person say, ‘how can I do this great wickedness, and ‘sin against God!’ The remembrance of this open act of self-dedication must be a powerful incentive in a believer’s mind, to ‘walk worthy of ‘the vocation wherewith he is called,’ and to ‘adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all ‘things.’ When at any time the fear of man comes in on the soul, like an overwhelming flood, threatening to bear down all before it; will not the sincere member of our church ask with Nehemiah, ‘should such a man as I flee?’* Shall I, who have so often professed my faith in Christ before the church and the world, now renounce my creed through fear ‘of a man that ‘shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be ‘made as grass!’ The apostle puts Timothy in mind, that ‘the elect angels’ were witnesses of his conduct.† We want every encouragement to duty; and no argument can be deemed unnecessary, considering the corrupt propensities of our nature, that may be used to deter us from the commission of sin. And surely to an ingenuous mind, it must be a consideration of some weight, that we have publicly devoted ourselves to God, and that therefore our misconduct will reflect dishonor on our Savior’s name; grieve the hearts

* 1 Ch. vi. 11.

† Tim. v. 21.

of our brethren, who have been witnesses of our professions; and bring a disgrace on the holy gospel, in the eyes of the profane and carnal world. That man must be destitute of every noble principle of Christianity, who can repeat the creed among the people of God on the Lord's-day, and yet retain in his heart an intention of employing the subsequent week to the dishonor of God; or rather, who has not formed a deliberate purpose of 'renouncing the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.' O let every worshipper of our church 'vow and pay unto the Lord his God,' and recollect in every circumstance and situation of life, I am a Christian; I have washed my garments, how shall I defile them! I have avowed my faith in Christ as 'my Lord,'* and Him I am bound to obey.

The benefit, that may be expected to result from a public and frequent repetition of the creed, is not merely of a private nature: for, while with a devout heart and an audible voice we join together in a profession of our faith, we encourage each other. 'Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.†' Let us therefore consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the

* 'I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord.' † Prov. xxvii. 17.

‘manner of some is : but exhorting one another,
 ‘and so much the more as we see the day ap-
 ‘proaching.’ We meet with many discouragements
 from the unbelief of our own hearts, which,
 like a canker at the root of a tree, prevents our
 growth in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord
 and Saviour Jesus Christ. The infidelity and
 profaneness of the world damp our spirits, and
 grieve our hearts. The conduct of many, who
 profess to belong to the congregation of the
 faithful, is so dishonorable to the cause and name
 of christianity ; that those, who truly love the
 Lord Jesus Christ, cannot but lament over them
 in the language of the old prophet at Bethel,
 saying, ‘alas my brother!’ Under such dis-
 couragements how necessary it is, that the
 followers of Christ should try to animate each
 other, and strengthen each other’s hands ! While
 joining in a repetition of the creed, we may con-
 sider ourselves as addressing each other in some
 such a manner as this ; ‘Come, brethren, let us
 ‘not be cast down : though unbelief daily dis-
 ‘tresses us, it has not the dominion over us ; for
 ‘we can uprightly join in avowing our faith in
 ‘God as our Father, in Christ as our Saviour, in
 ‘the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. Though sin
 ‘yet dwelleth in us, we believe in ‘the forgive-
 ‘ness of sins’ through the atoning blood of Jesus.
 ‘If infidelity exists, abounds, and even daily in-

‘ creases in the world, let us hold fast the pro-
 ‘ fession of our faith without wavering, for He is
 ‘ faithful that hath promised: let us endeavour
 ‘ with our lips and in our lives, more uniformly
 ‘ to shew, that we are not ashamed of the cross
 ‘ of Christ. If profaneness and iniquity walk
 ‘ abroad in our days with an unmasked front, let
 ‘ us try to manifest in our actions that we are
 ‘ members of ‘the holy catholic church,’ dedi-
 ‘ cated to the Lord. If the unworthy conduct of
 ‘ many professors discredit the ways of God; let
 ‘ us unite to shew, that faith,’ when real, ‘work-
 ‘ eth by love;’ and that ‘the grace of God teaches
 ‘ us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to
 ‘ live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this
 ‘ present world.’ Is one and another among us
 ‘ ready to ‘faint because of the way?’ Let us
 ‘ put him in mind that we believe in ‘the life
 ‘ everlasting;’ and that the time is at hand, when
 ‘ every tear shall be wiped from our eyes: and
 ‘ that we shall surely reap, if we faint not.’ Our
 union in a rehearsal of the same formulary of
 faith, is a means likewise of increasing among us
 Christian charity and brotherly love. Surely a
 stronger motive to oneness of heart and interest
 can scarcely exist, than our profession of the
 same truth. Were we hearty herein, all sects,
 parties, and divisions among us would cease, and
 the sacred name of Christianity swallow up the
 whole body of those, who believe the same im-

portant realities. Come, let us try, if the voices of the faithful, uniting in the same declarations, will not drown the clamour of irreligious debate, and suppress the unhappy spirit of division, which has made such inroads among us. If we believe in ‘the communion of saints,’ let us try to live as those, who love one another.

It is a melancholy truth, that our congregations are not made up wholly of those who are true members of Christ’s ‘holy catholic church.’ Many join in our worship, whom custom or curiosity brings to the house of God. With respect to these, the advantage of a frequent and public avowal of our creed may, with the blessing of God, be unspeakably great. It may be the means of conviction and conversion to some among them. It is not at all unnatural to expect that one or another of the careless numbers, who associate themselves with us, may be excited, on hearing our hearty declaration of the hope that is in us, to inquire, ‘do I believe the same truths? Doth my soul hang on God the Father as my Creator and Preserver? Do I, as a poor needy sinner, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation? What advantage have I derived from the incarnation, sufferings and death of the Son of God? Do I “believe in the Holy Ghost?” And have I experienced His sanctifying influence on my own soul? Am I a member of this “holy catholic church?” Does my life and con-

‘ duct prove me to be such ? Am I acquainted
 ‘ with the nature of this ‘ communion of saints ?’
 ‘ Have I any well-grounded hope of ‘ the forgive-
 ‘ ness of sins ?’ Is ‘ the resurrection of the
 ‘ body, and the life everlasting’ to me an object
 ‘ of desire and earnest expectation ; so that, in
 ‘ the hope of it, I am living as a stranger and pil-
 ‘ grim on earth ?’ Such reflections, under Divine
 influence, may be occasioned by the voice of the
 congregation, when repeating the Apostles’ creed.
 And assuredly, did the professors of the gospel
 evidence their sincerity more by their devoutness
 in public worship, and in the course of their lives,
 such blessed effects would more frequently be
 produced. It was thus among the first Christians ;
 for the Apostle declares that the united testimony
 of the congregation of believers to the same truths,
 was oftentimes made the happy means of convic-
 tion to others ; ‘ if all prophesy, and there come
 ‘ in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he
 ‘ is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus
 ‘ are the secrets of his heart made manifest ; and
 ‘ so falling down on his face he will worship God,
 ‘ and report that God is in you of a truth.’*

Various other arguments might be produced to
 prove the utility of such a compendium of Theolo-
 gy, as that contained in the the Apostles’ creed,

* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

and to shew the propriety of a public recital of the articles of our faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ expects us to appear for Him in an open and decided manner. ‘Who is on my side, who?’ is a question He addresses to all that bear his name. He knows the secret feelings of our hearts, and every article of our belief; but cannot be satisfied merely therewith, for he has a right to expect that, in the face of reproach, yea, of death itself, we should not shun to publish our adherence to Him. He hath set us the example. For, concerning this high Priest of our profession, the Apostle informs us, that ‘before Pontius Pilate ‘He witnessed a good confession,’* avowing His own character, as the promised Christ, the Friend of sinners, and the King of saints, at the expense of his life. O what a bright example of courage and magnanimity! Shall we not dare to follow it? Though the rehearsal of the creed, being now a matter of course, will expose us to nothing disagreeable; yet, if we boldly act in conformity to the profession we therein make, we shall prove that the offence of the cross is not ceased; and that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. But this must not deter us from the path of duty. If Christ be glorified by us, welcome reproach, bonds, or imprisonment! The true disciples of our Lord will ‘rejoice that they ‘are counted worthy to suffer shame for His

* 1 Tim. vi. 13. Com. John xviii. 37. Matt. xxvi. 64.

‘name’s sake.’ If we confess with our mouths His precious name, believing on Him in our hearts, we shall be saved ; and His ‘Euge’ will amply compensate for greater sufferings than any we shall ever incur on his account.

Our professions must be sincere, or they will avail nothing to our salvation ; but, on the contrary, aggravate our guilt and condemnation. How many rehearse the articles of the creed, and mean nothing by the act, in which they are engaged ! They declare their belief ‘in God the ‘Father Almighty,’ without feeling in themselves any reverence for Him, any dependence on Him, or gratitude to Him. They coldly mention the name of ‘Jesus Christ our Lord,’ without any solicitude to participate in His salvation. His conception by the Holy Ghost, His birth of the Virgin Mary, though celebrated by the heavenly host with devout acclamations of joy, is to them a matter of indifference, and passes carelessly over their lips ; as if the whole were ‘a cunningly ‘devised fable,’ or at most an historic truth, in which they are wholly uninterested. The ‘glad ‘tidings of great joy’ excite no other sensations in their bosoms than might be expected to arise from the birth of any other person. That ‘He ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate,’ they assent to as a truth ; but, having never been weighed down with the burden of those sins, which occasioned His passion, they know nothing of ‘the fellow-

‘ship of His sufferings.’ That ‘He rose again ‘from the dead’ is admitted to be a fact, because it constitutes part of the national creed ; but they are utter strangers to the reviving and sanctifying ‘power of His resurrection.’ His ascension into Heaven, and session at the right hand of God is equally unimportant to them ; since they feel no need of an interceding high Priest to plead their cause before the throne of God, nor of ‘a Prince and a Saviour to give them repentance ‘and remission of sins.’ Do they believe ‘that ‘He shall come again at the end of the world to ‘judge the quick and the dead?’ If they really did, could they live as they do ? But how many there are, who profess the truths contained in the creed with their mouths, and yet in their hearts deny them ! Such is the self-justiciary ; who, while he pretends to believe in Jesus Christ, trusts in his own righteousness for his acceptance and salvation : and such also is he, who objects to the necessity and reality of a Divine and spiritual influence on the souls of men ; while his tongue hypocritically professes faith ‘in the ‘Holy Ghost.’

The truth of our profession, if indeed it has been made with unfeigned lips, will be proved by the tenor of our lives. If we live habitually without prayer and praise : if we walk after the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the

flesh and of the mind ; our lives manifest the insincerity of our declarations. For ‘ he that hath this hope in him,’ which the Apostles’ creed suggests, ‘ purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure.’* ‘ Faith without works is dead.’† If it be not the labor of our lives to glorify Him, whom we call ‘ our Lord,’ and to conform our hearts and conduct to His will ; we prove nothing by a recital of the creed, but our own gross hypocrisy before God.

The Apostle exhorts us to ‘ hold fast our profession ;’ implying, that great opposition may be expected to it. The rain will descend, the floods come, and the winds blow and beat on our house ; and, if it be not founded on the rock, it must fall, and great will be the fall of it. Satan hates Christ, the holy faith, and them who profess it. He will try, O believer, to shake thy confidence, either by flattering thy pride, or exciting thy fears. The frowns and the smiles of the world will be employed against thee. Thy own evil heart will be ever ready to parley with the enemy, and open the gates of the citadel to his temptations. Are you aware of all this, and anxious to ‘ hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering ?’ Then be constant in the use of all the means of grace. Labor to main-

* 1 John iii. 3. † James ii. 20.

tain secret communion with God every day. Consider the ‘ great cloud of witnesses’ to the truth, with which you are encompassed ; and ‘ lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth ‘ so easily beset you ; and run with patience the ‘ race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus ‘ the Author and Finisher of our Faith ; who for ‘ the joy that was set before Him, endured the ‘ cross, despising the shame, and is set down at ‘ the right hand of the throne of God.’

How deplorable must be the state of those, who, with all the advantages enjoyed under the meridian blaze of Gospel truth, make no profession of Christianity ! Such persons are apt to congratulate themselves on their exemption from the guilt of hypocrisy, in not professing what they do not practice : as if a freedom from the palpable duplicity of the unrighteous professor, would be admitted at the bar of God, in excuse for irreligion. If a tree be alive, at the proper season it will produce leaves, blossoms, and ripe fruit. Where spiritual life exists in the heart, it will manifest itself in the practice. Who would venture to appear before the judgment seat of Christ with such an apology as this ? ‘ Lord, I made no ‘ profession of faith in Thy name, because I felt no ‘ attachment to Thy person, nor love to Thy ways. ‘ I lived in friendship with the world and with sin, ‘ and felt no desire after deliverance from it. I

‘ am, however, free from the charge of avowing
‘ with my lips, what my conduct did not justify.
‘ I was openly profane and made no pretensions
‘ to sanctity.’ What must such an one expect
from the lips of the Judge, but that tremendous
sentence, ‘ these mine enemies, who would not
‘ that I should reign over them, bring hither and
‘ slay them before me.’*

* Luke xix. 27.

ESSAY VII.

ON THE SECOND COLLECT IN THE MORNING SERVICE, FOR PEACE.

WHEN the great Apostle of the Gentiles is addressing himself to the saints at Rome, in the very beginning of his epistle he pronounces his blessing on them in these terms, ‘ grace and ‘ peace be with you from God our Father and ‘ the Lord Jesus Christ.’ In the sequel of the letter we find another solemn form of benediction and supplication ; ‘ Now the God of hope fill you ‘ with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may ‘ abound in hope through the power of the Holy ‘ Ghost.’ And, towards the conclusion of it, he repeats the same pious wish, ‘ now the God of ‘ peace be with you all. Amen.’ Of the Apostle’s affectionate regard for the brethren at Rome, who were ‘ the called of Christ Jesus, and be- ‘ loved of God,’ no doubt can be entertained ; since the whole of his conduct manifested the warmest attachment to, and zeal for all those, who loved our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

That his fervent love for them would prompt his heart to wish them the best of blessings, is equally unquestionable. We must therefore conclude that peace from God is an inestimable good. When our blessed Lord was taking His leave of His dear disciples, to whom He was united in the bonds of everlasting love; when we find Him solemnly making, as it were, His last will and testament in their favor, what is the legacy He bequeaths to them? Not worldly grandeur, riches, or pleasures; for He too well knew the emptiness and dangerous tendency of all these things, to wish His beloved followers a large participation of them; on the contrary, He tells them plainly, that in the world they should have tribulation. Peace is the blessing He devises to them; ‘peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.’ Surely then we have reason to conclude, that peace is a benefit, which we cannot too earnestly desire, nor too highly prize. And indeed it is of so great importance, that none of the comforts of the present life can be enjoyed without it; nor, without it, can we entertain any pleasing hope of that happiness which is to come. For this comprehensive good, our church teaches us to pray, in the following excellent words.

‘O God, who art the Author of peace and
 ‘Lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect
 ‘freedom; defend us Thy humble servants in all

‘ assaults of our enemies, that we, surely trusting
 ‘ in Thy defence, may not fear the power of any
 ‘ adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ
 ‘ our Lord. Amen.’

Are we sensible of the importance of an acquaintance with this amiable inhabitant of the heavenly world? Are we earnestly desirous that the Dove should bring the olive branch, and plant it in our bosoms? To whom should we apply but to God? For He is ‘ the Author of peace.’ In whatever point of view we consider this comprehensive benefit, God is the source, whence it flows. Are we involved in the calamity of war? The real cause of national calamity is sin. God only can restore tranquillity to our borders. And surely the most effectual method of obtaining it would be, not to add the spirit of intestine discord to the tumult that reigns without, but to address ourselves by repentance and prayer to Him, who is ‘ the Author of peace.’ He only can make our inveterate foes willing to return the murderous weapon to its sheath, and change the din of war into thanksgiving and praise. Do we enjoy the blessing of *domestic* peace? Are we of one mind in an house? Let us be thankful to God for so signal a mercy; whether the comforts, flowing from it, arise from an union of spirit in the faith of the gospel; or only from the restraint, which civilization imposes on the rag-

ing passions of the unsanctified bosom. For man, unconverted, and unrestrained by laws, or other effects of God's overruling providence, would prove a tyger to his domestics and neighbours. We have among us instances enough to shew what man is, when left to himself. In many houses the husband and wife, the parents and children, the master and servants, live together nearly on the same terms as do the wild beasts of the forest. God is 'the Author of peace;' and it is owing either to the happy influence of His renewing grace, or the kind interference of His providence, that we enjoy any of the comforts of social life. Abandoned to the boisterous tempers of our own fallen nature, we should prove continual tormentors, both of ourselves and of all around us. But the most important consideration of that peace, of which God is the Author, yet remains to be mentioned; *peace with God*. While man continued in a state of innocence, the most perfect friendship subsisted between God and His creatures. But the admission of sin set God and the sinner at variance. Had no method been discovered for the restoration of amity, and the reconciliation of the parties each to the other; the breach must have terminated in the everlasting separation of the sinner from God and happiness: for 'how can two walk together, except they be agreed?'"* And between a polluted

* Amos iii. 9.

sinner and an Holy God, with whom iniquity cannot dwell,* there must be, apparently to human reason, the most irreconcilable disagreement. But ‘God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us,’ hath to our astonishment provided means, whereby on the one hand His own attributes might all be glorified in the restoration of sinners to His favor ; and whereby on the other the sinner’s heart might be so changed, as to be rendered again capable of communion with God. All this is effected by that wonderful display of almighty love, which Christ Jesus made from the redeeming cross. Therefore, He is by the Apostle emphatically stiled ‘our Peace ;’† because His blood, by that perfect atonement for sin, which its effusion made, hath reconciled God to us ; and, when applied to the conscience by faith, reconciles us to God. Moreover, the human ‘mind,’ in its natural state, ‘is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ But when, ‘being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ;’ and are brought to a perception of the love, wherewith He hath loved us ; we lay down the arms of our rebellion, and submit ourselves to His mild sceptre ; and thenceforward peace regains her

* Psa. v. 4. † Eph. ii. 14.

throne in the believing heart. Are you enjoying, Christian reader, peace with God? You know the value of the blessing, and the source whence it is derived. Is the reader destitute of it? Is his own conscience his bitter enemy? Does he dislike that which God has commanded; and fear that which He has threatened? If such a person be not determined in his enmity against God and himself, surely he will rejoice to hear that God is ‘the Author of peace, and Lover of concord.’ As God delights in the happiness of His rational creatures, He is willing to be at peace with them. What proofs has He not given, that He is ‘the Lover of concord?’ The truth of it is written as with a sun-beam in the death of Jesus, and in the promise of His Spirit. O! what an argument for faith does this title of our God afford! If He loves concord, with what assurance may I return to him confessing my sins, and casting myself at His feet! That He is ‘the lover of concord’ appears from the character of those who are begotten again by His Spirit. For His children resemble their infinitely gracious parent. Every feature of the renewed mind, of the ‘new creature in Christ Jesus,’ is a transcript made by the Spirit of grace from the original perfection of the Divine nature. And is not a Spirit of love and concord one of the chief graces of the Christian charac-

ter? The beam of light, which descends from the sun, is not more truly of the same quality with that glorious orb; the drop of water, which is severed from the ocean, is not more truly of the same matter with the mass, with which it had been blended, than the spirit of forgiveness, peace, concord, and love, which more or less reigns in the bosom of every child of God, is an emanation from the Divine fulness. 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Is he then, whom grace hath created anew after the Divine likeness, earnestly solicitous that those with whom he once associated in rebellion, should return to their offended Maker, and find mercy? God, who is the author and giver of that solicitude, must be infinitely more compassionate. The question then, which remains to be answered by the conscience of each individual, is, are you desirous of peace with God? Consider how hypocritical is the use, which you make of this prayer, if your heart be not truly desirous of possessing and maintaining peace with God.

This peace can only be derived from the knowledge of God. For 'in the knowledge of Him standeth our eternal life,' of which present peace is the earnest and foretaste. Those, therefore, who believe their own prayers, will ardently desire this knowledge of God; and be solicitous in inquiring, what it is, and how it is to be

obtained. That it is more than a cold assent to the Being and Providence of God, is plain from this consideration ; that there are great multitudes of persons, who allow His existence and profess a belief in his providence, and yet enjoy no fellowship with Him on earth, nor cultivate any lively hope of the pleasures which are at His right hand for ever more. Such a conviction as this will leave us in all the horrors of a fallen state ; for the very ‘ devils believe and tremble.’ When eternal life is annexed to an acquaintance with God, such a knowledge of Him must indisputably be intended, as He has revealed in his word. All the mistakes which, are made about religion, originate in ignorance of the true character of God. Hence it is, that the careless sinner pursues quietly ‘ the way of his heart,’ and yet dreams of impunity ; though he lives in the neglect of the great salvation, and the habitual practice of sin. Did he verily know God, he could not satisfy himself with such silly apologies, as ‘ that many are worse than himself ;’ or ‘ that his natural appetites are strong, and that there is no harm in their unbounded gratification.’* Were not his mind destitute of all acquaintance with the perfections of the Godhead ; he would be afraid to postpone the work of repentance to a future day. From the same fruitful source of error arises also the blunder of

* Ps. xciv. 1---11.

the Pharisaic formalist, who fancies that the law of God may be satisfied with a partial, instead of a perfect obedience : or, that Christ came into the world to introduce a remedial law ; and that by the merit of obedience thereto man is to be justified and saved ; that he must do what he can for himself, and leave the remainder to Christ ; in consequence of which, man has a right to glory in his own righteousness, so far as it is supposed to extend ; although the plan of redemption in Christ Jesus is so laid by infinite wisdom, that no flesh shall be permitted to glory in his presence.* Did he know the holiness and justness of the Divine nature, he would discover his own helplessness ; and he would plainly perceive, that the scheme of a remedial law is blasphemy against God, since it represents Him as enjoining and approving that, which is imperfect and consequently sinful. It is not the doctrines of grace, but this wretched system of modern Divinity, which makes God the author and approver of sin. So soon as a man becomes acquainted with God, he instantly discovers the necessity of justification by the obedience of Christ, and regeneration by His spirit ; and the propriety of a state of total self-renunciation, and intire dependence on Christ alone.

* 1 Cor. i. 29.

Returning from this short digression, it will be proper for us to inquire, wherein this knowledge of God consists, which is here connected with eternal life. God has revealed in His word the perfections of His nature, so far as it is necessary for us to be acquainted with them : and in the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus, we have a picture of the ever blessed God drawn to the life. For Jesus is ‘the image of the invisible God,’ so that ‘whosoever hath seen him hath seen the Father.’ God then is revealed in scripture as a being of infinite *Holiness*. He dwelleth in the height of His sanctuary, at the remotest distance from all possibility of pollution. What striking ideas of the purity of the Divine nature are conveyed to the mind by the awful ceremonies, that were enjoined to the Israelites, when the most High descended to promulgate His sacred law on Mount Sinai !* Surely we may conclude from the thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquake ; from the trepidation of Moses and the horror of his people ; that ‘the Lord our God is holy,’ yea, ‘glorious in holiness.’ In the character and life of Jesus also, we have an open exemplification of this attribute. For He was a lamb without blemish and without spot. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

* See *Exod. xix. 10, &c.* *Comp. Hebr. xii. 18, &c.*

He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Like the sun in his daily round, He went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men ; and is in the most strict and incommunicable sense of the word ‘JESUS CHRIST THE RIGH-
‘TEOUS.’ Whosoever therefore contemplated the character and conduct of Jesus, might therein have discerned holiness itself made visible. Now a persuasion of the holiness of God in our own heart is essential to salvation. For without it we must remain ignorant of the nature and evil of sin, and the necessity of renovation and sanctification. It is not to be wondered at that those, who consider God as like to themselves, should confound a reformation from outward immorality with conversion of heart. Whereas he, who is taught of God, clearly discerns his own inward defilement ; and learns, with Job, to ‘abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes.’ When a discovery is made to him of the immaculate purity of God, with Isaiah he exclaims, ‘wo is me ; for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’—A knowledge of the inflexible *Justice* of God is also essential to a participation of eternal life. The existence of this perfection appears in the destruction of the old world, and the cities of the plain. It is also evident from the damnation of the Angels, who kept not their

first estste ; and from all the threatenings of the scriptures. But it shines with the brightest lustre round the bleeding temples of the Lamb of God. How awfully strict must He be, in maintaining the sanctions of His perfect law, who,

‘ Rather than His Justice should be stain’d,

‘ Hath stain’d the cross.’*

Now unless we have some proper conceptions of this attribute of God, we shall discover no necessity of the death of Christ, we shall fancy that God might by an act of His sovereign authority have forgiven sin ; and all our apprehensions of His love, and gratitude for it, will be cold and lifeless. It is a due conviction of the glory of this divine perfection, that excites in the believing heart that ardor of thankfulness which it feels ; and which causes the redeemed sinner to cry out, while gazing on his incarnate God stretched on the Cross, ‘ Behold, what manner of love He hath vouchsafed to such a wretch as me !’ It would also be easy to show the necessity of an acquaintance with the other perfections of the Godhead. But, lest the present essay should be extended to an unusual length, one particular more shall suffice. A knowledge of the *Love* of God is essential to salvation. For a man may know Him to be just, and holy, and by his apprehensions of these tremendous attributes be driven to

* Dr. Young’s Night Thoughts.

despair ; unless at the same time, a manifestation of the loving-kindness of the Lord be made to the mind. Without this there can be no genuine repentance, faith, love, hope or joy. But as this subject has been already presented to our contemplation, it will be needless here to expatiate on it any farther. It is, however, necessary to remark, that this knowledge of God is not mere theory or speculation ; but it is such a kind of information, as communicates life to the soul, awakening it to sensibility, and exciting it to pant after God. It transforms the soul into the Divine image, by enabling it to appreciate every object by the standard of inspired truth, and by producing emotions of love to God, because He hath first loved us. It is a knowledge that is always accompanied by humility of heart ; for the sinner, who is instructed aright in the character of God, must lie prostrate in the dust at His footstool, in silent admiration of that grace and glory, which irradiate the countenance of the Divine Majesty. If your knowledge of God be such, as is here connected with eternal life ; then the effect of beholding the glory of God has been similar to that, which is experienced by one, who gazes on the natural sun ; for his eyes are thereby so powerfully affected, that he is rendered incapable of looking as before on terrestrial objects : and, if you have seen the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, you look around you on

the things of time and sense with an indifference, to which you were before a stranger. This knowledge of God is eternal life. The life it produces in the soul is similar in kind, though not in degree, to that, which saints made perfect enjoy : for this knowledge has always a sanctifying efficacy. The justification of him, who believes, is indeed complete ; but his sanctification is partial : it is begun through grace, and will be gradually carried on to farther degrees of maturity, in proportion as his acquaintance with God increases ; till it be perfected at his dismissal from the body, and at the resurrection of the just. To know God in Christ is also eternal life, both as it is the sure and only way to it ; and as it is the earnest and beginning of it : for the peace of conscience, the love to God, the sensations of delight in Him, the desire after conformity to His image, and obedience to His will, which it uniformly produces, are real foretastes of glory, and infallible evidences of a right, founded on redemption, to the possession of the purchased inheritance. And the complete enjoyments of heaven will partly consist in the clear discoveries, that will then be vouchsafed to us, of the glorious perfections of the Godhead, when we shall see eye to eye, and face to face. O blessed knowledge, which thus enriches the human soul ! How happy the man, who is possessed of it ! How pitiable the case of those, who have substituted any

thing in the place of it ! For, if it be ‘ life eter-
 ‘ nal to know the only true God, and Jesus
 ‘ Christ, whom He hath sent ;’ it is, on the con-
 trary, eternal death to remain in ignorance there-
 of. And if you have never sought it, as the one
 thing needful to happiness, be assured that hither-
 to you possess it not.

How delightful is our social worship, when we
 personally experience, that ‘ God’s service is per-
 ‘ fect freedom !’ The freedom talked of so much
 in these licentious times, would prove in all cases,
 as it has in one, a liberty of depriving each other
 of property, peace, and life.

‘ But there is yet a liberty unsung
 ‘ By poets, and by senators unprais’d,
 ‘ Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the pow’rs
 ‘ Of earth and hell, confed’rate take away.
 ‘ A liberty which persecution, fraud,
 ‘ Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind,
 ‘ Which whoso tastes can be enslav’d no more.
 ‘ ’Tis liberty of heart, deriv’d from heav’n,
 ‘ Bought with HIS blood, who gave it to mankind;
 ‘ And sealed with the same token. It is held
 ‘ By charter, and that charter sanction’d sure
 ‘ By th’ unimpeachable and awful oath
 ‘ And promise of a God.-----
 ‘ -----There is a paradise that fears
 ‘ No forfeiture, and of its fruits He sends
 ‘ Large prelibation oft to saints below.
 ‘ Of these the first in order, and the pledge
 ‘ And confident assurance of the rest,
 ‘ Is liberty. A flight into His arms
 ‘ Ere yet mortality’s fine threads give way,

‘ A clear escape from tyrannizing lust,
 ‘ And full immunity from penal woe.’*

The service of sin, Satan, and the world, is perfect thralldom. Continual fears of loss or disappointment haunt the wretched slaves of these hard task-masters. Though various are the employments in which ‘ the servants of sin’ † are engaged, yet, wretched is the drudgery of all. ‡ One man is instigated to destroy his constitution, and ruin his soul by the beastly practice of drunkenness. Another brings his own body to the gallows, and his soul to hell by acts of fraud, rapine, or violence, committed either on the person or property of his neighbor. A third is impelled to defy the Lord of heaven and earth by blaspheming His name, or breaking His sabbath. These are the lowest menials of the unhappy family. There are others who have higher rank, but are equally in a state of bondage with the former : Such are the covetous, the ambitious, and † the man of fashion,

* Cowper’s Task, p. 209, 210.

† Rom. vi. 20.

‡ How pathetically is this described in our Lord’s beautiful parable of the prodigal son ! In which we are told that the unhappy spendthrift, ‘ when he began to be in want, went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine.’ How degrading an employ, and yet how descriptive an image of that, in which all the dupes of sensuality are engaged, who serve divers lusts and pleasures ! ‘ And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.’ Wretched state ! to be seeking happiness for the soul from the trough of sensual gratification !

who live without God in the world ; such also is the formalist and self-justiciary. For the Lord of this family is as much obeyed, and his service as faithfully attended to, by the decent moralist, if his heart be kept back from God, as by the drunkard and debauchee.* Cruel is the treatment which the slaves of sin receive. Their eyes are first put out,† lest they should discover the turpitude and danger of the service ; and then they are hurried on in the way that leadeth to everlasting destruction : for ‘ the God of this world ‘ blindeth the minds of them that believe not, lest ‘ the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is ‘ the image of God, should shine unto them.’ How happy are those, who are delivered from this captivity, and are become servants to God ; who have ‘ their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life !’ To angels and saints made perfect, God’s service is ‘ perfect freedom ;’ freedom from those uneasy sensations, which all the ungodly experience in the performance of religious acts, the torments of fear and the loathings of disgust. Therein part of their happiness consists ; so that whatever be the service, in which God employs them, in that they find their heaven. To believing sinners on earth, so soon as they believe

* Rom. vi, 16. ‘ His servants ye are, to whom ye obey.’

† The prodigal son is represented by our Lord as deprived of reason, till he formed the resolution of returning to his Father ; and then he is said to ‘ come to himself.’ Luke xv. 27.

in Jesus, and enjoy communion with God in the path of duty. ‘His service is perfect freedom.’ If any fears remain, if any weariness oppress them, it arises not from the nature of the service but the imperfection of their present state. This they happily know, and are looking forward with longing desire to the arrival of that period, when the service of God shall be as much the source of delight to them, as it now is to their elder brethren ; who, being freed from the burden of the flesh, are safely landed on the blissful shore, where the servants of God rest not day nor night in their Master’s work. But do the generality of our worshippers prove the service of God to be freedom in any respect ? Rather is it not perfect bondage to them ? Is not the sabbath to them the least pleasurable day of the seven, and the work of it less gratifying than any worldly engagement ? Must they not own that the more spiritual the service is, the more disgusting it proves to them ? Do they not long for the termination of it, that they may return to that, which is more congenial to their inclinations ? How can such persons join in our liturgy, and call, ‘God’s service perfect freedom?’ Out of their own mouths they are condemned, as declaring with their lips what their hearts deny.

The persons, who in this excellent collect address ‘the author of peace and lover of concord,’ profess themselves to be His ‘humble servants.’ If they speak the language of truth, they have given up their hearts to God, and devoted themselves to Him. While they confess themselves unworthy the meanest office in the service of such a Master, they feel in their hearts, that ‘it is better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.’ As God has declared Himself willing to receive them into His service, they willingly take his yoke upon them, and prove that ‘His yoke is easy, and His burden light.’ How awful it is to consider that any, who daily prove themselves to be the slaves of sin, should come and avow themselves God’s ‘humble servants.’ O that such could be brought to attend to the awakening questions suggested by the Psalmist, ‘He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?’*

The servants of God, while in the present world are in an enemy’s country. They are exposed to a thousand evils in mind, body, and estate. Their tenements of clay are liable to various calamitous accidents, and diseases almost without number. Their property, if they possess any, may at any moment make to itself wings, and fly

* Psalm xciv. 9.

away. But these are not the objects which principally employ a believer's concern. To him the most important interest is that of the immortal soul. And to what tremendous perils is that every day, hour, and moment, exposed! When he considers the enemies, which are in league against him, the devil, the world and the flesh, each of whom is stronger than Goliath; his heart is ready to fail through fear. When he reflects that Adam fell from a state of innocence; that David, the man after God's own heart, was seduced from the state of obedience; and that Peter, in a moment of temptation, denied his beloved Lord; he trembles for himself. Such an one sees the excellence of the petition, which our church has here taught us to adopt; 'Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies.' What could Jonah do for himself in the belly of the fish, when, to use his own emphatic expressions, 'the waters compassed him about even to the soul, the depth closed him round about, the weeds were wrapt about his head; when he went down to the bottoms of the mountains, when the earth with her bars was about him, when his soul fainted within him;' what could he do in such circumstances, but 'remember the Lord and look again towards his Holy temple?' Equally hopeless and helpless is the situation of every child of God, with respect to aid from any re-

sources of his own, or his fellow creatures. As Saul said to David, 'Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth :' so every believer knows himself to be a bruised reed, which every foot may easily crush ; and his spiritual enemies to be more in number than the hairs of his head, each of whom hath slain its thousands. What can he do but look to the mighty God of Jacob for help ? Knowing that every day, in which he is upheld in the exercise of the functions of Divine life, he is a monument of almighty grace and power ; and that his continuance in the faith and hope of the gospel, is as great a proof of the interference of Omnipotence, as though a mill-stone were suspended in the atmosphere without a prop, or a spark of fire were kept alive in the very midst of the raging sea. Surely, if the reader does not perceive the necessity of a daily importunate use of this petition, it is because he is a stranger to himself, and his true condition ; because he is not yet engaged in the spiritual warfare against the devil, the world and the flesh ; because he is living in amity with the enemies of his soul's salvation. He may be compared to the Syrian army, which, being smitten with blindness, was led by the Prophet into the midst of Samaria ; and fancied themselves in perfect security, when they

were surrounded by the walls and weapons of their enemies, and wholly in their power.* Very melancholy is the situation of such persons. A poisonous serpent is cherished in their bosoms, and they are strangers to fear. Their house is on fire, and they are insensible to danger. The cordial use of the prayer before us is a striking characteristic of a christian, which distinguishes him from all others. The unawakened mind is conscious neither of danger without, nor weakness within. If duty is proposed, it thinks itself equal to the undertaking; it discerns none of the difficulties of the Christian life; and therefore it can go on securely from day to day, without any lively aspiration after pardon for the past, or grace for the future. Whereas the genuine believer sees his danger, and knows his own imbecility; and therefore like the Canaanitish woman, he cries 'Lord help me!' When he rises in the morning, or commits himself to rest at night; when he engages either in worldly business or religious duty; in short, when he is placed in any supposed situation whatever, he knows his own inability, to think and act right, but so far as he derives help from above.

We are taught to pray, not for absolute deliverance from assaults of our enemies, but for de-

* 2 Kings, vi. 18, &c.

fence *in* them ; because it is oftentimes for the glory of God, and the profit of his servants that they should be assaulted. Such assaults are graciously permitted for the trial of their faith ‘ which being much more precious than of gold ‘ that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, will ‘ be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at ‘ the appearing of Jesus Christ.’

Trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, and various kinds of adversity, are necessary for the purification of the children of God : and therefore it is written, ‘ whom the Lord loveth, He chasten- ‘ eth ; and scourgeth every son, whom He re- ‘ ceiveth.’ Were we ‘ without chastisement, ‘ whereof all are partakers, we should be bas- ‘ tards and not sons.’ And, as inward affliction is necessary for our profit that we may ‘ become ‘ partakers of His holiness,’ so is temptation also. For, as the approach of an earthly enemy drives the straggling soldiers into their garrison ; so the assaults of our spiritual enemies add speed to the pace of those, who are flying for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. How precious is Christ to the tempted soul ! ‘ The ‘ name of the Lord is a strong tower ; the righ- ‘ teous,’ in the time of trial, ‘ runneth into it, and ‘ is safe.’ Since our Heavenly Father sees it right to permit us to remain in a state of trial, we must not pray to be taken out of it, but to be

preserved from the evil :* that we may be enabled by His grace to bear the afflictions He lays on us to His glory and our own advantage ; and that, ‘ when the enemy cometh in like a flood,’ threatening to overwhelm us, ‘ the spirit of the Lord may lift up a standard against him.’

We not only pray for exemption from danger, but also from the distressing apprehension of it : even, ‘ that we may not fear the power of any ‘ adversaries.’ For since their power is great, we should spend our days in anxious dread, had we no assurance of safety from above. Surely those persons, who have never trembled at a review of the hostile band, are in a dead stupor ; like Jonah who was asleep in the sides of the ship, when every other heart shook with horror. The believer, who knows, by experience, their rage, subtilty, and malice, will pray for deliverance from that ‘ fear, which hath torment ;’ lest his mind should be so enervated by its baneful influence, as to be incapable of fighting ‘ the good ‘ fight of faith ;’ and lest those days should be employed in groundless apprehensions, which should be filled up in communion with God, and obedience to his will. And, as it is only through faith that deliverance from evil, and from the fear of it, can be experienced, the soldiers of Christ

* John xvii. 15.

make it the subject of their earnest request, that their faith may be strengthened; that they may be enabled ‘surely to trust in God’s defence.’ It can only be through God’s defence that we are for a moment safe from ruin: and it can only be in proportion to our faith in His protection, that we are for a moment exempt from fear. When David went forth against Goliath, had he considered his own weak and unarmed condition, he must have trembled at the prospect of the unequal contest. But faith excluded fear from his bosom. ‘Thou comest to me’ (says the faithful stripling to the vaunting champion of Philistia) ‘with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.’ The issue of the combat is well known. ‘So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun, when he goeth forth in his might!’*

The great object of faith, as recommended to us in this collect, is ‘the might of Jesus Christ our Lord.’ For He, the once despised Nazarene, is ‘the mighty God.’† This is our consolation, that greater is He that is for us than all who are against us. He, who once sat down,

* Judges v. 31.

† Isaiah ix. 6.

wearied with His journey on the well of Samaria*
 ‘ is the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator
 ‘ of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither
 ‘ is weary.’† Wonder, O my soul, and adore!
 He emptied Himself, that thou mightest be filled;
 He impoverished Himself, that thou mightest be
 enriched; He became weary, that thou mightest
 be refreshed. ‘ He giveth power to the faint,
 ‘ and to him that hath no might He increaseth
 ‘ strength. Even the youths shall faint and be
 ‘ weary; and the young men shall utterly fall.
 ‘ But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew
 ‘ their strength: they shall mount up with wings
 ‘ as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary:
 ‘ and they shall walk, and not faint.’‡ The virtue
 of his atonement cleanses from all sin: the merit
 of His righteousness justifies the ungodly: the
 prevalency of His intercession preserves His re-
 deemed from danger, and secures acceptance to
 their persons and prayers. ‘ The might’ of His
 arm is all-sufficient to defend them from all dan-
 gers ghostly and bodily, to support and uphold
 them even to the end. For ‘ the Lord’s portion
 ‘ is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.
 ‘ He found him in a desert land, and in the waste
 ‘ howling wilderness:’ and with respect to each
 of them, ‘ He leads him about, He instructs him,

* John iv. 6. † Isai. xl. 28.

‡ Isai. xl. 29, 30, 31.

‘ He keeps him as the apple of His eye. As an
 ‘ eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttering over her
 ‘ young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh
 ‘ them, beareth them on her wings ; so the Lord
 ‘ alone leads, defends, and saves those, who
 ‘ trust in His defence, through the might of Jesus
 ‘ Christ our Lord.’* So that each individual
 of His little flock may adopt the Apostle’s tri-
 umphant exclamation, and say, ‘ who shall lay
 ‘ any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is
 ‘ God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ?
 ‘ It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen
 ‘ again, who is even at the right hand of God,
 ‘ who also maketh intercession for us. Who

* Dent. xxxii. 9---12. How striking is the image of God’s
 tender care, which is here used by the sacred historian ; ‘ *He*
 ‘ *kept him as the apple of His eye ;*’ which, being a most valuable
 part of the body, and liable to injury from the slightest accident,
 the wisdom of Divine Providence has placed deep in the head,
 and secured in a most remarkable manner by various means,
 which like the several parts of a fortification, prevent the enemy’s
 approach. ‘ *Pupilla oculi est inquam illud in tunica oculi cor-*
 ‘ *nea, per quod instar fenestræ species rerum intromittuntur, &*
 ‘ *ad mentem deferuntur ; estque adeo id in oculo, quod corruptum*
 ‘ *visum tollit vel minuit. Cum autem inter sensus omnes visus*
 ‘ *homini maxime sit utilis et necessarius : pupilla oculi censetur*
 ‘ *res omnium carissima, cui conservandæ quisque summo studio*
 ‘ *invigilat : quæ causa est, quod ubi cura tenerrimi amoris, quo*
 ‘ *Deus populum suum prosequitur, et studium ejus protegendi ac*
 ‘ *præservandi, Scriptura hac utatur phrasi, qua hoc in loco Moses,*
 ‘ *Psa. xvii. 8, Zach. ii. 8.*’ Vitringæ Commentarius ad Canticum
 Mosis.

' shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall
 ' tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or
 ' famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay
 ' in all these things we are more than conquerors
 ' through Him that loved us. For I am persuad-
 ' ed that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor
 ' principalities, nor powers, nor things present,
 ' nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor
 ' any other creature, shall be able to separate us
 ' from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus
 ' our Lord.*'

* Rom. viii. 33--39.

ESSAY VIII.

ON THE THIRD COLLECT AT MORNING SERVICE, FOR GRACE.

VARIOUS are the acceptations of the word **GRACE** in the sacred pages. In its primary and general sense it signifies the favour of God. This is the perennial fountain, or rather the boundless ocean, from which every stream of blessedness flows, whether to angels and saints made perfect in heaven, or to sinners on earth. Sometimes the various traits of the Christian character are intended by this term, such as faith, hope, love, and patience ; because these are rivulets flowing from the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. In other places we must thereby understand that ability, which God communicates to His believing people for the performance of the several functions of the Divine life. Our life springs from the grace of God, and every act of that spiritual life proceeds from a continual communication of power from Him, so that our works can only be

spiritual in their rise, progress, and accomplishment, so far they are ‘ begun, continued and ‘ ended in Him.’ In this latter sense our church uses this important word in the rubric that precedes the third collect at morning service; wherein she teaches us to pray for supplies of grace in the following excellent words.

‘ O Lord our Heavenly Father, Almighty, ‘ Everlasting God, who hast safely brought us ‘ to the beginning of this day; defend us in the ‘ same with Thy mighty power, and grant that ‘ this day we fall into no sin, neither run into ‘ any kind of danger; but that all our doings ‘ being ordered by Thy governance may be ‘ righteous in Thy sight, through Jesus Christ ‘ our Lord. Amen.’*

The persons, who address these admirable words to God in prayer, are evidently supposed to be true believers; those, whom the Apostle Peter describes, as a ‘ chosen generation, a royal ‘ priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,’ appointed to ‘ shew forth the praises of Him, who ‘ hath called them out of darkness into His mar- ‘ vellous light,† and to offer up spiritual sacrifices, ‘ acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’‡ For,

* ‘ The third Collects, both at morning and evening service, are ‘ framed out of the Greek *Euchologion*.’ WHEATLY.

† 1 Pet. ii. 9. ‡ Ver. 5.

as none others can have any true desire after the blessings, which are the subject of this prayer ; so none, besides them, can properly use the mode of address, which is here adopted. Who, but a child, can look up with confidence in his heart, and a smile on his countenance, and say, ‘ my ‘ Father !’ That God is the Father of all, as He is the Author of all, cannot be denied. But, if this be the only source of consolation we have, we might as well attempt to quench our thirst with matter emitted from the flaming bowels of Vesuvius, as to extract comfort from a consideration of our relation to God, as creatures to a Creator. In this sense God is the Father of Devils, as much as of men ; for He gave them their existence and upholds it. And, if this be our only claim to His favor, ‘ the angels, who ‘ kept not their first estate, and are reserved in ‘ chains of darkness to the judgment of the great ‘ day, possess the same.’ They have unhappily exchanged the title of children for that of rebels : and so have we. The alarming interrogatory, by which Jehu answered the inquiry of Joram King of Israel, may be applied to every careless and impenitent sinner ; ‘ What hast thou to do ‘ with peace ?’ What right hast thou to call God thy Father ? Thou art wholly a stranger to any filial feelings towards Him, or to any sense of filial duty ; and, continuing as thou art, hast no reason to expect any parental kindness from

Him. But the language of filial confidence is appropriate to those, who are ‘begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’* They were once aliens, but are now adopted into the family of God, and made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. And ‘because they are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father.’† And, though they are of different ages and attainments, and not all of them able to speak with equal distinctness; yet all of them demonstrate the holy change, which their adoption has produced, by their dissimilitude from their former selves, as well as from the world around them; and by their increasing conformity to God their Father, to Christ their elder brother, and to those branches of the family, who bear his perfect image. How delightful is the thought, that at every recurring season of public worship, thousands of those, who have ‘access by one Spirit unto the Father,’ are jointly looking upward, and lisping out His adored name. We describe our Father by the place of His peculiar residence; and thereby distinguish Him from all others, to whom this relative title is sometimes given. For, though God is every where present; so that if we ascended up into heaven, He is there; were we to make our bed in Hell, behold, He is there;

* 1 Pet. i. 3.

† Gal. iv. 6.

were we to take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; still we should be surrounded with His Divine Majesty; yet Heaven is the seat of His glory. And, while we style Him ‘our heavenly Father,’ we call that to our remembrance, which is calculated to strengthen our faith, and confirm our confidence in prayer. An earthly parent might be incapable of supplying the wants of a numerous family; and, however ardently he might wish to afford the needful relief, might be obliged to dismiss them from his presence with unavailing wishes that it was in his power to grant their requests. But, since our Father, to whom we repair, dwelleth in heaven; we may rest assured that he is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent; and it will become us to entertain the most exalted conceptions of His grace and power: and, though His family consist of unnumbered millions; though every individual member thereof be dependent on Him; and, though their various exigencies be such, as no finite sufficiency can relieve: yet of Him we may confidently ask and receive, till our joy be full. No circumstance of time or place, of unworthiness, or deep distress can prevent the success of the messages we send to ‘our heavenly Father.’

‘Our Heavenly Father’ is also ‘Almighty God.’ When we ask for deliverance from sin and danger, and the governance of all our doings;

we implore blessings, which Omnipotence only can bestow. How necessary therefore it is, that we should carry with us to the throne of grace a full persuasion of that important declaration, that ‘nothing is impossible with God.’ This circumstance affords a fresh instance of the wisdom of the compilers of our liturgy, in their selection of those epithets, which they have adopted in our invocations.

Since we are ever prone to ‘stagger at the promises of God through unbelief;’ another of His glorious perfections is here introduced. It is the will of God that His humble servants should ‘draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.’ It becomes them therefore, knowing the constant difficulty of maintaining in their bosoms a full persuasion of the truth of the promises, to fortify their minds with every corroborative illustration of the nature of that gracious God, with whom they have to do. He is ‘Everlasting’ in His existence, and all His attributes. We solicit at His hands deliverance from eternal ruin; and the inestimable boon of eternal life. Surely no being, whose duration is finite and limited, can bestow on us these benefits. But ‘our heavenly Father,’ the Son of His love, and the Spirit of His grace, the

Triune Jehovah, is ‘without beginning of days, or end of life.’ With Him there is no mutability. What He has promised, He lives for ever to perform. Safely therefore may we conclude, that ‘whatsoever we ask faithfully, we shall obtain effectually.’

We are taught to acknowledge His over-ruling Providence, as the sole cause of the continuance of our lives and comforts. How proper a confession for every morning is that, which we here make, even that ‘God hath brought us safely to the beginning of this day,’ since ‘in Him we live, and move, and have our being!’ The senseless doctrine of chance* occupies no place in the creed of a true member of our church. Are the hairs of our head all numbered? Is it true that an insignificant sparrow does not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father’s observation and permission? Surely then His children may infer the universality of His superintendence over them and their concerns. But, alas, are there not many practical Atheists even in the bosom of

* The word *chance* is unhappily used both by the compilers of our Liturgy, and the translators of the Bible: (see the first collect after the communion service. Eccles. ix. 11. and Luke x. 31. et al.) but assuredly without the least intention of affording any countenance to that system of impiety, which excludes the providence of God from the governance of the universe and all things in it. The word *occurrence*, which is the exact meaning both of the hebrew and greek terms, would have conveyed their meaning; and is not liable to the same objection with the word *chance*.

the visible church? Who, although they have verbally acknowledged that their safety has arisen from the Divine protection, can open their eyes in the morning, and enter on their worldly engagements with renewed corporeal vigor, without raising their hearts in grateful adoration of the boundless goodness of that almighty Being, from whom every blessing flows! Have we not many nominal Christians, who are enemies to the doctrine of a particular providence; and who even make a false zeal for the glory of God a pretence, with which to cover the unbelief of their hearts? If they are pressed with the propriety of thankfully acknowledging God in all their ways; their excuse for the base ingratitude of their forgetfulness of Him, is a wretched notion, which contradicts the positive declarations of scripture, that God is too great to intermeddle with the minute affairs of mortals; and that we degrade His Majesty, if we suppose that He regards matters of so little moment.* But these objectors themselves, while they give evident proof of their inattention to, or disbelief of the plainest assertions of the inspired volume, are the persons, who derogate from the honor of God, while they suppose that the regulation of the affairs of the universe, and of every being in it,

* A Christian is taught to believe that God clothes the grass of the field, feeds the birds of the air, and the young ravens that call upon Him. Matt. vi. 26, 30. Luke xii. 24, 27, 28.

occasions trouble or fatigue to Omniscience and Omnipotence. Such persons may be addressed in the words of the Prophet, ‘ hast thou not known ? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary : there is no searching of his understanding ?’* It would be well, if they would study the boundless compassion of our God, as manifested in the gift of His Son ; and they would soon come to this conclusion, that if ‘ God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son’ for its redemption, nothing that respects the welfare of those, who are the objects of this love, can be unimportant to the Lord our God. The true reason of the arguments brought against the Scripture system of Providence, is the necessity, which the belief of it establishes, of an humble walk with God ; and the restraint which it lays on the criminal independence of the fallen mind of man. ‘ Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow : for what is your life ? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord

* Isa. xl. 28.

‘will, we shall live, and do this, or that.’* If we ‘believe in God,’ we shall own His hand in all our concerns. At the return of every morning, we shall gratefully look up to Him, as our Preserver through the dangers of the preceding night : like a mariner, who has escaped safe to shore from the roaring billows of the deep, we shall review the perils through which we have been brought in safety, and admire and adore the goodness of God. Each believer will lift up his heart to heaven, fraught with the idea that many of his fellow-creatures have been, during the watches of the last night, consumed by devouring flames, while sleeping in their beds ; or murdered by the merciless hands of the sons of violence : that many have been seized with fatal diseases, and lain through the tedious hours of darkness in agonies of bodily pain, crying, ‘would God it were morning!’ and when the morning came, unrelieved from anguish, have repeated the cry, ‘would God it were evening!’ That many have spent the gloomy season in still deeper mental distress, which forbade them to close their eyes, either through the loss of some beloved relative, dear to them as their own lives ; or perhaps from a sense of the wrath of God drinking up their spirits ; for ‘the spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?’ He will consider that thousands have, since the

* James iv. 13, 14, 15.

sun last sunk below the horizon, dropt into eternity. He will inquire, ‘ who hath made me to differ from another, and what have I that I have not received ?’* ‘ I have laid me down, and slept in peace ;’ and surely it behoves me to acknowledge that ‘ it was Thou, Lord, only who madest me to dwell in safety.’† Careless mortal, day after day you are preserved in life, while thousands around you are dropping into the grave. Yet you live without any consideration of the end of your creation and preservation. O that you may now perceive, that God’s providence has hitherto preserved you from the pit of destruction. May you ‘ account the long-suffering of the Lord to be salvation ;’ and henceforward pursue, with an undivided heart, the great object for which you were sent into the world !

We are taught to pray at the return of every morning, for defence through the day on which we are entered ; and to beseech God ‘ that therein we may fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger.’ It is not necessary here to point out the various kinds of external danger to which our tenements of clay are daily and hourly exposed. Certain it is that they are very many.

* I Cor. iv. 7. How affecting and humiliating is the question, which God put to the Jews by the Prophet Malachi ! ‘ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother ?’ Ch. i. 2.

† Psa. iv. 8.

The pages of every newspaper afford a lively comment on the subject ; and, if read in the spirit, which the excellent prayer we are considering breathes, the perusal of them must afford spiritual profit to a devout mind. Would to God that all, who join in the worship of our church, felt their dependence on God for their security from ‘ those evil accidents which may happen to the body !’ Were it so, they would soon also perceive the necessity of looking to Him by faith for preservation from ‘ all those evil thoughts which assault and hurt the soul. A real believer in the Providence of God cannot be indifferent to the concerns of his immortal part.

Having cursorily hinted the necessity of looking to Divine Providence for protection from the various external calamities, which flesh is heir to, we proceed to remark, that the genuine member of our Church considers sin as the greatest of all evils. Against the danger of bodily disasters he is here taught to pray in general terms, without specification of their various kinds ; but sin is particularized as that, which ought to be the chief object of his dread. The Christian worshipper may be compared to a person, who has a long journey, which he is under the necessity of taking, and in which many difficulties are likely to occur : but he foresees one in particular of such magnitude, as to engross his attention, and swallow up all the rest. Or, we may consider

him in the same predicament with a man, who is laboring under a complication of bodily diseases, but among them one of a more threatening aspect than the rest : now though his less important infirmities will unavoidably be felt, and require not to be wholly disregarded ; yet that principal malady, which menaces his life, will excite his chief anxiety ; and the discovery of a remedy for that, will be ‘ the one thing needful’ with him. The believer differs from others, both with respect to his hopes and his fears. While the main inquiry with the generality of men is, ‘ what shall I eat, ‘ what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be ‘ clothed ?’ With the believer it is far otherwise ; for, ‘ what shall I do to be saved,’ is the grand question that daily excites his solicitude. While the careless multitude tremble only at the idea of the loss of property, reputation or life ; his fears are occupied about sin. He knows that the common accidents of life can only kill the body ; but that sin, if habitually practised, will plunge both body and soul into hell. Wonder not at him, ye sons of folly, if circumspection be visible in his walk ; if every step be taken with precision.*

* Great offence is occasioned in the giddy world by the *preciseness* (as it is called) of the followers of the Lamb ; as if it were only a pretence to superior sanctity, which being worn as a cloak of dissimulation, in all cases covered a rotten heart, full of pride and

He knows what you, alas, are ignorant of, that sin in all its shapes is as much more inimical to the happiness of man, than poverty, contempt, or the worst of human calamities, as eternity exceeds time in duration, or the favor of God is more valuable than the smile of a fellow-worm. If a man fall and break his bones ; or if he suffer the loss of all his substance ; the evil is temporary, and may be repaired : but sin dishonors God ; and the honor of God is dear to all His children. Sin wounds our Savior afresh ; brings a reproach on His cause ; grieves His Holy Spirit ; deprives the believer of his choicest treasure, spiritual peace and joy ; it shuts up every avenue of his soul to communion with God ; darkens his prospect of a better world ; and endangers his eternal salvation. Can it be wondered at, that one who knows this, should fly precipitately from the ugly monster, in whose aspect every species of deformity is combined, more horrible than the

hypocrisy. It is admitted that there may be wolves in sheep's clothing ; but surely this is no reason for drawing a conclusion that every creature, which bears the resemblance of a sheep, must be a wolf. Such a charge does not exhibit the charity of those, who make it, in the most amiable light. Though precision in externals may exist without any intrinsic Christianity ; there can be no real religion in the heart, where there is not circumspection in the conduct. ' See therefore that ye walk (*ακριβως*) circumspectly (or precisely) not as fools, but as wise.' Eph. v. 15.

fabled Medusa's* head, the sight of which petrified every beholder? But it may be asked, if sin be this shocking evil, where is the danger of falling into it? Will not a proper degree of caution on our part, prove a sufficient preservative from it? Where is the necessity of calling for assistance from above? Such inquiries can arise only in the mind, which is 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' The person who considers nothing to be sin, but what renders the transgressor liable to punishment by the laws of civil society, may dream of his exemption from all danger of falling into it. But the soul which is alive to the spirituality of the law of God, as requiring from every rational creature immaculate purity in thought, word, and deed, cannot but perceive the constant perils of his situation. A believer, while an inhabitant of this sublunary world, is, like one who walks over sheets of ice, every moment liable to stumble; or rather like Peter, when he ventured on the fluid surface of the sea, constantly in danger of sinking, unless supported by an unseen and almighty hand. If Adam, while yet he remained in innocence, proved unequal to his own preservation; how much

* *Ægidaque horrifera, turbatæ Palladis arma,
Certatim squammis serpentum, auroque polibant,
Connexosque angues; ipsamque in pectore Divæ
Gorgona, defecto vertentem lumina collo.*

Virgil. *Æneid.* 8.

more so must all his children be, who are ‘born
 ‘in sin, and shapen in iniquity ;’ and who, even af-
 ter the renovation of their nature has been effect-
 ed by the grace of God, have daily reason to
 complain of ‘sin that dwelleth in them :’ and often
 in bitterness of soul find themselves constrained
 to join in the mournful exclamation of the Apos-
 tle, ‘wretched man that I am, who shall deliver
 ‘me from the body of this death !’* A convic-
 tion of this occasioned the man after God’s own
 heart earnestly to pray, ‘Keep back thy servant
 ‘from presumptuous sins, let them not have do-
 ‘minion over me : then shall I be upright, and I
 ‘shall be innocent from the great transgression.†’
 Experience, sad experience taught him, that ‘it
 ‘is not in man, who walketh to direct his steps
 ‘aright ;’ and this made him so importunate
 with God, ‘uphold me according to thy word,
 ‘that I may live : and let me not be ashamed of
 ‘my hope ! Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe :
 ‘and I will have respect unto thy statutes con-
 ‘tinually !’ If a lion, rendered furious by hun-

* Rom. vii. 24. The Apostle is supposed to allude to an horrible custom, which is said by some ancient writers to have been practised by tyrants on their captives. A dead carcase was fastened to the living body ; so that the unhappy victim of this cruel treatment was obliged to drag about with him, wherever he went, the putrid, loathsome, and heavy burden. A more forcible and expressive image of the sad case represented cannot surely enter into the mind of man. See Doddridge in loc.

† Psal. xix. 13.

ger, were ranging at large in the place of your residence : if with savage cruelty he had destroyed numbers of your neighbors ; with what caution and vigilance would you walk about ! How solicitous would you be to equip yourselves with such armour, both offensive and defensive, as might secure you from his rage ! With what anxiety would you look around you in every situation, lest the monster should there be lurking in concealment, ready to seize you as his prey ! If you were weak and defenceless, how solicitous would you be to procure some person, whose strength might prove equal to the encounter, to attend your excursions. And, in case of the appearance of the voracious animal, how welcome would a place of refuge be, to which you might betake yourselves for security from his ravenous claws ! Behold, the scene is more than realized ; for ‘ your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, ‘ walketh about seeking whom he may devour.’* There is a necessity of putting on ‘ the whole ‘ armour of God, that we may be able to stand ‘ against the wiles of the devil ; for we wrestle not ‘ against flesh and blood’ (only,) ‘ but against ‘ principalities, against powers, against the rulers ‘ of the darkness of this world, against spiritual ‘ wickedness in high places.’ If you perceive no danger, surely it must be, because your attention is wholly occupied about the present world ; so

* Peter v. 8.

that like one in a delirium, you please yourselves with ideas of perfect safety, while dangers of the most alarming nature attend every step you take. Come, bring yourselves to the test, which these remarks afford ; and from hence form a judgment of yourselves, whether you are a churchman in name only, or in deed and in truth. The latter can cordially every morning join in this petition ; merciful Father, ‘ grant that this day we fall into ‘ no sin, neither run into any kind of danger !’ He knows that in every step he takes, and thro’ every hour of the day, he is liable to sin : that every employment in which he engages, will expose him to temptation : that even in religious duties he is not exempt from perils : that in his lawful business, and all his intercourse with the world, his heart is incessantly obnoxious to danger of being drawn off from the God of his life : and that, unless the Lord is pleased graciously to ‘ keep the door of his lips,’ and direct his goings ; he shall disgrace his profession, and bring guilt on his own conscience : that every relative duty is attended with difficulty insurmountable to the unassisted efforts of the best of men : his comfort therefore arises from God’s faithful promise, that He will never leave nor forsake those, who trust in Him. What says thy heart, sinner, to this experience ? is it thus with you ?

Every true son of our church can lift his heart together with his voice to God, and pray, as it follows in this excellent form, ‘that all his doings ‘being ordered by God’s governance, may be ‘righteous in His sight.’

But what is righteousness? There is a necessity of accuracy and certainty, as to this important point ; because many are the mistakes which are made on the subject. The word of God, explained by the teaching of His Spirit, is the only source of information. If we follow the multitude in opinion, we shall share with them in error and confusion. As ‘sin is the transgression of the ‘law,’* righteousness is its opposite, an exact obedience thereto. Our doings are righteous in proportion to the rectitude of the motive, which influences our minds ; our measure of conformity to the standard, by which they are regulated ; and the worthiness of the object which we have in view. The specious act of external piety, often like the tulip gaudy in its appearance, but destitute of those fragrant odors which regale the senses, through defect of principle, proves an abomination in the sight of God : while the circumspect walk of the lowly penitent, though, like the sweet scented violet, it may attract no notice from man, is accepted in His sight, who seeth not as man seeth. This might be illustrated by the com-

* 1 John iii. 4.

mendation, with which our Savior honored the diminutive contribution of two mites, which the poor widow cast into the treasury of the temple, in preference to the magnificent offerings of the rich.* The actions of men, though formally good, may be deficient in that ‘without which all our doings are nothing worth ;’ like the apples of Sodom, which are beautiful to the eye, but are found on examination to contain nothing but fœtid dust. Such was the conduct of King Saul, as recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel. To offer sacrifice to the Lord was certainly an instance of piety with respect to the overt act. Yet this very part of his conduct, specious as it seemed in his own eyes, authorized the prophet to charge him with disobedience, and denounce to him the loss of his kingdom. This may to many appear strange ; but ‘for as much as it was not done as God had commanded and willed it to be done, it had the nature of sin.’ We have another instance of the same kind, in the history of Saul, recorded in a subsequent chapter. Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites. When victory had crowned his arms, he spared the best of the spoil, if we might believe the account he himself gave of the matter, in order that he might offer it to the Lord God of Israel. Such was the plausible design, of which he vaunted : and doubt-

* Mark xii. 41, &c.

less many admire his seemingly pious intention. But self was at the bottom of this devotional parade. Covetousness was the principle on which he dared to act in opposition to the express order he had received to smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that he had. The great searcher of hearts (whose Omniscience pierces through all the hidden motives of the soul with greater facility than the light of the radiant sun passes thro' the most transparent glass) detected his hypocrisy, and rejected both his person and offerings. It behoves us to consider this matter with deep attention. Our persons must be made righteous, before any of our doings can be accepted : for ' no works, done before the grace of Christ and ' inspiration of His Spirit, are good works,'* but the contrary ; for ' they have in them the nature ' of sin.' Therefore it is said that ' God had ' respect to Abel and to his offering.† His person was first justified through faith in the future Messiah, and then his doings became pleasing to God. Our first inquiry is, are we justified thro' faith in the atonement and obedience of Jesus ? For, ' we are accounted righteous before God ' only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus ' Christ by faith, and not for our own works or

* Art. 13.

† Gen. iv. 4.

‘deservings.’* This question being satisfactorily answered in the affirmative, we may safely and comfortably infer that, ‘Albeit (our) good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away sin, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree is discerned by the fruit.’† The love of Christ, arising from faith in his meritorious death and intercession, is necessary to constitute ‘our doings righteous in His sight.’

‘Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love,
‘The great morality is love of Thee!’‡

The sincere worshipper of God, according to the forms of our church avows his earnest desire to have ‘ALL his doings righteous.’ It may be asked, is it possible in the present state of imperfection that they should be so? Certainly not without great alloy. The state of a believer’s heart, and the practice which results from it, may be compared to the precious substance which is dug out of the mines of Mexico and Peru. Though it be truly valuable to the pro-

* Art. 11. † Art. 12.

‡ Young’s Night Thoughts.

prietors, yet much dross is mixed with the ore ; the separation of which requires the refiner's skill and labor. Even an Apostle confesses, that ' when he would do good, evil was present with him. '* Assuredly then his younger brethren may adopt the sentiment of the beloved disciple, and confess that ' if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ' But the true distinction between the converted sinner and the mere formalist, consists in this, that the former desires, prays and labors, ' that all his doings may be righteous in God's sight ; ' while the latter is solicitous only for their fair appearance before men. He knows that there is an essential difference between the righteousness which God accepts, and that which men applaud. To please Him, in whose favor is life, though in opposition to every maxim of a degenerate age, and in defiance of the united opinion of a world in arms against him ; to obey His law, whatever difficulties occur in the service, and whatever contempt he may be thought to merit for needless scrupulosity ; this is uniformly the Christian's object, aim, and end. Reader, is it your's ? While conscious of much remaining infirmity ; while sensible that, as all your sins are pardonable through Christ, all your duties are damnable

* Rom. vii. 21.

without Him,* are you daily endeavouring that 'all your doings may be righteous in His sight?' The narrow way, between antinomianism and legalism, is a path, which the vulture's eye hath not seen. God the Spirit alone can guide us in it. To renounce our own righteousness altogether with respect to justification before God, and at the same time to be as 'zealous of good works,' as if our salvation depended on them, is the arduous task of Christianity.

Our doings can only be thus righteous, when they are 'ordained by God's governance.' It is not enough to produce in a sinner a life of holiness, that he has been converted by grace from the error of his ways. Continual supplies must be received from above, or he cannot take one step aright in the path of duty. The Christian life is therefore represented as maintained by faith, because faith receives from Christ the ability to do and to suffer the will of God. The constant influence of the Spirit of God is as essential to the continuance of life in the soul of man, as an unceasing communication of air is necessary to the life of his body. The effects, produced on animal life under the exhausted receiver of the air pump, prove how indispensable that element is to all vitality and motion. And for this reason the third Person in Jehovah is usually described in

* Bishop Beveridge's private thoughts,

the scriptures both of the old and new Testament, by a name, which is also given to the medium of corporeal respiration. Happy is the man, who knows by experience, that ‘all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed from God.’*

In offering these petitions we implore such great and inestimable blessings, as the consideration of our unworthiness might justly discourage us from aspiring to. But our prayers are presented ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord;’ and therefore we may ask with boldness, since He Himself hath given us this comfortable assurance, ‘whatsoever ye ask the Father **IN MY NAME**, He will give it you.’ He still sustains the character of the Lamb that hath been slain. He still liveth to make intercession for all those, who come unto God by Him. With His adorable name on our lips, it is a sin to doubt of a favorable audience.

* Second Collect at Evening Service.

ESSAY IX.

ON THE PRAYER FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND ALL IN CIVIL AUTHORITY.

THE wisest of men has declared that ‘a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver ;’ the external part of which, consisting of silver curiously engraved, is beautiful and valuable ; but its internal part so far exceeds, that its true excellence cannot be ascertained, till closely examined. Whatever was the precise idea intended by the author of this allusion, the passage affords a striking illustration of the nature of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though some degree of beauty may be discovered in it by a careless observer, its superlative excellence can only be comprehended by one, who looks through the network of silver to the golden fruit, which is contained within. A man, who would form just notions of Christianity, must

draw near and survey the symmetry of its parts ; and the effects, which it is designed and calculated to produce on its votaries in every situation and relation, both in the present and the future world. The system of the Bible is not like a whited sepulchre, of which the outside only will bear inspection ; but it may be compared to the glorious orb of day, which, though revolving continually on its own axis, presents in every direction a luminous appearance. The works of man are often lovely, when viewed at a distance, or with the naked eye ; but the works of God will bear the strictest scrutiny under every advantage, which the eye is capable of receiving. ‘ The glorious Gospel of the blessed God’ is not only beneficial to the individual, who feels its influence ; producing peace in his conscience, mildness in his tempers, and contentment in his bosom, while it changes the ferocious lion of the forest into a gentle and patient lamb : it not only conduces to domestic comfort, making men to be of one mind in a house, and converting the wild uproar of contentious debate into the peaceful language of prayer, praise, and heavenly intercourse ; enabling husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, to fill up their several situations with mutual satisfaction and benefit : but its influence on society at large is equally benign. If the spirit of Christianity reign in the hearts of Kings and those who are

in authority, it diffuses its salutary influence on all around; like a river, which as it flows through an extensive country, spreads fertility over all its borders, filling the hearts of thousands with joy and gladness. If it possess the bosom of a citizen, it makes him a quiet and peaceable, an affectionate and useful member of society; producing in every mind, where it finds reception, so far as it prevails, without a single exception, reverence to the constituted authorities and obedience to the laws of the country, in which the favored partaker of it lives. How different from all this is the genius of infidelity in the effects, which it produces both on the heart of the individual, the comfort of domestic life, and also on the peace and well being of society! The last hours of the unhappy Voltaire afford a lively comment on the wretched condition, in which infidelity leaves its deluded advocates, as to the state of their own souls. Though he had for a long course of years employed both genius and learning in the impious efforts of erecting a fortress on the foundation of Atheism, which should be tenable against the artillery of a guilty conscience, and the fears of death and judgment; the walls of the whole fabric mouldered into nothing at the blasting of the breath of God's displeasure, and left the miserable builder

a defenceless prey to anguish and despair.* Similar to this was the experience of another of the sceptic tribe, the apostate Julian; who after a life of philosophical unbelief, and active enmity against Christ and His church, having received a mortal wound from a lance in the Persian war, and being conscious of his approaching end, filled his hand with his own blood, and, casting it into the air, cried, ‘Vicisti, O Galilæe, O Galilæan, ‘thou hast conquered.’ If those, who are placed

* The above account is fully justified by the Abbé Barruel, in his *memoirs illustrating the history of Jacobinism*. From which curious and interesting work it appears that Voltaire and his associates of the French academy had carried their antipathy to Christianity so far, that the horrible expression, *crush the wretch*, (by whom they meant our most adorable Lord and Saviour) was the watch-word of the party, which they used continually in their private correspondence. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that these impious men should be made distinguished objects of Divine displeasure. The Abbé Barruel, from the most incontestable authority, gives such a description of their end, as strikes the mind with the deepest horror. Voltaire, during his last illness, which continued for three months, recanted his infidel opinions, confessed to a priest, and declared that he died in the holy catholic church. The whole time of his sickness was employed in alternate supplication and blasphemy. The remembrance of his conspiracy against Him, whom he now invoked in vain, was continually present to his mind. His physicians, particularly Mr. Tronchin, and the Mareshall de Richelieu fled from his bedside, declaring the sight too terrible to be sustained, and that the furies of Orestes could give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.

The Author in the sequel of this valuable work, asserts that several of the other conspirators, died in the same horrors of soul with their wretched chief. The reader, if he be a friend to revelation, will be highly gratified by a perusal of the whole account.

in authority, 'neither fear God nor regard man;' they are under no restraint from acts of injustice and cruelty, except those which arise from motives of self-interest and fear of personal suffering. It is unnecessary, to add how insufficient these considerations are to check the furious current of the human will, when freed from all apprehension of the Divine vengeance. The effects of infidelity on the conduct of the governed are depicted to the life in the present age, and are too glaring to make it necessary that they should be pointed out.* A man without God is ready to every evil word and work. If death be an eternal sleep, farewell at once to all the comforts of social life. Its ties are instantly broken, and its cords burst asunder. So soon as this becomes the prevailing creed, we shall

* 'Voltaire was the father of the Sophisters of impiety, and before his death he becomes the chief of the Sophisters of rebellion. He had said to his first adepts, *Let us crush the altar, and let not a single altar, nor a single worshipper be left to the God of Christians;* and his school soon resounded with the cry of, *Let us crush the Sceptre, and let not a single throne, nor a single subject be left to the kings of the earth!*' The above paragraph extracted from the two last pages of Barruel's first volume display the connection that subsists between infidelity and rebellion. The second volume more strongly points out the pernicious tendency of infidel principles to subvert the obedience of subjects, and to shake the basis of every earthly government, whether monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical.

thenceforward live on the same terms with each other, as bears and tygers. Every man will become a prey to his neighbour, so often as superior power promises success to an assault, and unbridled appetite demands his property or life.

The true genius of the religion of Jesus appears in a most amiable light in the prayers of our church, which respect civil government : especially those for our Rulers. That it is the duty of every christian citizen to pray for the supreme magistrate, and all that are put in authority under him, will be controverted by no persons who really receive the scriptures as a revelation from God. A charge of disaffection to ‘the powers that be,’ has often been laid against persons professing godliness. But whatever reason may have been justly given for such an indictment by some, who have avowed themselves members of the Christian community ; most certain it is, that christianity has never been the cause of sedition. Our Lord himself was charged with being an enemy to Cæsar : but the reader needs not to be informed, how totally unfounded was the accusation, since on every occasion our adorable Saviour shewed Himself an obedient subject, both of paternal and civil government, and hath set us an example that we should follow His steps. Charity, which hopeth all things, wishes to find that the charge, too

often brought against His disciples, may prove equally unsupported. But, however that be, the character of His religion is to be estimated, not from the misrepresentations of its enemies, nor the misconduct of its pretended friends ; but from the plain and decisive precepts of the new Testament.

It may be safely here assumed as an axiom in Divinity, that he only is a Christian, who labors to demean himself according to the spirit of the Gospel, and the rules which are laid down as a directory of our conduct in the holy Scriptures. No one has even a pretence for ranking himself among the disciples of Christ, who is not solicitous to know, in order that he may practice the will of God. So soon as a person is in any measure renewed in the spirit of his mind, so as to have his will and affections turned to God, he begins to study his Bible, if he has the ability of reading it ; and if not, he will necessarily embrace every opportunity of conversation with his more enlightened brethren, and of a diligent and conscientious attendance on all the means of grace, in order that he may furnish himself with a knowledge of its contents : and in this pursuit he keeps in view, not only the necessity of a more enlarged acquaintance with the way of salvation through faith in Jesus ; but also of a more comprehensive and distinct perception of the path of duty, in which he is to walk. When Saul of Tar-

sus had heartily embraced the principles of the gospel, he immediately discovered an anxiety after conformity to its precepts, and therefore asked, ‘ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?’ A foreigner, who had been naturalized in this country, and admitted to a full participation of its privileges, if he were a wise and good man, would be desirous of knowing its laws and customs that he might conform himself to them. And can we hesitate to denounce that man to be void of every spark of divine life, who has no wish to know, or practise, so far as he knows it, the whole will of God ? The love of Christ has a constraining influence on the human soul, and consequently on the life of every sound professor. The mighty power thereof, when it is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, on every branch of the believer’s deportment, may be illustrated by the instance of some light body floating on the surface of an impetuous stream. So soon as the path of duty is made known, the believer, whose heart is occupied by emotions of gratitude to his Saviour and Lord, resolves without delay to walk therein, without any deviation to the right hand or the left. Every one, who is desirous to know the whole will of God, and is thus Divinely disposed to do it, must soon discover that it is the command of the King of kings and Lord of lords, that all, who are His subjects, should pray earnestly and affectionately for all those, in whose hands His

providence has placed the reins of authority ; and thenceforward consider himself as under the most sacred obligation to a performance of this duty. The exhortation of the Apostle, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, has on his mind all the force of an express command from God : if any doubt before existed in his breast, it is at once removed, when he reads the following decisive words : ‘ I exhort that first of all supplications, ‘ prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be ‘ made for all men : for kings, and for all that ‘ are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and ‘ peaceable life in all Godliness and honesty ; ‘ for this is good and acceptable in the sight of ‘ God our Saviour, who will have all men to be ‘ saved, and to come to the knowledge of the ‘ truth.’* ‘ If, (says every genuine disciple of ‘ Christ) this be good and acceptable in the sight ‘ of God my Saviour, I have no further inquiries ‘ to make : His will is my law. Henceforward ‘ at every season of public worship, and frequent- ‘ ly in my family circle, and when in my closet I ‘ bend my knees before my Father who seeth in ‘ secret, I will endeavor in the spirit of prayer to ‘ carry my rulers and those who serve under ‘ them, to the throne of grace. I will pray that ‘ every personal, domestic, and national blessing

* 1 Tim. ii. 1, &c. It has been observed that this injunction was given, when that monster Nero wore the imperial purple.

‘ may be bestowed on them. And this I will do
 ‘ in simplicity on this ground, that it is my Sa-
 ‘ viour’s will.’ The political as well as the re-
 ligious creed of every follower of Christ is taken
 from the Bible, so far as it affords him informa-
 tion and direction on the subject.

If the person, of whom we are speaking, be at
 all acquainted with ecclesiastical history, he will
 naturally consider the conduct of the primitive
 Christians, as affording a lively comment on the
 precepts of scripture. He will perceive, that in
 those early days, more precise attention was paid to
 the rules of the Gospel, than is given them in the
 present licentious age : that Christians were then
 more insensible to worldly interests and maxims,
 and more alive to eternal things, than the gen-
 erality are at the present day ; and will therefore
 wisely conclude that their example is worthy of
 imitation. Though the positive declarations of
 scripture will prevail with him against the united
 opinion and practice of the whole world ; yet
 where any doubt arises, he will without any im-
 propriety inquire, how did my elder brethren,
 who lived in an age not so distant from the apos-
 tolic times, and who appear to have been so much
 more under the influence of the principles of the
 Gospel than their degenerate followers of the
 eighteenth century, act in such a case ? When
 this inquiry has been made with respect to the
 behavior of the disciples of Christ towards the

government under which they lived, he will find that though the Emperors of Rome were heathens, from the time of the first propagation of Christianity, until the reign of Constantine the Great; and though they were enemies to God, and persecutors of his church; yet Christians looked on the existing powers as ordained of God, and made it their constant practice to offer up supplications on their behalf. Very remarkable are the words of Tertullian, who died A. D. 216, in his apology for the Christians addressed to the Emperor Severus. ‘ We pray (says he) for the safety of the
 ‘ Emperors to the eternal God, the true, the liv-
 ‘ ing God, whom Emperors themselves would de-
 ‘ sire to be propitious to them above all others,
 ‘ who are called Gods. We, looking up to heaven
 ‘ with out-stretched hands, because they are
 ‘ harmless; with naked head, because we are not
 ‘ ashamed; without a prompter, because we pray
 ‘ from the heart, constantly pray for all Empe-
 ‘ rors, that they may have a long life, a secure
 ‘ empire, a safe house, strong armies, a faithful
 ‘ senate, a well moralized people, a quiet state of
 ‘ the world, whatever Cæsar would wish for him-
 ‘ self in his public and private capacity. I can-
 ‘ not solicit these things from any other than
 ‘ from Him, from whom I know I shall obtain
 ‘ them, because He alone can do these things, and
 ‘ I am he who may expect them of Him, being
 ‘ His servant, who worship Him alone, and lose

‘ my life for His service. Thus then let the hoofs
 ‘ pierce us, while our hands are stretched out to
 ‘ God, let crosses suspend us, let fire consume us,
 ‘ let swords pierce our breasts, let wild beasts
 ‘ trample on us, a praying Christian is in a frame
 ‘ for enduring any thing. Act in this manner, ye
 ‘ generous rulers ; kill the soul who supplicates
 ‘ God for the Emperor. Were we disposed to
 ‘ return evil for evil, it were easy for us to re-
 ‘ venge the injuries we sustain. But God forbid
 ‘ that His people should vindicate themselves by
 ‘ human fire, or be reluctant to endure that, by
 ‘ which their sincerity is evinced. Were we dis-
 ‘ posed to act the part, I will not say of secret as-
 ‘ sassins, but of open enemies, should we want
 ‘ forces and numbers ? Are we not dispersed
 ‘ through the world ? It is true we are but of
 ‘ yesterday, and yet we have filled all your places,
 ‘ cities, islands, castles, boroughs, counsels, camps,
 ‘ courts, palaces, senate, forum. We leave you
 ‘ only your temples. To what war should we not
 ‘ be ready and well prepared, even though une-
 ‘ qual in numbers, we who die with so much pleas-
 ‘ ure ? Were it not that our religion requires us,
 ‘ rather to suffer death than to inflict it. Were we
 ‘ to make a general secession from your domin-
 ‘ ions, you would be astonished at your solitude.’
 He afterwards takes ‘ notice of the extreme read-
 ‘ iness with which Christians paid the taxes to
 ‘ government, in opposition to the spirit of fraud

and deceit, with which so many acted in these matters. But I must not enlarge; the reader may form an idea of the purity, integrity, heavenly-mindedness, and passiveness under injuries, for which the first Christians were so justly renowned.* The foregoing anecdote presents a beautiful portrait of the spirit and conduct of the primitive Christians, while the imperial throne was filled by heathens. Afterwards, when the Kings of the earth became professors and defenders of the faith; they were remembered in the prayers of the church in the most affectionate and respectful manner, as the antient liturgies, which are still extant, fully evince.† If the conduct of these persons were not only consistent with the general spirit of the gospel, but also with the express commands of scripture, what conclusion must we draw, however reluctant, but that, if any modern professors of the same religion act a different part, they are so far defective in these important features of the Christian character.

The servants of God, though their primary regard be unquestionably due to His word, yet are allowed also to have a subordinate respect to their own real interest in the line of conduct, which they are called to pursue. And such are

* Milner's history of the church. Vol. 1. p. 308.

† See the liturgies of St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, and St. Cyril.

the unsearchable riches of the wisdom and goodness of God, that his law is so constructed as to promote the happiness and welfare of those, who submit themselves to its requisitions. It is not only ‘holy and just,’ but it is also ‘good.’ Obedience is happiness, and disobedience misery. Gracious Father, what wisdom and love appear in all Thy revealed will : in the preceptive, as well as the promissory part of it ! ‘Grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise ; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord !’

We may illustrate the connection, that subsists between our duty and our interest, in the point which forms the subject of the present essay. Are our wives and our children dear to us ? Do we wish to retain our property, and to have that and our lives protected from insult and injury ? The wish is natural ; and, while we are praying for the life of our Rulers, and the prosperity of their administration, we at the same time promote the continuance of our civil rights. The command of God to his people, while they were captives in Babylon, shews us at once our duty and our interest. ‘Seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it : for in

‘the peace thereof shall ye have peace.’* What motive could exist to bind a Jew to a compliance with this injunction, which does not lie with ten-fold weight on every citizen of the United States?

Are our religious liberties valuable? Do we justly prize them above all our other possessions? Do we pray for the peace and prosperity of our Zion? These questions must be answered with an hearty affirmative by every believer in Jesus. Are not our religious liberties, and our Christian privileges, as extensive as can be desired? Is not the prophesy of Micah experimentally fulfilled in us who are the inhabitants of this favored and? ‘They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid.’† May not the Lord address the people of these United States in the same language, with which he appealed to His antient church? ‘O inhabitants of America, judge I pray you between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,’ (even the fruits of cheerful obedience and lively gratitude) ‘brought it forth wild grapes,’ ingratitude, discontent, and murmuring?

That part of Christian duty, of which we are treating, does not stand alone and unconnected,

* Jer. xxix. 7.

† Micah iv. 4.

it involves in itself an obligation to various other branches of genuine godliness. Those virtues which are implanted in the believer's heart, and adorn his life, are mutually combined, like the golden links of the chain which suspended the beautiful breast plate of the Jewish pontiff. They follow each the other, as the comely train of virgins, which accompanied the Egyptian Princess, when introduced to her royal husband. The connection is so close, that none of them can be conscienciously regarded, whilst any of the rest are treated with neglect. 'Fear God and honor 'the king,' (or, in application to the people of these United States, *our Rulers*) are so intimately blended, that, what the Bible hath joined together, no man can put asunder.

Such is the union of prayer and thanksgiving in Christian practice, that a separation between them is an impossible thing.* The Apostle, in his exhortation which *ye* addresses to Christians in behalf of Magistracy, has joined them together. 'I exhort (says he) that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for kings, and all that are in authority.' We cannot cordially intercede for them in their official capacity, unless we are also thankful for

* We cannot, for instance, unfeignedly implore salvation to our souls, without thanking God at the same time that we are not suffering in hell, beyond a remedy, the punishment which our iniquities deserve.

the blessings of the government we enjoy, the Rulers under whose administration we live, the laws which exist, and the protection which they afford us. If government be so valuable, that even the despotism of Nero was better than anarchy, and a just subject for thankfulness ; how inexcusable is that man, who hangs his harp unstrung on the willows, watered by the tears of discontent, while protected under the shelter of a Republican government ! Were a man to assert the reality of his obedience to the apostolic precept, which has been just referred to, while he gave perpetual proofs of his insensibility of the political blessings he enjoyed ; he would thereby demonstrate that he is a liar, and that the truth is not in him.

A due respect and love to the persons and government of our Rulers is inseparable from that spirit of prayer for them, which we have proved it to be the duty of a christian to maintain. To ‘despise dominion and speak evil of dignities’ is the characteristic of those, who have no fear of God before their eyes. A disciple of Jesus will labor to stifle the disloyal thought, should the author of all anarchy, the abettor of confusion, the Prince of darkness, suggest it to his mind. Did evils really exist in the government, under which the Christian lives, he would always speak of

them with tenderness, and without any diminution
 of the reverence and affection, which he owes his
Rulers ; because his duty arises, not from the
 character of those men, or the nature of the
 government, but from the positive command of
 the **King of kings and Lord of lords**. ‘ Let every
 ‘ soul be subject to the higher powers : for there
 ‘ is no power but of God. The powers that be
 ‘ are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore re-
 ‘ sisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God :
 ‘ and they that resist shall receive to themselves
 ‘ damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good
 ‘ works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be
 ‘ afraid of the power ? Do that which is good,
 ‘ and thou shalt have praise of the same. For
 ‘ he is the minister of God to thee for good : but
 ‘ if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he
 ‘ beareth not the sword in vain : for he is the
 ‘ minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath
 ‘ upon him that doth evil. Wherefore ye must
 ‘ needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also
 ‘ for conscience-sake. For, for this cause pay
 ‘ you tribute also : for they are God’s ministers,
 ‘ attending continually on this very thing. Ren-
 ‘ der therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom
 ‘ tribute is due, custom to whom custom, honour
 ‘ to whom honour.’* It is easy for a man to
 deny the Bible to be the word of God, and avow
 himself, either a **Deist** or **Atheist**. But while

* Rom. xiii. 1, &c.

any one professes to believe that ‘ all scripture is given by inspiration of God ;’ he will find it difficult, even under every advantage to be derived from the diabolical sophistry of the modern age, to shake off the obligations, which are laid on him by these decisive scriptures, to ‘ honour and obey all that are in authority.’ So unambiguous are the Apostle’s words, that an attempt to explain or enforce them would be to act the part of one, who endeavoured to improve the flavour of wine by mixing it with water. Let the Christian reader, however, keep in remembrance, that the precepts of the Gospel are spiritual, and extend beyond words and actions, even to the thoughts, intents, and purposes of the heart. Both the secret desire and the overt act are cognizable in the court of Heaven. How deeply must the argument of the Apostle Peter influence every heart, that has tasted of the love of Christ ! ‘ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto Governors as unto them, who are sent by Him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.’† It is FOR THE LORD’S SAKE, that submission is required, because all Governors, in

† 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15.

their public administration, are God's vicegerents. And shall I not on this motive submit myself even to a Cataline or a Nero? With how much more alacrity, respect, and affection, to the Father of his people! Christ cannot plead in vain with those who know His name. If He says, 'do this for my sake,' a believer's answer is ready, 'Lord, Thy blessed will is the rule of all my conduct.'

It will now be proper, previous to the conclusion of the present essay, to lay before the reader that excellent form of prayer for the President of the United States, and all in civil authority, which our church teaches us to use; and then briefly to point out, how admirably the particulars it contains are adapted to the purpose, for which it was composed.*

'O Lord our heavenly Father, the high and mighty (Ruler of the Universe,) who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers upon the earth; most heartily we beseech Thee with thy favour to behold and bless thy servant, the President of the United States, and all others in au-

* This prayer 'is taken verbatim out of the sacramentary of St. Gregory, but was not inserted in our liturgy till the reign of Queen Elizabeth; when our Reformers observing that, by the liturgies of King Edward, the Queen could not be prayed for but upon those days, when either the litany or communion office was to be used, prudently added this form to supply the defect of the daily service.' *Wheatly.*

‘thority ; and so replenish them with the grace
 ‘of Thy Holy Spirit, that they may always in-
 ‘cline to Thy will and walk in Thy way: en-
 ‘due them plenteously with heavenly gifts, grant
 ‘them in health and prosperity long to live ; and
 ‘finally, after this life, to attain everlasting joy
 ‘and felicity through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 ‘Amen.’

We here with singular propriety address our-
 selves to God as ‘our heavenly Father ;’ be-
 cause to His parental goodness we owe the ex-
 istence of civil government, and all the inestima-
 ble blessings which are connected with it ; [and,
 in an especial manner, that excellent form there-
 of under which we live. If we employ a mo-
 ment in making a comparison between the con-
 stitution of our favored land, and the various un-
 happy systems of government that prevail in ma-
 ny other countries ; we shall perceive the propri-
 ety of acknowledging God’s fatherly goodness in
 appointing this distinguished spot for the land of
 our nativity and the place of our residence.] It
 is an established maxim that ‘the less is blessed
 ‘of the greater ;’ and therefore, in the act of
 supplication for an earthly Ruler, we properly
 consider Him, before whose footstool we bow, as
 ‘the high and mighty Ruler of the Universe ;’
 from whom magistrates derive their authority,
 and to whose bar they are amenable as much as
 the meanest of their subjects. ‘His eye beholds

‘ all the dwellers upon earth,’ regarding the necessities and the practices both of Rulers and their people.

Before this King of kings, who is higher than the highest in dignity, and mightier than the mightiest in power, we humbly and devoutly bend the knee ; beseeching Him to ‘ behold with His ‘ favour, and bless the President of the United ‘ States and all others in authority.’ For authority, without the favor of God, can only make its possessors more miserable than other men. In whatever station man be placed, the favor of God is essential to his happiness. On this solid basis the inward peace of the mind is entirely founded ; and without it every outward circumstance of grandeur or prosperity is attended with a curse. The favor of God is essentially necessary for our Rulers, because the peace of our government, the wisdom of our senate, the efficacy of their measures, the success of our armies, and the welfare of the people are inseparably connected with it.

Since God manifests his favor chiefly by the communications of His Holy Spirit ; we go on to pray that they may be replenished therewith. For, as no persons can incline to God’s will and walk in His way, except they be taught and influenced by Divine grace ; so those, who are placed in stations of pre-eminence, particularly need that inestimable benefit in a more than ordinary

measure. Their duties are more difficult ; their temptations more numerous ; and their conduct is of more consequence.

And, that they may be qualified for the functions of their high and important stations, we further request on their behalf, that God would ‘endue them plenteously with heavenly gifts.’ All the graces of the Christian character are gifts from heaven ; and such, in an especial manner, are those important endowments of the mind, which are essential to the character of a wise and good governor. We pray for a continuance of their lives, health, and prosperity. And surely, if we duly consider our present circumstances, we shall clearly perceive the indispensible obligations, which lie on us, arising both from our interest and our duty, heartily to join in these petitions.

Finally we pray that ‘after this life’ our Rulers ‘may attain everlasting joy and felicity.’ For, though we consider their lives as a signal favor from God, we know that the time must come, when they must submit to the common lot of humanity,* and appear before their Lord and our’s. Therefore if we love their persons, and are thankful for their government ; we shall pray for their final happiness, that they may exchange their authority for a crown of glory, and the scap-

*Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque tures. Hox.

tre of temporal dominion for the palm of everlasting joy and triumph ; that they who govern, and we who obey, may finally rejoice together in the kingdom of God. And, as there is but one way of salvation either for Rulers or people, we supplicate these mercies ‘ through Jesus Christ our ‘ Lord.’ Reader, this is your only plea before the throne of God. Go, use it for yourself, your Executive and your country : and may the King of kings and Lord of lords hear and answer from heaven his dwelling place ! Amen.

ESSAY X.

ON THE PRAYER FOR THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE.

THE wisdom of God appears in every circumstance that is connected with the redemption of fallen man. The structure of universal nature, and of every minute part of its system, discovers the glory of this Divine perfection. It is written in legible characters on every blade of grass, and on every individual atom of matter. But, if this world were erected on purpose to be a theatre, on which the wonders of redeeming love might be displayed : if it were created only as a scaffold to a building of far greater magnificence : if, when the more important fabric is completed, the scaffold is to be demolished, as of no farther use ; we may reasonably expect to find greater wisdom manifested in the spiritual than in the natural creation.

Among a thousand other wonders, which crowd

on the spiritualized imagination, the selection of Ambassadors for the work of the ministry of reconciliation is not the least. As it was the design of the **ETERNAL THREE**, in the whole œconomy of grace, to secure the glory to Him, to whom alone it is due ; the wisdom of God in the appointment of the instruments, by which his designs are carried into effect, is very apparent. Had angels been employed, as ordinary preachers of the Gospel, their eloquence might have been considered as meriting a share of the honor, derived from the success of the ministry. Therefore the rich, the heavenly treasure is deposited ' in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*' On the same account our Lord chose twelve illiterate fishermen to be the first messengers of His love to man ; that the astonishing revolution to be produced in the human heart, and in the world at large, by the preached Gospel, in turning it from sin and Satan to the service of God, might evidently appear to be accomplished, not by the wisdom of man, but by the power of God ; not by moral suasion, but by the energy of the Holy Ghost. It is allowed that one, who was afterwards admitted to the fellowship of the Apostolic office, was a man endowed with extensive erudition, having been instructed in the academy of

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

the celebrated Gamaliel, and favored with every advantage which can arise from a learned education. But it is pleasing to remark with what an holy anxiety this person endeavours in all his writings, which are transmitted to us, to evince that the effects of his preaching were entirely owing to the dew of God's blessing, which attended his word. He every where speaks of himself in the most disparaging terms, lays all his learning at the foot of the cross ; and avows his total unfitness, independent of help from God, for the discharge of the ministerial office. Writing to the Corinthians, among whom he had labored with great success, he says, ' When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom ; but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*' In the same spirit of humble dependence on the strength of God, when writing to the Thessalonians, he requests the prayers of the faithful for himself and his fellow-laborers ; that

* 1 Cor. ii. 1---5.

they might be endued with ability, fidelity, and abundant success in the work ; ‘ Brethren, pray for us.’*

This request of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, at once shews the propriety of that part of our Liturgy, to which the reader’s attention will be directed in the present essay ; the prayer for the Clergy and People. No doubt can remain on the mind, whether it be the duty and interest of the laity to pray for those, who labor in the word and doctrine. But, as in the production of that fervency of spirit, in which prayer consists, it is not only necessary that the understanding be informed ; but also that the affections be moved, and the heart interested in the subject ; it may not be improper to point out a few considerations, which demonstrate the indispensable nature of the duty.

A right discharge of the ministerial office, and the salutary effects which it is designed to produce, are objects of so prodigious magnitude, that those, who are engaged in it, have an undoubted claim on the charity of others for a remembrance in their fervent prayers. For, compared with this, every earthly interest, that is styled momentous, shrinks into an unsubstantial vapor. A large share of importance must be ascribed to the labors of the statesman, the civilian, and the physician, on which the temporal happiness of

* 1 Thess, v. 25.

man so much depends : but however weighty may be the consequences, which are suspended on the wisdom and fidelity of those men, to whom our civil rights and bodily health are intrusted ; yet, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary with those, which the functions of an evangelist involve, they are found lighter than the thistle's down. For nothing less than the manifestative glory of the Triune Jehovah is closely connected with the latter. A Christian minister is an Ambassador of God, and a steward of His mysteries. The subject of his embassy is that, in which the honor of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is deeply interested ; since by the salvation of sinners, through the meritorious cross and passion of Jesus Christ, which is the sum and substance of the gospel-message, God has proposed eternally to magnify His own adorable name. This part of the reward, assigned to the sufferings of our incarnate God, proceeds from a faithful promulgation of the truth. Not that we are to suppose the effects of redemption to be left to contingency ; for then Christ might have died in vain ; and therefore both the means and the end are secured by the immutable counsels of God. Yet this does not in the least degree cancel the awful responsibility, which is attached to the persons of those, who have taken on them the sacred office. If

the situation of a person, who has been raised to the dignity of representing an earthly potentate as his ambassador, be considered as very important ; in how solemn and tremendous a light must we view the ministers of the Gospel, since to them is committed a work in which the honor of every Divine attribute is concerned ; and from the execution of which God expects a greater revenue of glory than from the creation of the universe ? With what propriety may they earnestly call on their people in the Apostle's words, ' Brethren, pray for us.'

If we add to this consideration the inestimable value of the souls of men, whose salvation depends on the Gospel ministry as the appointed means of effecting it ; the wisdom of our church, in the remembrance which she makes of her ministers before the throne of grace, will be still more conspicuous. He only can form a just estimate of the worth of the soul, who died to redeem it. Were we permitted to descend into the bottomless pit ; and be witnesses to the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, with which its horrid caverns perpetually resound ; were our ears to be wounded for a season with the bitter lamentations of the damned, and their earnest, but fruitless intreaties for a drop of water to cool their flaming tongues ; nay, were we ourselves to taste the cup of trembling, every ingredient of which is ten thousand times more

Bitter than the quintessence of wormwood, and gall : were we, after a transition through this scene of overwhelming horror, permitted to enter for a season within the gates of the new Jerusalem, which is above ; and be spectators, or even participants of the pleasures, which are at God's right hand : we should be nevertheless unable to form adequate conceptions of the value of the human soul, unless we could at the same time comprehend eternal duration. The price, which its redemption cost, affords the best idea of its worth.* Immensely valuable as this treasure is, its safety in a qualified sense is suspended on the existence and fidelity of the Gospel ministry, as the Divinely appointed means of conversion and salvation. The Apostle's interrogations strongly imply a negative, when he asks, ' How shall they call upon Him, in whom they have not believed ? ' And how shall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard ? And how shall they hear without a preacher ?'† And it may be added,

- * ' The Ransom was paid down ; the fund of Heav'n,
 ' Heav'n's inexhaustible, exhausted fund,
 ' Amazing and amaz'd, pour'd forth the price,
 ' All price beyond : Tho' curious to compute,
 ' Arch-angels fail'd to cast the mighty sum ;
 ' Its value vast, ungrasp'd by minds create,
 ' Fer ever hides and glows in the *Supreme*.'

Young's Night Thoughts.

† Rom. x. 14.

if the preacher be deficient in knowledge, fidelity, and zeal, the people may perish in their iniquities; for ‘if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?’ Surely the possibility of the loss of a single soul, through the minister’s misconduct in the awful work with which he is intrusted, is enough to make the same impression on him, which the miraculous hand-writing made on the impious Babylonish Monarch, when ‘his countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.’* ‘Brethren, pray for us!’

The salvation of our own souls is inseparably connected with the faithful discharge of our solemn office. The awful declarations of our Lord and Master, which we find in the Prophecy of Ezekiel, should excite pity on our behalf, and earnest supplication for us. ‘O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thine hand.’† ‘If the righteous’ among the

* Dan. v. 6.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 1--8.

laity ‘scarcely be saved;’ assuredly in much greater difficulty is involved the salvation of those who minister in holy things, because their work is of a much more arduous nature. Well might St. Paul ask, after labouring to form an estimate of its importance, ‘who is sufficient for these things?’

The difficulty, which attends a conscientious discharge of the ministerial office is such, that the highest mountains which the traveller meets with in other parts of life, when compared therewith, sink into mole-hills, which the foot may surmount with the greatest ease. In the breasts of those, who labor in God’s vineyard, simplicity of motive and intention is indispensably required. Self in all its delicate and unsuspecting forms must be excluded: the lust of fame, and of man’s applause; the love of filthy lucre, or the promotion of secular interest in any shape, are inadmissible, considered as objects of the ministerial undertaking. Zeal for the glory of God, love to Jesus Christ, and an affectionate concern for the salvation of precious souls, are the grand principles, which ought to actuate the conduct of those, who have dedicated themselves to the service of the sanctuary. A corrupt motive, if predominant in the heart, must necessarily prove an insurmountable bar to usefulness in the vineyard, and to the approbation of its Great Proprietor. O

who is thus 'pure in heart!'—'Moreover it is 'required in stewards that a man be found 'faithful.' We are bound by every tie to use all fidelity with the consciences of our fellow sinners, whether they be rich or poor, high or low. Though it becomes us in our civil character to give honor to whom honor is due, and demean ourselves with all lowliness of spirit; yet in our ministerial engagements, whether public or private, we must know no personal distinction; wealth and influence must not deter, learning and abilities must not discourage us from an honest and unequivocal declaration of the whole counsel of God. An appeal may be made to the consciences of all, who are sincere in their exertions for the glory of God and the good of man, without any fear of contradiction, whether the difficulties of their work are not such as no human abilities, unassisted by grace, can surmount. O that the reader's heart may be excited to a more earnest remembrance of us, when he finds in his soul the nearest access to the throne, and is indulged with a favorable audience by his Lord and our's!

The nature of the two comprehensive subjects, which we are called to develop, is another circumstance, which shews our utter insufficiency for the work, which is given us to do. To draw a picture sufficiently deformed, whereby to exhibit the true evil of sin, is no easy matter; for

even an inspired Apostle seems to have been at a loss for expression, when he described sin as 'exceeding sinful.' His vocabulary did not furnish another word so expressive of its hideous turpitude, as one derived from the thing itself. To trace the deceitfulness of the human heart through all its meanders, so as to force conviction on the conscience, requires a knowledge of ourselves, which can only be derived from Divine teaching. But above all, to preach Jesus Christ in the transcendent glory of His person, in the fulness of His merit, in the unsearchable riches of His grace, in the length, breadth, height, and depth of His love; to preach Him as a free, present, almighty Saviour of the sinful sons of men, so as not to injure His character, and depreciate His value; this is an arduous task indeed, and shews, if any thing can, our need of your most earnest intercession on our behalf. If we preach ourselves, instead of Christ Jesus the Lord; if we substitute a refined system of ethics for 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God;' we mislead those to certain and eternal ruin, whom we should have labored to conduct to the cross of Christ, and eternal happiness through Him. Nothing but personal experience can enable a man to pourtray either the evil of sin, or the riches of Christ, in a proper manner. Without this indispensable qualification for a due discharge

of our office, not only shall we be liable to mistake error for truth ; but even the truth we declare, will be so devoid of energy and persuasion, that it will appear to the hearer no other than ‘a cunningly devised fable ;’ or at best an uninteresting narrative of facts, in which he has little or no concern. The scenes, whether of the comic or tragic muse, which are exhibited on the stage, though altogether fictitious, produce on the minds of the audience, effects suitable to their nature ; because the actors emphatically speak falsehood, as if it were truth ; while on the other hand, the truths of the Bible, as delivered from the pulpit, whether those of the most pathetic, alarming, or reviving nature, though sanctioned by the word and oath of God who cannot falsify, will in general leave the congregation unmoved and insensible of any good effect, if the preacher himself appears by the coldness of his manner, to give no credit to them. The gospel message is then only properly delivered when the preacher addresses his hearers with the same affectionate importunity, with which a man who has been cured of the plague by some sovereign antidote, recommends it to his bosom friend, when tainted with the same malady. For he will not on this occasion be contented with a bare proposal of the remedy ; but the compassionate feelings of his soul will speak in every feature of his countenance, and give an emphasis to his language,

while he enforces the necessity of its immediate application. ‘We PRAY you in Christ’s stead, ‘be ye reconciled to God.’* O that the Lord may be pleased to enrich our minds with a deep and abiding experience of His mercy in Jesus, as absolutely requisite to our own salvation! May we, through the influence of the word and spirit of God, have such clear discoveries made to our own souls of the glories of the Person of Immanuel, and the fullness of His redeeming merit; that our hearts may burn with affection to His name and zeal for His glory, and be melted with tender compassion for the souls of our fellow-sinners! Then shall we be able to depict in glowing colours that adorable Saviour as known to ourselves, not by report only, but by a personal acquaintance, and as ‘the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely.’ Then shall we perceive that the same truths will produce in the eighteenth century the same effects, which they produced when they flowed from the zealous tongue of the great St. Paul. ‘The demonstration of the Spirit’ will attend our message, and sinners will turn ‘from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.’

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

The testimony, borne by ministers concerning their crucified Lord, must not be confined to the language of the lips, but extended to that of the life. ‘Take heed unto **THYSELF**, and to thy doctrine; continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.’* Their conduct must display the influence of Christianity, or their preaching will be in vain. Their daily walk, forasmuch as they are the successors of the Apostles, must address itself to others in the language of St. Paul, ‘Brethren, I beseech you, be followers of me.’† Their deportment must exhibit a pattern of heavenly-mindedness, deadness to the world, and an unreserved surrender of the heart to God. O our Brethren among the laity, we are oppressed with a pungent sense of our imperfections! pardon them yourselves; and beseech God to pardon them also, and to enable us to walk worthy of our high vocation!

Enough has undoubtedly been advanced to shew the necessity of prayer being made by the people on behalf of the clergy: and yet the evidence, which has been brought forward, com-

* 1 Tim. iv. 16. The 15th verse very forcibly points out that entire devotedness of character, which becomes a Gospel-minister: *ταυτα μελετα, εν τωτοις ιδι, ινα συ η προκοπη φανερα η εν παση.* ‘Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, (esto totus in illis) that thy profiting may appear to all.’

† 1 Cor. iv. 16.

prizes a very small part of that, which might be adduced. A thousand considerations might be suggested from the various branches of the ministerial office. We shall, however, notice but one, as a specimen of the whole.

Come then, reader, with me ; and I will introduce you into the chamber of a dying sinner : Behold his deplorable situation. I have been sent for by his affectionate relatives to administer spiritual consolation to his mind ; for the reception of which, as you perceive by his answers to my questions, he is wholly unprepared. You clearly discover his unawakened state ; and that, though there is but a step between him and death ; and, according to the scriptures of truth, but another between him and everlasting misery ; yet he is unalarmed and insensible of danger. If I deal plainly with him ; if I sound in his ears the tremendous declarations of scripture, which are appropriate to cases like his ; if I tell him that ‘ the wages of sin is death ;’ and that without repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ he must perish for ever ; every word I speak will be a dagger to the hearts of the weeping friends who surround his bed, and they will brand me for a cruel and unfeeling wretch : and (what is still worse) perhaps I may be the means of hastening the awful moment of his departure, which appears to be at hand, by exciting his apprehensions, and shaking his enfeebled animal

frame. Yet on the other hand, if I soothe him with anodynes, when I ought to administer stimulants or emetics ; if I tell him of peace, when God says there is none ; I lead his soul into unavoidable destruction, deceive those who stand around him, prove unfaithful to my charge, and so endanger my own soul. Tell me, ye men of wisdom, what path I am to pursue in this dilemma. You hesitate not to answer, be faithful, and leave the consequences to God. The advice is certainly good. But as you see the difficulty of acting in conformity to it, O let us enjoy an interest in your prayers, that we may be found faithful to God, our neighbors, and ourselves. You have an admirable form adapted to the purpose in the following words.

‘ Almighty and everlasting God, from whom
 ‘ cometh every good and perfect gift ; send down
 ‘ upon our Bishops and other Clergy, and all the
 ‘ congregations committed to their charge, the
 ‘ healthful Spirit of Thy grace ; and that they may
 ‘ truly please Thee, pour upon them the continual
 ‘ dew of Thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for
 ‘ the honor of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus
 ‘ Christ. Amen.’*

* ‘ This prayer was added in Queen Elizabeth’s common prayer-book, out of the sacramentary of St. Gregory, in conformity to the practice of the ancient church, which always had prayers for the clergy and people.’ *Wheatly*.

The character of Gregory is drawn at large in the third volume of Milner’s history of the church ; from which it appears that,

The preceding mode of address, adopted in our liturgy, when supplication is offered for the clergy, is very remarkable. We call upon God as ‘Almighty and everlasting, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.’ The wisdom of the authors of the prayer will become apparent by a few considerations. The erection of a church in the world is the effect of Almighty power and marvellous loying-kindness. When the inveterate obstinacy of the Jews, and the ignorance and idolatry of the Gentile world are considered; we shall clearly perceive that the conversion of such persons from darkness to light, is a more evident demonstration of Omnipotence in the agent, than the original creation of the world. Indeed every living stone, which is taken from the quarry of nature, polished, and incorporated with the spiritual temple, proves the Omnipotence of Him, who alone worketh great marvels. And when the means, by which the foundation of the church was ministerially laid, and the superstructure of it has been carried on towards perfection, are taken into the account; our wonder will rise yet to a greater height. The preaching of fishermen, how inadequate to

though he lived in a period when Christianity was at a very low ebb, he was a man deeply taught of God, devoted in heart and life to Him, and a truly Christian Bishop.

the proposed object ! That this church has been preserved in existence, notwithstanding the malice of Satan and his legions of infernal spirits ; notwithstanding the rage of persecutors, acting under their instigation ; the subtilty of heretics ; the venality of pretended supporters, who were in reality its worst adversaries ; and the divisions that have arisen in the centre of the ecclesiastical body ; that, notwithstanding all this, the church has been preserved from annihilation is a proof that the ‘ almighty and everlasting God’ is both its builder and defender. If we confine our attention to the present day, it is a marvellous thing that so mean instruments, as the best of us are, should be employed in such a momentous work ; and that any among us should be made faithful, and our labors crowned with success in the conversion and salvation of our fellow-sinners. Let us then join together in adoring Him, who is ‘ almighty and everlasting, and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift!’

The persons for whom our prayers are expressly offered, are ‘ our Bishops and other Clergy, and all congregations committed to their charge.’ By Bishops are intended the superior officers of the church, on whom a weight of responsibility lies, too heavy for the shoulders of an Angel.*

* When St. Ambrose was chosen to the Bishopric of Milan, he was astonished, and peremptorily refused ; nor was any person ever more desirous to obtain the office of a Bishop, than he was

Assuredly then they have need of our prayers. For, though they are supposed by their office to be persons of superior knowledge, grace, and sanctity ; yet their sufficiency must be wholly of God. Other Clergy comprehends all those ecclesiastical persons, who have the care of souls intrusted to them ; whether they be rectors, or deacons. ‘The congregations committed to their ‘charge’ include all the people of the land, excepting those who have withdrawn themselves from our communion.

The blessings supplicated in behalf of these ecclesiastical persons and their flocks are indispensable in their nature, and inestimable in their value. ‘The Spirit of God’s grace’ is the Holy Ghost ; who is so denominated, because he is the gift of Divine grace to mankind, and the Author

to avoid it. He even used methods, which are by no means justifiable. At last finding it was in vain to stem the torrent, he stole out of Milan at midnight, but missing his way, and wandering all night, he found himself in the morning at the gate of Milan. After making a second effort to escape, he was at last brought to submission by a menacing edict of the Emperor Valentinian.

A similar account is given of Ephraim the Syrian, who never advanced farther on the ecclesiastical scale than to the office of a deacon ; and once he took a very extraordinary method to avoid being preferred to the office of a Bishop. He feigned madness and escaped. In *Ephraim’s* days, the pastoral character appeared to good men awful beyond measure, requiring little less than angelical virtue. In our days is not conveniency and love of gain the principal motive, and decency of character the principal qualification?---*Milner’s history of the church.* vol. 2. p. 186 and 272.

of all gracious dispositions in the human soul. 'Without Him nothing is good, nothing is holy.' He is also 'the healthful Spirit of Grace,' because He is the source of all spiritual health; for naturally 'there is no health in us.'* No spiritual life or vigor does our fallen soul possess, till He imparts it. How necessary a boon then is this, which we request for 'Bishops and other clergy and all congregations committed to their charge. May our Almighty and everlasting God' pour out abundantly 'the healthful spirit of His grace' on our church, both her ministers and the community, for His name's sake!

We proceed to intreat that all these persons in their several stations may 'truly please God.' Here an important question arises, which demands a more diffuse discussion, than can here be given to it. How may ecclesiastical persons please God? Not by employing their time and talents on political, or other secular subjects; for with respect to these things their Lord's command is, 'what is that to thee? Follow thou me.' Not by occupying a box at the theatre, appearing on the race ground, or filling a seat at the card table. All these things are beneath the dignity, and shockingly disgraceful to the character of one, who avows his dedication to the service of God: they waste his time; unfit his soul both

* See the essay on the general confession.

for the duties of the closet and those of the pulpit ; they divert the attention of the mind from its one object, secularize its views, and bury it in sensuality. We may go a step farther, and assert that laborious literary researches into subjects unconnected with the Gospel are unappropriate to the duties of a clergyman, and a waste of that precious time, which ought to be dedicated to higher purposes. But yet more than this ; a merely verbal and doctrinal acquaintance with the Gospel-system is not pleasing to God, if unaccompanied with that, in which the very essence of true religion consists. A man may be a critic on the language and style of scripture, as on that of Plato or Cicero, and not please God. What then is truly acceptable in His sight ? Nothing can prove a sinner to be reinstated in the favor of God, but a genuine and living faith in Jesus Christ : for ‘ without faith it is impossible to please God.’ Impossible for any man, and therefore much more so for a clergyman, who is to ‘ feed the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer.’ If he be not himself a member of the mystical body of Christ, he may be compared to a factitious limb annexed to the body natural, which though it may be made subservient to the welfare of the body, derives itself no advantage from its situation. It can derive no vital influence from the head, nor enjoy any communion with the real members. A dead branch in the

ecclesiastical vine, however honorable may be the situation it occupies, must at last be cut down, and cast into the fire; it is fit only for the burning flames. In his public discourses a minister can only please God, when he preaches Jesus Christ and Him crucified faithfully, affectionately, and laboriously. To the cross, and to that alone, he must direct the attention of his hearers, if he would truly please God. And then his own example must recommend the ways of God to his congregation, adorning the gospel he preaches by his conduct in his own family, in the church, and in the world; evidencing by their effects upon himself the superiority of Christian motives to those, which the schools of Philosophy and Ethics have promulgated to mankind. And with respect to those private members, who compose our congregations, they can only truly please God as they receive with meekness the engrafted word, and bring forth fruit with patience. It is not a mere occupation of their pews at church, or even a diligent attendance on its most sacred ordinance, that will entitle them to any share of Divine complacency. ‘ For if any man be an hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not

‘ a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this
 ‘ man shall be blessed in his deed.’*

Our venerable reformers have not left us in a state of uncertainty as to the agency necessary to enable us thus ‘ truly to please God.’ They inform us that neither Bishops, Ministers nor their congregations can act in an acceptable manner before Him without ‘ the continual dew of His ‘ blessing.’ By this beautiful and scriptural image they inculcate on us the necessity of a divine influence to the production of every good thought, word, and work. The ground, or surface of the earth, affords a striking emblem of the heart of man, and is frequently introduced in this metaphorical sense in the sacred pages.‡ The ground was created to bear fruit for the use of man, as man’s heart was formed to yield fruit to the praise and glory of God. But as in consequence of the fall, a curse was denounced on the soil,† so that it now requires labor and culture before it will yield its fruits ; in like manner the human heart is become barren and unfruitful, so that it can produce no fruits of righteousness ; but on the contrary, like the ground, it yields spontaneously the thorns and briars of sin to the dishonor of

* James i. 23, 24, 25.

‡ Matt. xiii. 3, &c. Is. lv. 10, 11. Hos. x. 4, & al freq.

† Gen. iii. 17.

God, till it be created anew in Christ Jesus. And moreover, as continual rains or dews must be dispensed to fertilize the earth, so must a constant supply of Grace be communicated from God for the purpose of creating in us ‘ all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works.’ It would be easy to carry the parallel farther : but enough has been said to demonstrate the beautiful propriety of the emblem, and the end for which it is here introduced.

We ask all these blessings ‘ for the honor of our Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ.’ It is for His honor that Bishops and Ministers be found faithful, diligent, and successful : and that the people derive that benefit from their labors, of which His atonement is the meritorious cause. He is our Advocate, and pleads on our behalf ; our Mediator, and represents our persons. While we are lifting up our hearts and hands in supplication here below, may He intercede for us in Heaven ! Then shall our Bishops and Ministers, and all congregations committed to their charge, richly enjoy the healthful Spirit of God’s grace, and the continual dew of His blessing, and so our Jerusalem shall become a praise in the earth. Amen.

ESSAY XI.

ON THE PRAYER FOR ALL CONDITIONS OF MEN.

THE whole of our duty may be summed up in two points, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. And these duties are so intimately blended, that a separation between them is absolutely impossible: for ‘if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? and this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.’* What an affecting picture of the amiable nature of true Christianity does our Lord’s most beautiful parable of the good Samaritan exhibit! Let me address the reader in the words with which it is concluded, ‘Go thou and do likewise.’ Are you ready to say, ‘alas, my means are too limit-

* 1 John iv. 20, 21.

‘ ed for diffusive liberality ; and the situation of
 ‘ the far greater part of my brethren, under
 ‘ which term the whole human race is compre-
 ‘ hended, is too remote to be benefitted by me ?’
 Love is the fulfilling of the law : and if this God-
 like temper prevail in your bosom, you will labor
 to the utmost extent of your ability, ‘ to do good
 ‘ unto all men, and especially to them that are of
 ‘ the household of faith.’ And though your power
 of actual beneficence be restricted by Providence
 within a compass as narrow as her’s who cast
 her two mites into the treasury of the temple ;
 yet the feelings of your heart are unconfined, and
 may range through the world, like the solar
 beams, visiting every nook of the terrestrial
 globe where a brother may be found. There is
 one office of Christian friendship, which we may
 constantly perform on behalf of every participant
 of human nature. And as God has required this
 at our hands, declaring it to be His holy will
 that ‘ prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks
 ‘ be made for ALL men ;’* our church calls us to
 the performance of this duty at every recurring
 season, when her united throng appears before
 the throne of grace ; teaching us to pray for all
 conditions of men in the following appropriate
 form.

* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

• O God, the creator and preserver of all man-
 • kind, we humbly beseech Thee for all sorts and
 • conditions of men, that Thou wouldst be pleased
 • to make Thy ways known unto them ; Thy sav-
 • ing health unto all nations. More especially we
 • pray for Thy holy church universal ; that it may
 • be so guided and governed by Thy good spirit,
 • that all who profess and call themselves Chris-
 • tians may be led into the way of truth, and hold
 • the faith in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace,
 • and in righteousness of life. Finally, we com-
 • mend to Thy Fatherly goodness, all those who
 • are any ways afflicted, or distressed in mind,
 • body, or estate ; that it may please Thee to
 • comfort and relieve them according to their sev-
 • eral necessities, giving them patience under
 • their sufferings, and an happy issue out of all
 • their afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus
 • Christ His sake. Amen.'

The spirit of universal charity which the gos-
 pel breathes, indicates its origin, and affords con-
 clusive internal evidence of its Divinity. ' Who
 • is he among the gods that may be compared to
 • the Lord ?' And where is that system to be
 found, among all the various schemes of religion,
 which have been promulgated to mankind, that
 will bear a comparison with Christianity ? When
 they are weighed in a balance, they are found
 wanting ; as in a variety of other things, so es-
 pecially in the effects which they produce on the

human mind. He, who inhabiteth eternity, though He was infinitely glorious and happy in His own perfections, chose to communicate his felicity ; and, with this view, called the world of angels, and the world of men into existence : and, when man had destroyed himself, ‘ God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son’ for its ransom ; ‘ that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Those, who are made ‘ partakers of the Divine nature,’ resemble their heavenly parent in the universal benevolence of their characters. Not satisfied with the solitary enjoyment of Christian privileges ; not contented to feast alone on the ‘ fat things full of marrow, and the wines on the lees well refined ;’ to the participation of which they are called by the boundless goodness of God ; they feel a solicitude that all their fellow creatures, who are, through sin, involved in the same guilt and misery with themselves, may be, through grace, brought into the fellowship of the same salvation. This is one characteristic of a real Christian, in whatever age or country he may live ; and of every genuine member of our church. It is impossible for any one to receive Christ into his heart by faith, and remain destitute thereof. Every true disciple of Christ feels an holy anxiety in his bosom for the enlargement of his Redeemer’s Kingdom, and the conversion of his fellow creatures. Are you sensible of any such

solicitude? Surely, reader, you have abundant reason to suspect the reality of your profession, however splendid it may be, if it be unaccompanied with this Divine enlargement of heart, which causes you to labor and pray for the salvation of all around you. This is genuine charity; and is as far superior to that which is fashionable in the present day, and which is confined to the relief of the corporeal wants of others, as the ineffable pleasures, to which the Gospel calls us, are superior to the gratifications of sensual appetite. The charity which man applauds, and which too often arises from the vanity of the fallen mind, is only occupied in the erection and endowment of infirmaries and hospitals, and such like means of provision for the wants of the perishing body. But the Christian grace,* which

* The real Christian, while he possesses an exclusive claim to a charitable disposition, lies under an imputation of being totally destitute of this amiable virtue. And this has been the case through every age of the church. The ancient people of God were charged with bigotry and narrowness of mind, because none could be admitted to religious communion with them, unless they became proselytes to their creed, underwent circumcision, and submitted to worship the God of Israel only. The various Gentile nations acquiesced in the worship of each other's Deities, and the admission of each other's rites and ceremonies. This the law of Jehovah absolutely prohibited to His people; and hence arose the general outcry against them. The case was the same with the primitive Christians. The Roman empire tolerated a thousand

God implants and approves in the bosoms of all His people ; while it neglects not these calls of humanity, has higher objects in view. Its first concern is to promote the eternal felicity of mankind by communicating the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In our intercession for all conditions of men, we address God with the highest propriety as ‘ the Creator and Preserver of all mankind.’ While we call on Him as the universal Parent of the human race, we bring to our remembrance our obligation to a performance of the duty, in which we are engaging. For if ‘ God made all men of one blood,’ then we are all brethren ; whether we inhabit the burning regions of Africa, the frozen shores of Greenland, or the more favored temperate climates of the earth. It is unnatural for the children of the same family to be indifferent to the welfare of each other. The

differing religious sects. The Emperors offered to have an image of Jesus erected in the capitol, that He might have an equal share of worship with the false gods, with whose statues its walls were polluted. But Christians claimed for him an exclusive right to adoration. And this was the principal cause of the hatred and persecution they experienced. The case remains the same between Christians and the world in the present day. Christians believe that, ‘ if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.’ And therefore, though they are not called to sit in the seat of Judgment, they cannot flatter men to their eternal destruction. And on this account they are condemned and hated as being destitute of charity. But ‘ to their own Master they stand or fall.’

manifest languor of the Christian church, in her efforts to extend the evangelization of the pagan world for many centuries past, is perhaps one of the most striking symptoms of its declension from its primitive zeal, purity, and excellence. While the diffusive benevolence of the religion of Jesus maintained its empire in the hearts of its first professors, every possible exertion was made to communicate the gospel, with all its lovely train of blessings, to the world at large. No dangers intimidated, no difficulties or hardships discouraged the disciples of Jesus from the glorious enterprize. But what has been the motive, which has influenced *our* excursions to the distant regions of the globe? Not a dissemination of Divine truth, or a communication of happiness by a manifestation of the gospel to their benighted inhabitants; but the advancement of commerce, or at best the promotion of philosophic research. Where one ship has been freighted with the incomparable treasures of Divine truth, may it not be safely asserted that ten thousand have sailed for other purposes? Could Apostles and Evangelists rise from their graves, and revisit those climes, through which they travelled with the Bible in their hands, and the love of a crucified Saviour in their hearts; would they not blush to own their degenerate followers? If God be 'the Creator and Preserver of all mankind,' then all the inhabitants of the earth, in respect of any

natural right to the inestimable blessings of Divine revelation, are exactly on a level. ‘Who hath made us to differ, and what have we that we have not received?’ As all without exception have sinned, all have forfeited every claim to His favors ; so that He may justly withhold them from whomsoever He pleases ; and none have any right to call Him to account for any supposed partiality in His dispensations. But if we feel ourselves to be of all men the most unworthy of the privileges we enjoy ; if we know that ‘in our Father’s house there is bread enough and to spare :’ and, if we love our neighbours as ourselves ; ignorant as we are of the secret counsels of His will, we shall anxiously pray, and laboriously endeavour to make known the Saviour’s name to our brethren towards the east and west, the north and the south. And though the difficulties that occur in the evangelization of heathen countries may appear to us to be almost insurmountable ; yet we shall call to remembrance that in all the dispensations both of His providence and grace He works by the intervention of rational means ; and we shall therefore exert ourselves under the comfortable conviction that He, who is ‘the Creator and Preserver of all mankind,’ can, at any time when He pleases, create them anew in Christ Jesus, and cause a nation to be born in a day, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

A cursory view of the present state and condition of the world will be sufficient to excite those, 'who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' and who are possessed with real charity towards their fellow creatures, to an ardent importunity in the use of the prayer which is before us. 'Divide the world into *thirty* parts, *nineteen* of them are pagans ; of the eleven that remain six are Mahometans.* How widely extended, and how deep is the gloom of mental darkness, which still prevails in the world around us ! Merciful 'Creator and Preserver of all mankind,' 'have respect unto the covenant ; for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty !'† Those places of the earth,

* Bp. Hall's sermon on Ps. lxxviii. 30.

† Ps. lxxiv. 20. Almost every heathen country, either by human sacrifices or other practices from which humanity recoils, affords an illustration of this passage. But it may properly be asked, is there no other species of cruelty, besides that which is practised on the bodies of men ? Is there not a more atrocious instance of barbarity, which is practised by thousands, even in this civilized land ; but which nevertheless is little thought of, and seldom condemned ? Which, however, surpasses in horror even that of Robespierre himself. The reader needs not to be informed that cruelty to the souls of men is here intended ; of which thousands are the daily victims. Are not parents cruel, who neglect to bring up their children in 'the nurture and admonition of the Lord ?' Does not the charge lie also against masters of families, who by their wicked example or total indifference to religion, leave their dependents to perish in sin ? Is it not equally

on which the sun of righteousness has not yet arisen, are dark indeed. The descriptions of the gentile world, given by the Apostles in their day, are equally applicable to heathen nations now. Unhappy creatures ! ‘ They are dead in ‘ trespasses and sins : they walk according to ‘ the course of this world : they have their con- ‘ versation in the flesh, fulfilling the desires of ‘ the flesh and of the mind.*’ ‘ Their understand- ‘ ing is darkened, being alienated from the life of ‘ God through the ignorance that is in them, ‘ because of the blindness of their heart ; so that ‘ being past feeling they have given themselves ‘ over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness ‘ with greediness.’† O what an inducement to

• or more applicable still to those ministers by whom the word of life is not dispensed to the people ? How would that man be considered, who mixed poison with the food of his household : or withheld from it a sufficient supply of wholesome nourishment ?

* Eph. ii. 1---3.

† Eph. iv. 18, 19. See also Rom. 1, 21. ad finem. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Is there not reason to suspect that some modern travellers, either through ignorance or wilful misrepresentation, have given to the world false notions of some newly discovered countries ? ‘ It is ‘ easy for the fancy to invest with borrowed qualities persons and ‘ things, with which we are little acquainted. A voyager touch- ‘ ing upon a strange coast, and beholding a company of the natives ‘ seated at their ease under the foliage of some spreading oak or ‘ plantain, while others are seen diverting themselves on the lawn ‘ with the dance and the song, will imagine himself to be trans- ‘ ported to a paradisaical region, where all is innocence and de- ‘ light ; and should he happen to be received to an hospitable re-

earnest prayer, and laborious exertion on their behalf! Ecclesiastical history reports of the famous Gregory Thaumaturgus, that, when he was appointed to the Bishopric of Neocæsarea, he found it almost destitute of Christianity: that the success of his labors there was such, that at his death he left in it very few indeed, who had not embraced the truth; and that, previous to his decease he wept over the city, because it contained a few persons, who still adhered to idolatry.* Would God, there was more of this tender concern for the souls of men existing in the breasts, and manifested in the conduct of modern professors! For then, with what ardent zeal should we importune ‘the Creator and

‘past instead of being devoured himself, he will be disposed to re-
 ‘quite them with the praise of every virtue, which can adorn hu-
 ‘manity. To appearances much less flattering than these, we are
 ‘probably indebted for some late panegyrics on savage life and
 ‘manners. We all know how common it is for men, especially for
 ‘travellers, out of mere vanity to embellish their narratives;
 ‘and we may know too that there are not wanting some, who
 ‘will both embellish and invent from a malignant design of ex-
 ‘alting nature at the expense of Christianity.’ *Bates’s cursory
 view of civil government.* p. 102. Mr. Bates’s hint is confirmed by
 Professor Robison, in his *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the re-
 ligions and governments of Europe*; who says, that this was one of
 the many artful methods by which the illuminati have promoted
 their hellish plot.

* Cave’s lives of the Fathers; and Milner’s history of the church. vol. 1. p. 53.

‘ Preserver of all mankind,’ while we offer up the admirable missionary form, with which our church has furnished us !

The ‘ exceedingly great and precious promises’ of scripture, which respect the glory of the church at a future period, in the general accession both of Jews and Gentiles to its hospitable bosom, afford us encouragement in the hearty use of this prayer. For, though ‘ the Lord hath already ‘ done great things for us, whereof we rejoice ;’ we have still reason to cry, ‘ Turn our captivity, ‘ O Lord, as the rivers in the south !’ Though the church of God has been raised to an height of glory, and extended in its borders to such wide dimensions, as appeared at its commencement altogether improbable to human reason ; yet the promises do not seem to have received their utmost fulfilment : though the grain of mustard seed has grown and flourished in an amazing manner, a farther expansion of its branches may yet be expected : and, though the little leaven has leavened no inconsiderable part, it has not yet pervaded the whole lump. If the promise made to the father of the faithful be understood in a literal sense, that in his seed (which is Christ) all nations of the earth should be blessed ;* there remains as yet much work for the evan-

* Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18. and xxvi. 4.

gelist to perform. If our adorable Redeemer is to receive ‘the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession ;’* we may conclude that He is not yet satisfied in that which He has ‘seen of the travail of His soul.’ For the time will come, when ‘all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him.† He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.’‡ If this extensive dominion, most gracious Saviour, be included in the reward of Thy sufferings and death ; ‘Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty !’§ Hasten the time, when ‘the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea !’|| The progress of saving truth is represented in beautiful imagery by the prophet Ezekiel ;¶ who saw in vision the holy

* Ps. ii. 8. † Ps. xxii. 27. ‡ Ps. lxxii. 8. see also Isai. xlix. 6. and Zach. ix. 10. § Ps. xlv. 3. || Isai. xi. 9. Habak. ii. 14.

¶ Chap. xlvii. 1---5. ‘Apud Ezechielem vero insigne habetur emblemata aquarum prodeuntium ex sanctuario, et se diffundentium versus quatuor cœli plagas ; quæ quidem aquæ sensim faciebant incrementum ; primo pertingentes ad talos, inde ad genua, mox ad lumbos, et denique tam alte evaserunt, ut non nisi natando pervadi possunt. Symbolum est cognitionis viarum Dei sa-

waters of gospel grace issuing from under the threshold of the house of the Lord. The emblematic flood rose gradually to the ankles, the knees, and the loins; till at last it became a river too deep to be forded. This enchanting picture can scarcely be considered as yet realized; and affords us ground for hope, that we shall see the kingdom of our Lord enlarged, till ‘the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands’* shall have broken in pieces all those kingdoms of the world, where the throne of Satan is erected. Then ‘shall the Lord famish all the Gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the sea.’† Then, ‘from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, His name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto His name, and a pure offering; for His name shall be great among the heathen.’‡ When ‘the fullness of the Gentiles is come in,§ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God;’|| then shall be brought to

lutaris et cum donis veræ gratiæ conjunctæ, quæ per gradus et articulos temporum cresceret, usque quo pervenisset ad summum, secundum mensuram gratiæ, ecclesiæ in hisce terris definitam: quod ipsum est hujus prophetiæ argumentum. Mysticum autem sensum, visi illius Ezechielis quis neget ad postrema tempora reserendum esse?---*Vitringa in Jesaiam.*

* Dan. ii. 44, 45. † Zeph. ii. 11. ‡ Mal. i. 11.

§ Rom. xi. 25. || Luke iii. 6.

pass the saying which is written, ‘ to Him (even
 ‘ Immanuel,) every knee shall bow, and every
 ‘ tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the
 ‘ glory of God the Father.’* O animating prospect
 of futurity ! Transporting thought ! ‘ Lord,
 ‘ we beseech Thee, that we, with all those who are
 ‘ departed in the true faith of Thy holy name,
 ‘ may have our perfect consummation and bliss
 ‘ both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and
 ‘ everlasting glory through Jesus Christ our
 ‘ Lord !’†

The unbounded extent of the virtue of the blood of Christ, and the Omnipotence of His Spirit, are considerations, which we should keep in remembrance, when we approach the mercy seat in behalf of all conditions of men. Though we know that a part only of the human race will be ultimately benefitted by his death ; and that the number of those, for whom the many mansions above are prepared, is restricted within certain limits : yet, as those limits are unknown to us ; and as we have absolute certainty, that the blood

* Phil. ii. 11.

† Burial service---In addition to that, which has been said in this paragraph, might have been added the various prophecies which relate to the restoration of the Jews to the church of God. The reader may consult at his leisure the following passages. Deut. xxx. 1. Isai. xi. 11. Jer. xxiii. 3. xxix. 14. xxxi. 8. xxii. 37. Ezek. xxxvi. 33. xxxix. 23. Hos. iii. 5. Amos ix. 14. Zech. viii. 7. Matth. xxiii. 39. Rom. xi. 1. 23. 2 Cor. iii. 16.

of our incarnate God is, with respect to its meritorious efficacy, ‘ a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ;’* and that, however deeply rooted be the idolatry of the heathen world, however dense the darkness that envelops it, however firm the strong holds with which it is fortified, nothing is impossible with God : since this is the case, we are emboldened to pray that ‘ His ways may be known upon earth, and His saving health unto all nations.’ And surely we may derive a very comfortable hope from the exertions, which are making in the present day, that God is about to fulfil His promises ; and we ought therefore more earnestly to say, ‘ Thy Kingdom come !’

The language, which our reformers have adopted, is borrowed from the book of inspiration. Lukewarm and uncharitable as the descendants of Abraham have been for the last two thousand years, the ancient Jewish church was of a different spirit. She prayed in the time of David that ‘ God’s ways might be known upon earth, and His saving health unto all nations.’† It is a pleasing thought that these petitions have been so long in use. Surely the Lord will hear the prayers of His church, which his own spirit sug-

* Communion office.

† Ps. lxvii. 1, 2.

gested. If the knowledge of 'His ways' be essential to salvation ; and, if the virtues of that salutary medicine, which the Gospel conveys, be alone able to restore 'health' and vigor to the diseased and languishing spirits of men among 'all nations ;' how importunate should our supplications be ! Let the reader interrogate himself on this subject, and inquire if he really uses this prayer with an hearty zeal for the promotion of God's glory, and the salvation of his fellow sinners. You are not perhaps called to inlist as missionaries to carry the glad tidings of salvation to heathen nations : you are perhaps unable to contribute much pecuniary support to missionary institutions : but you can pray. And, if you are a true member of the Episcopal church, and live in the enjoyment of its privileges ; the promulgation of the gospel lies very near your heart.

From general intercession for the whole race of mankind, we descend to a remembrance of the visible church of Christ here on earth. By the holy Church universal, in this place, we mean that part of the world which is called Christendom ; or the whole aggregate number of persons, who make a profession of Christianity. And surely, while the salvation of our fellow-sinners at large ought to be a matter of deep concern, the welfare of the church should be remem-

bered with greater affection ; since therein the glory of God is more immediately interested. We are commanded to pray for the peace or good estate ‘ of Jerusalem,’ and the catholic church : and a gracious promise is annexed to the injunction ‘ they shall prosper that love thee.’ Therefore let us affectionately intercede in the words of the Psalmist, ‘ Peace be within thy walls ; and prosperity within thy palaces ! For ‘ my brethren and companions’ sake I will now ‘ say, peace be within thee ! Because of the house ‘ of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.’*

The state of the catholic church, when it is considered in this extensive view, is very melancholy. It may be compared to a tree, in which some vegetable life remains, demonstrated by the appearance of a vigorous shoot here and there, on which leaves, blossoms, and fruit delight the eye ; but of which the far greater part consists of dry and barren branches, which are unprofitable to the proprietor and disgustful to the beholder. How wretched is the condition of that part of Christendom, over which the pretended vicar of Christ sways his ecclesiastical sceptre ! If charity, ‘ which hopeth all things and believeth ‘ all things,’ indulges an hope and belief that some, who are in communion with the papal see, are re-

* Ps. cxxii. 6--9.

al members of the mystical body of Christ ; yet, as ‘charity rejoiceth in the truth,’ we are at the same time constrained to fear that the number is very small, ‘like the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.’ In how deplorable a state are some parts of Asia and Africa, where the gospel was planted at an early period, but which now retain no more of Christianity than is just sufficient to prove that the light of truth once shone among them ; even as the putrid carcass of a man, demonstrates that it has been the tabernacle of a living soul !* But leaving those countries, where Apostles labored and martyrs bled, if we approach nearer to our own shores, the propriety of an importunate use of this form of supplication for the catholic church, will be fully evident. In many of the protestant churches on the neighboring continent how is the fine gold become dim ! How has Philosophy supplanted primitive Christianity ! † Where is the simplicity that is in Christ, either with respect to principle or practice now to be found ?

* Any one, who has read Bruce’s account of the state of Christianity (if it may be so called) in Abyssinia, will not deem the colouring, which is here used, too deep.

† The author was informed by a person, who had spent much of his time on the continent, that a successor of the excellent professor Frank in the college at Halle, told his pupils that science could never flourish, till the present blind attachment to the Bible was abolished. ‘O tempora, O mores !’

Without passing over the narrow sea which insulates this favored country, let us survey the state of religion among ourselves. Blessed be God, there is a little salt in the ecclesiastical body, which preserves it from total putrefaction. There are a few persons, who, by the holiness of their lives demonstrate the purity of their principles. But, alas, how small a proportion does this little remnant bear to the general mass of those, who have been admitted by baptism within the pale of the visible church! If we consider the general state of Christianity throughout our borders, the enlightened mind recoils from the melancholy scene. Are not the most sacred mysteries of our most holy faith denied; and held up to ridicule even by those who avow themselves, without any just pretensions to the name, the followers of Christ? Is not morality, and that even of the lowest kind, substituted for vital Godliness?* Are not too many of the teachers of our religion immersed in the pleasures, riches, and honors of the world, and consequently careless, ignorant, and disqualified in every respect for the functions of their high vocation? If the present state of religion be compared with primitive Christianity, in what do the points of similitude consist? Will the assertion be too strong, if we say that the deformed system which has now obtained the name of Chris-

* See Bp. Horseley's charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of St. David.

tianity, bears the same resemblance to the lovely pattern exhibited in the principles and practice of the primitive church, as the present ruins of Babylon bear to its antient splendor? Concerning this city, Isaiah, in the Spirit of Prophecy describing its present state, says, that ‘ Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chal-dees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. The wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there; and the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces.’* Are not the horrid principles, which are openly avowed among us; and the shameful practices, which proclaim aloud our national depravity, inmates of a more distressing kind than the worst of those doleful creatures, with which the ruins of Babylon are infested? Does not the ignorance of Divine truth, of which the bird of darkness is a proper emblem, and of which both the press and the pulpit, the city and the village afford daily and awful evidence, demonstrate the magnitude of our declen-

* Isai. xiii. 19---22. See Prideaux’s connection. Part 1. p. 308, &c. The minute detail, which this valuable author has given of the fulfilment of this and other antient prophecies, while it captivates the attention, cannot fail of confirming the faith of every pious reader. ‘*Tolle, lege, ora!*’

sion? Lord Jesus, is this thy bride, 'the King's
 'daughter all glorious within, whose clothing is
 'of wrought gold!' Was it for this purpose that
 Thou didst shed Thy precious blood, that Thy
 holy name might be disgraced through its as-
 sumption by persons, whose creed contains
 scarce an article of the faith once delivered to
 the saints; and whose conduct evinces that they
 have 'renounced the Devil, the world, and the
 'flesh' in word only; while the Devil is their
 prince, the world their idol, and the flesh their
 guide? Arise, ye men of prayer, ye wrestling
 Jacobs, and be earnest with God, that He may
 vindicate His own cause, and grant that His
 'church may be so guided and governed by His
 'Holy Spirit that all who profess and call them-
 'selves Christians, may be led into the way of
 'truth.'

The rapid growth of that shapeless monster,
 Deism, in those countries, where Christianity is
 professed, justly alarms the minds of all those,
 who perceive the inseparable connection that sub-
 sists between morality and revealed religion.
 The time seems to be at no great distance, when
 the name of Christian will be as odious, as it was
 during the continuance of heathen Rome; and
 when the disciples of Jesus will be again persecu-
 ted as the enemies of mankind. The minds of
 great numbers among those, who bear the name
 of Christ, seem already prepared for such a rev-

olution. The transition from a disavowal of the leading tenets of the Bible to a rejection of the whole is natural and easy. For when those characteristic doctrines, the necessity of the vicarious sufferings of the Son of God, and of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, are either denied or explained away; what remains in the page of revelation to interest the mind, to engage the affections, or to distinguish it from the system of Epictetus? The partition wall between the Deist and nominal Christian, who, while he pretends a respect for the scriptures, strips them of all their essential peculiarities, is very thin: and it will be no wonder, if it should entirely vanish in consequence of growing attachments to earthly interests, and be succeeded by a baneful coalition of both parties. While multitudes deride the experience of the humble Christian, who avows his dependence on the Grace of God for pardon and acceptance, for holiness and happiness; the labors of the apostles of infidelity will be very successful: nor can any effectual opposition be made to them, but by an adherence to the unsophisticated truth of God in all its various branches and pristine purity. The paucity of communicants compared with the number of those, who have not yet expressly renounced the Christian faith, ceases to be unaccountable; when the rapid progress of scepticism, under the name of rational Christianity, is duly considered.

Since such is the state of the church, we pray that it may be guided and governed by God's good spirit ; because its prosperity entirely depends on His guidance and governance, without which the word of God cannot be preached, nor His sacraments be administered, to His glory, and the edification of his people. To Divine influence the church is indebted for its rise and progress : and it prospers or declines in proportion as it receives or is deprived of ' the dew of God's blessing.' For the true excellence of the church consists, not in the elegance of the buildings, not in the order of its ceremonies, not in the learning of its ministers, the orthodoxy of its creed, nor even in the general morality of its members ; but in the spirituality of its worship, the devotedness of heart to God, that prevails in it, and its consequent enjoyment of the blessings of the cross of Christ. Divine life is the one thing needful, whether in the bosom of the individual, or of the community ; without which the externals of religion are no better than the caput mortuum, which remains in the crucible after the extraction of the precious ore : all which the judicious Chymist will reject, as totally unprofitable to its heavenly Proprietor.

The end we propose in this request for the guidance and governance of God's Spirit is very important, viz. ' that all, who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way

‘ of truth.’ Many professors are in the way of error, both as to doctrine and practice. What our church means by truth, may easily be gathered from her liturgy, articles, and homilies ; and how exactly these coincide with the oracles of God, has in some measure been shewn in the preceding pages. It becomes all her members to inquire, whether they are in the way of truth. All curious inquiries about speculative matters in religion are unbecoming and hurtful : they are unbecoming as they shew a desire to be wise beyond what is revealed ; and they are hurtful, as they distract the mind from a due attention to those things, which are truly interesting and essential to its happiness. A person, running in a race,* in which an immensely valuable prize is to reward the successful candidate, is inexcusable, if he spend his time in any trifling investigation. A patient, who is sick of a mortal disease, would be ill employed, while making deep researches into anatomical or botanical subjects, instead of attending to the prescription of his Physician, and taking the medicines recommended. Our gracious Saviour says, ‘ enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate,

* 1 Cor. ix. 24.

‘ and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, ‘ and few there be that find it.’* Dear reader, have you entered through this strait gate into the narrow way of eternal life? You have a soul to be saved; and therefore the question is of immense importance; insomuch that you ought to estimate every thing, as it bears a greater or less relation to it. Alas, how many live, like the beasts that perish! The human soul is naturally in a lost state; a state of sin and guilt: and a state of sin and guilt is a state of impotence; so that it is impossible that man should be his own Saviour. The gate, through which a sinner must pass in the way from guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance, from sin to holiness, and from hell to heaven, is Jesus Christ, who is frequently styled ‘ a door’ and ‘ a way :’ by which metaphors the scriptures intimate continually, that Christ is the only medium of salvation to a sinner. A sinner must be justified, before he can be saved; but ‘ by the works of the law can ‘ no flesh be justified :’† a sinner must be sanctified, before he can be glorified; but Christ is our sanctification as well as our righteousness.‡ So that He is the *only* gate, the *only* way that leadeth to life; and if you have not entered by this gate; and if you are not walking in this way, you are in the way of error, which leadeth

* Matth. vii. 13, 14.

† Gal. ii. 16.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.

to destruction. The gate of life is strait, and 'the way of truth' is narrow; too strait to admit unhumbled Pharisees, worldly-minded Sadducees, and lovers of sin. None but the humble contrite mourner can find admittance by this gate, and walk in this way. O 'strive to enter in!' Anxiety and exertion are absolutely necessary. The time of admission will soon expire. Therefore begin directly and without delay: carry on the work with diligence; and continue in it with perseverance. You have the prayers of the church on your behalf, that God's 'good Spirit may lead you into the way of truth.'

We go on to intercede that those, who are 'in the way of truth,' may be enabled 'to hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.' For the guidance and governance of God's good Spirit are as necessary for the preservation of the saint, as they are for the conversion of the sinner. Since temptations abound, and many have apostatized, every humble disciple of Christ will be thankful that he enjoys the daily prayers of the Church for his continuance in the faith. And, since Satan's watch-word among his infernal emissaries is, 'divide and rule;'* how proper it is that we should pray for all the members of the Church universal, that they may 'hold the faith in unity

* Divide et impera.

‘of the Spirit in the bond of peace!’ And, since ‘faith without works is dead, being alone;’ that ‘righteousness of life’ may evidence the truth of our profession. These are excellent petitions. May we see more of their beauty, and join in them with increasing fervor of soul!

‘Finally we commend to God’s fatherly goodness all those, who are any ways afflicted or ‘distressed in mind, body, or estate.’ Sin has metamorphosed the world into a vale of tears. Through this valley of Baca all must pass in their way to Zion.* Saints and sinners taste of the bitter cup. With respect to the former, we are expressly told, that it is ‘through much ‘tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of ‘God.’† Calamity appears ‘in a thousand ‘shapes.’ It is needless to endeavour to enumerate them: our church has comprehended them all. It is meet that we should ‘remember them, ‘which suffer adversity, as being ourselves also ‘in the body.’‡ We are commanded to ‘weep ‘with those that weep,’ as well as to ‘rejoice ‘with them that rejoice.’ Our great High Priest sympathizes with His suffering members, ‘being touched with a feeling of their infirmities.’ ‘In all their afflictions He is afflicted.’ His people resemble Him, and feel for each other; so that, ‘if one member suffer, all the mem-

* Ps. lxxxiv. 6.

† Acts xiv. 22.

‡ Heb. xiii. 3.

‘bers suffer with it.’ And being unable to afford consolation and relief out of any stock, of which they are possessed ; they carry their dear brethren in affliction to the throne of grace, praying ‘that it may please God to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions.’ God knows the sorrows of all His saints, and puts their tears into His bottle.* He can comfort in every trouble, relieve in every distress, and succour in every necessity. However great our sufferings, He can give patience under them ; and however heavy the pressure of our afflictions, He can give a happy issue out of them. And therefore as these are promised blessings, ‘we beg’ them for ourselves and our brethren humbly at His hands ‘for Jesus Christ His sake. Amen.’

* Ps. lvi. 8.

ESSAY XII.

ON THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

PRAISE is an essential part of the worship of God ; and it is due from every rational being to Him, who of His goodness created all things, and who upholds them by the word of His power. Our church, in the exhortation that precedes the general confession, when she is recapitulating the several constituent parts of Divine worship, and assigning the reasons of our frequent and stated visits to the house of God, tells us that ‘ we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits which we have received at His hands, to set forth His most worthy praise, to hear His most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.’ Here praise stands foremost in our list of duties : and indeed it is not without solid reason, that it obtains a distinguished place. For it is that, for which

man was at first created. Confession of sin, deprecation of punishment, and supplication for mercy, became necessary only in consequence of the fall ; but praise is the work, for which man originally received his being. This is the great business of heaven, from which its blessed inhabitants cease not day and night : and, if ever we join the highly favoured throng, it will also be our's to all eternity. The necessity of confession and prayer will then be superceded ; because we shall be perfectly delivered from all evils both of soul and body, and shall have no wants unsatisfied. Then faith will be swallowed up in the immediate vision of its glorious object ; and hope will be lost in the complete fruition of its expected felicity. Then the din of war, from which the militant church is never free, shall be exchanged for ' the voice of harpers, harping with their harps ;' and the fatigues of the conflict, which is past, be forgotten, while the once harrassed combatant shall incessantly drink of the waters of the river of pleasures, which proceeds from the eternal throne, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.

Should a charge of tautology be brought against our church, on account of her frequent introduction of thanksgiving in her services, we are not without a precedent to quote in her defence. That church, in whose worship there are no de-

fects, ceases not day and night, ‘crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.’ It is not to be wondered that those unhappy persons, who rove from one sublunary object to another, seeking rest in an endless variety of gratifications, but finding none; should consider our worship as insipid, and condemn it as tautologous. Were they locally admitted into heaven, they would feel the same irksomeness in all its engagements; because they have no taste for those living waters, at the fountain head of which, saints made perfect, drink, and from the streams whereof believing sinners on earth quench their thirst, and refresh their weary souls. Believers understand the Psalmist’s exhortation; ‘Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God: for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.’* They know that ‘it is meet, right, and their bounden duty, that they should at all times, and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God; therefore with angels and arch-angels, and with all the company of heaven, they laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.’†

* Ps. cxlvii. 1.

† Communion office.

The rationality of a frequent, yea a constant performance of this duty will be denied by no persons, who are sincere in their acknowledgments that all good proceeds from God. And to all those, whose hearts are tuned by penitence, the employment is also joyous and delightful; and we may safely assert that he, who has never found it pleasant to sing praises unto our God; whose emotions have never been in unison with the harp of the son of Jesse, is a stranger to all real religion, and lives without God in the world. This act of worship is of universal obligation. No worldly engagements, however important, can ever be a sufficient excuse for its neglect. No circumstances, in which the poorest among us are involved, exempt them from presenting to the Lord this oblation: for, though their means be too small to furnish expensive eucharistic offerings; yet every man, who is possessed of a heart to feel, and a tongue to speak, is bound to employ them both in the work of thanksgiving. The heart that never felt, and the tongue that never tried to lisp the gratitude that is due to God, are totally disqualified for the felicity and employments of the courts of Heaven; and must be banished forever to that abode, where the worm, that dieth not, will corrode the thankless heart; and the fire, that is never quenched, will torment the unprofitable tongue.

Our church has provided for our use a form adapted to the feelings of every bosom in which the love of God is kindled, distinguished by the name of the General Thanksgiving.

‘ Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we
 ‘ Thine unworthy servants do give Thee most
 ‘ humble and hearty thanks for all Thy goodness
 ‘ and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We
 ‘ bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and
 ‘ all the blessings of this life, but above all for
 ‘ Thine inestimable love in the redemption of the
 ‘ world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means
 ‘ of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we
 ‘ beseech Thee give us that due sense of all Thy
 ‘ mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly
 ‘ thankful, and that we may shew forth Thy
 ‘ praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives,
 ‘ by giving up ourselves to Thy service, and by
 ‘ walking before Thee in holiness and righteous-
 ‘ ness all our days, through Jesus Christ our
 ‘ Lord; to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost,
 ‘ be all honour and glory, world without end.
 ‘ Amen.’

The object of all praise is ‘ Almighty God,’ because He is ‘ the Father of all mercies.’ The favours which we acknowledge to have received, are such as afford the most luminous evidence of the infinite power and goodness of the Giver. The former of these His glorious perfections, calls for our devoutest adoration; while His pa-

ternal kindness exacts from us every return of grateful love, which it is in our power to make. While we are employed in meditation on His greatness, our minds are filled with holy awe and overwhelming astonishment: but, when we also contemplate His boundless compassion, the feelings, which His dreadful majesty would otherwise inspire, are tempered by the milder beams, which His more amiable attributes dispense; and thus we are prepared for the work of praise, in which we are called to engage.

The persons, who unite in this holy and delightful exercise, profess themselves to be God's '*unworthy servants.*' We are then in that peculiar frame of mind, which is most adapted to the performance of this act, when we are least and lowest in our own eyes; because, at those seasons of self abasement, (for a more frequent return and a longer continuance whereof every believer devoutly prays) we acknowledge with the most unequivocal sincerity that God is the author of all good, and experience the liveliest emotions of gratitude to Him. The language of Jacob will become every sinful child of Adam, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant.*' This conviction of unworthiness is essential to the spirit of praise; for a hireling doth

* Gen. xxxii. 10.

not consider himself under any obligation to his master for the wages, which he has earned by the sweat of his brow ; as a mendicant to his benefactor for the alms, which he has gratuitously received. A converted heart therefore is an indispensable prerequisite to the unfeigned and fervent use of this form of thanksgiving ; because, without this qualification, the sinner is unhumbled, and deems himself more or less worthy of the blessings, which he enjoys. Until I know that, in consequence of sin, I have forfeited every good, and have merited every evil ; and that whatever I possess flows from the mercy of God through the mediator Jesus ; the language of my lips, if I use the form of thanksgiving which our church has prescribed to her members, will be chargeable with gross hypocrisy, and prove an act of insult to the Great Searcher of hearts. Reader, is your avowal of unworthiness free from duplicity ? It is easy for the lips to adopt the words of self-humiliation, but God requireth truth in the inward parts. Take heed and beware of dealing deceitfully with God. Look to it that your discontent at the allotments of providence ; your fretfulness occasioned by the absence of blessings, to which your heart advances a claim of desert ; or your forgetfulness of God do not afford demonstrative evidence that there is a lie in your right hand, while you call yourself God's

‘unworthy servant.’ The specious language of compliment will not pass current in His presence, whose eyes are as a flame of fire.

The act, in which we here engage, is giving to God ‘most humble and hearty thanks.’ Thanksgiving is an open confession of the Divine attributes, arising from a heart deeply impressed with a sense of those inestimable benefits, which as creatures and as sinners we derive from them. Of this we have a beautiful exemplification in the conduct of the man after God’s own heart; who, when he had received of the people of Israel their liberal contributions towards the erection of a temple to the Lord at Jerusalem; and had dedicated his own munificent offerings for the same pious purpose, renounces all merit on account of, or deducible from, the work they had performed, and ascribes the glory to God alone. The sacred historian informs us, that ‘David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said, Blessed be Thou, O Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all, and in Thine

' hand is power and might, and in 'Thine hand it
 ' is to make great and to give strength unto all.
 ' Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee and
 ' praise Thy glorious name. But what am I, and
 ' what is my people, that we should be able to of-
 ' fer so willingly after this sort? For all things
 ' come of Thee, and of 'Thine owe have we given
 ' Thee.* *Humility* is an essential concomitant
 of all acceptable thanksgiving. Is there not rea-
 son to fear that many, who join in our devotional
 forms, are offering incense to their own vanity,
 while they pretend to give unto God 'most hum-
 ' ble and hearty thanks?' It is evident that the
 Pharisee, whose duplicity our Lord has deline-
 ated in a parable as a warning to others, sacrific-
 ed to his own supposed goodness, when he stood
 in the temple and said, ' God, I thank Thee that
 ' I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust,
 ' adulterers, nor even as this publican. I fast
 ' twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I
 ' possess.† Our church supposes her worship-
 pers to be possessed of the temper of the humble
 publican, who ' stood afar off, not daring to lift
 ' up his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his
 ' heart, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!‡
Sincerity is equally as necessary as humility.
 And indeed each of these qualifications supposes

* 1 Chron. xxix. 10---14.

† Luke xviii. 11.

‡ Luke xviii. 13.

the other ; for it is impossible to separate them. The sincere language of every unhumiliated heart is similar to that, which the church of Laodicea used ; ‘ I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.’ While every genuine member of our church, who offers unto God ‘ humble and hearty thanks,’ approaches the throne under a deep conviction of being in himself ‘ poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.’ ‡

The subject of our thanksgiving is generally defined to be God’s ‘ goodness and loving-kindness to ourselves and to all men.’ Though we cannot but feel in the most sensible manner those proofs of His goodness, which respect ourselves ; and therefore properly begin with the mention of these ; yet, as it becomes us to remember the wants of our brethren in our daily supplications, equally does it behove us to celebrate God’s mercy towards them in our acts of praise. And this is indeed expressly required of us by the Apostle, who enjoins that ‘ giving of thanks,’ as well as ‘ prayers and intercessions, be made for all men.’ It is one of the lovely offices of Christian charity to ‘ rejoice with them that do rejoice.’ They whose hearts are truly sensible of the amazing kindness of God to the human race, will grieve that there are so many of their fellow

‡ Rev. iii. 17, 18.

creatures, who, whilst they participate in His goodness, rob Him of His glory ; and they will labor, by their zeal in the service, to supply the deficiency ; lamenting at the same time the coldness of their own love, the languor of their own praises, and the enfeebled accents of their own tongues.

A portion of the form is appropriated to the case of those persons, who, in the time of their distress, have desired the prayers of the church ; and having obtained a gracious answer, are now solicitous that the congregation of the faithful should join with them in giving thanks to the Lord. The propriety of such an open avowal of our dependence on Him cannot on Christian principles be denied : and the growing neglect of the laudable custom of desiring the prayers of the church in the season of trouble, and its concurrence in grateful acknowledgments for an answer to such prayers, is an awful proof of the decay of piety in the present day. The conduct even of heathens in this particular is enough to put us to the blush. For in the temple of *Æsculapius* at *Tetrapolis*, it is said, multitudes of sick and miserable petitioners were continually assembled ; and the walls thereof were every where covered with painted tablets, recording the disease and the name of the party, which had been restored to health.* In

* *Strabo*, quoted by *Dr. Comber*; to whose valuable work I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations for many useful hints, throughout these essays.

like manner those who had suffered shipwreck, used to give thanks to Neptune for preserving them alive ; and, in testimony of their gratitude, they hung up the clothes they had worn at the time of their escape, with a detailed narrative of their preservation inscribed on a consecrated stone, that others might be excited to join with them in the oblation of praise.* When Hezekiah received from the prophet a promise of recovery from his dangerous malady, his first inquiry was ; ‘ what is the sign that I shall go up into ‘ the house of the Lord ?’ † A variety of other scriptural instances might be adduced of persons who returned public thanks for signal mercies. Can it be asserted that among ourselves the number of those, who thus acknowledge the goodness of God for similar instances of deliverance, bears such a proportion to our congregations, as is equal to the single individual of the ten lepers, who were cleansed by our Lord ? Might not an officiating minister ask on occasion of every note he receives, ‘ were there not ten cleansed, but ‘ where are the nine ?’ ‡

* Me tabula sacer
Votiva paries indicat uvida
Suspendisse potenti
Vestimenta maris Deo. HOR.

† Isai. xxxviii. 22.

‡ Luke xvii. 12, &c.

From a general acknowledgment of God's 'goodness and loving kindness,' we descend to a more particular survey of the favours, which we have received at His hands. Yet in our most diffusive strains of gratitude, when we wish to be most minute in our ascriptions of praise for the benefits we enjoy, we are obliged to express ourselves in general terms; for the ocean of his goodness is too vast to be fathomed by our powers of mensuration, and the accumulated drops of the dew of His blessing confound all our arithmetical calculations.

'We bless Him for our Creation.' 'He made us and not we ourselves.' To all those, who enjoy the 'lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' existence is a subject for unceasing thankfulness. The Atheist, who attributes the production of all being to a fortuitous concourse of atoms; the Deist, who after having rejected the gracious revelation which the gospel contains, through a love of darkness in preference to light because his deeds are evil, is judicially left to wander in the wide field of endless conjecture, respecting a future state of rewards and punishments; and the sceptic, who, under the influence of the same antipathy to holiness, is tossed to and fro on the waves of uncertainty, like a ship in a storm without a rudder or pilot; these may well adopt, when under the insupportable pressure of the

evils of the present life, the disgraceful language used in an unguarded moment by the Patriarch Job, ‘ Let the day perish wherein I was born ; and the night in which it was said there is a man child conceived.* But the believer who finds in the promises of God support under the calamities of the present life ; and to whom faith opens a luminous vista through the gloomy vale of death into the regions of glory and immortality ; has reason to ‘ bless God for his creation.’ My existence I owe to His boundless goodness. Why was the dust, of which my body is composed, fashioned into man, and made the receptacle of a living soul ? Why was it not formed into some insignificant insect or noxious reptile ? And wherefore was I endowed with a capacity of knowing and enjoying Thee, my Creator, as my portion forever ? I know that, as a sinner, I am ‘ born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward ;’ yet, since Thy mercy has consecrated ‘ the valley of Achor to be a door of hope ;’ and Thou hast promised that ‘ these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;’ let every faculty of the immortal principle, which

* Job iii. 3, &c. Is it any wonder that men, who are destitute of faith in Jesus, and the consolations of His Gospel, so often commit acts of suicide ? If the Bible were a fable, the man, who is his own executioner, could not be blamed. But according to the word of truth, ‘ no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.’

Thou hast breathed into me, and every member of this earthly machine, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made, be devoted to Thy glory !

‘ Our Preservation ’ is equally a call for gratitude with ‘ our Creation. ’ For without the former the latter would have proved a curse instead of a blessing. It is God, who has preserved our souls in life ; who has continued to us the use of reason ; and who has restrained us from those evil things, which would have issued in the eternal ruin both of body and soul in Hell.

We comprise in our list of benefits ‘ all the ‘ blessings of this life ; ’ which being incapable of specification on account of their multitude, we are obliged to comprehend in a few words, lest our public service should be swelled to an immoderate length. As the catalogue is every moment increasing in dimensions, our obligations are continually rising to a greater height. But, though the blessings of this life are in our public worship necessarily noticed in a cursory way ; yet, as they from time to time occur, they call for those grateful ejaculations, by which genuine piety of heart will always manifest itself.* No circumstance of time or place will prevent the real mem-

* What an alarming proof of the impiety of the present age is the disuse of the practice of acknowledging God at our meals ! While many partake of the bounties of Providence, like brute beasts that have no understanding ; there are more, whose irrev-

ber of our church from acknowledging that Divine hand, from which all blessings flow.

From a consideration of the goodness of God, as it respects the present life, we rise to those more stupendous proofs of His love, which have respect to the world to come. Here our tongues must falter for expression ; and, after our utmost efforts, we shall be constrained eternally to lie at the foot of the cross, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

‘ The redemption of the world by our Lord ‘ Jesus Christ’ is ‘ above all’ God’s other mercies, because it is the foundation of all : for even the temporal blessings, which the wicked enjoy, are effects of this redemption, without which our creation and preservation would finally become sources of infelicity. Nothing can make us truly thankful for the benefits of our creation and preservation, but an acquaintance with redemption. If we consider the nature of this unspeakable act of grace, and the circumstances that attend it, our wonder and gratitude will be heightened at every step. If we inquire into the evils from which we have been redeemed ; the result will open to our view such a scene of misery as no tongue can describe, and no heart conceive.

erence in the act is nearly as reprehensible as the omission. ‘ The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib.’ Isai. i. 3.
‘ Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord ; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?’ Jer. v. 9.

The present torments of a guilty conscience, and the slavery of carnal appetite are alone sufficient to shew the greatness of the inestimable benefit. But this is no more than a diminutive part of those horrible mischiefs, which sin has introduced. When the subject is farther investigated with respect to the present and future blessings which this redemption has procured for us ; though we know but in part, and read of ‘ such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man to conceive ;’ yet enough is perceptible to the believing soul to shew the propriety of the following phraseology of our church ; ‘ but above all’ we bless Thee ‘ for thine inestimable love, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.’ The addition of one consideration more, the nature of the ransom, will constrain us to confess our total inability to make any adequate returns of love and duty ; for ‘ we are bought with a price ; not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold ; but with the precious blood of Christ :’ Christ, ‘ the only begotten of the Father ; God manifest in the flesh.’ When the Roman Proconsul T. Q. Flaminius, after the defeat of King Philip and the Macedonians, restored to Greece its liberty, laws, and privileges ; so soon as the proclamation of the herald was distinctly heard, the shout which the delivered Greeks gave, in the transport of their joy, was so loud as to be audible

even at the sea; and the birds, which were flying over their heads, dropt down into the midst of the theatre, stunned with the noise of their acclamations. The people deserted their seats; no farther regard was paid to the instituted diversions; but all hastened to embrace and to address the preserver and protector of Greece. And, if the Proconsul had not retired to a place of shelter, so soon as the assembly rose up, he must have been surrounded and probably suffocated by so immense a multitude.* Shall the sons of men, who have been redeemed from everlasting destruction by the blood of the Son of God, be silent in His praise?

The blessings of redemption, great and inestimable as they are, would be to us of no value, had not its gracious Author opened a way, by which we might become partakers of them. On this account we proceed to bless Him 'for the means of grace.' The preaching of His word and the administration of His Sacraments, together with reading, prayer, and devout meditation, are those precious channels, through which His favor flows into our souls. These are the Divinely instituted means of grace; of regenerating, renewing, quickening, strengthening, comforting, and sanctifying grace. Reader, have you learned to prize them? Does your constant attendance on them prove that your use of this

* Laughton's *Plutarch*, Vol. 2. p. 374.

form of thanksgiving is the language of sincerity and truth? If, by these means of grace, your soul has been quickened from that death in trespasses and sins, in which it once lay, they are as necessary to your soul, as food is to your body; and more valuable in proportion as you esteem the salvation of your soul above the life of your mortal body.

‘ The hope of glory,’ which ‘ the redemption of
 ‘ the world by our Lord Jesus Christ’ procured
 for us, and which ‘ the means of grace’ excite in
 us, completes the list of our spiritual mercies.
 This sweetens the bitter cup of affliction; this
 sheds a ray of consolation on the darkest path,
 we are called to tread. If death were indeed an
 eternal sleep; ‘ if in this life only we had hope in
 ‘ Christ, we should be of all men most miserable;’
 because faith produces in the hearts of all, who
 are possessed of it, desires and expectations, to
 which the world is an utter stranger. But ‘ bless-
 ‘ ed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
 ‘ Christ, which, according to His abundant mer-
 ‘ cy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by
 ‘ the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
 ‘ to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled,
 ‘ and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven
 ‘ for you, who are kept by the power of God
 ‘ through faith unto salvation, ready to be reveal-
 ‘ ed in the last time: wherein ye greatly rejoice,
 ‘ though now for a season (if need be) ye are in

‘ heaviness through manifold temptations : that
 ‘ the trial of your faith, being much more pre-
 ‘ cious than of gold that perisheth, though it be
 ‘ tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and
 ‘ honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus
 ‘ Christ : whom having not seen ye love ; in
 ‘ whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believ-
 ‘ ing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of
 ‘ glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the
 ‘ salvation of your souls.’* Reader, is this the
 experience of your heart ? Is ‘ the hope of glory’
 the anchor of your soul in the storm of life ? And
 is your anchor cast on the rock of ages, Jesus
 Christ ? Let me entreat you to consider what
 base hypocrisy is couched under your oral thanks-
 givings ‘ for the hope of glory,’ if you are one of
 ‘ the men of the world, who have their portion in
 ‘ this life !’ †

How humiliating is the consideration that, after
 the reception of all these favors, we are incap-
 able of gratitude, till God gives us ‘ a due sense
 of all His mercies !’ And therefore in the sub-
 sequent words, our church teaches us to pray for
 it. The acknowledgments of every unconverted
 sinner proceed out of feigned lips. And even the
 believer is deeply sensible that he is not possessed
 with a *due* sense of all God’s mercies.’ This

* 1 Pet. i. 3---9.

† Ps. xvii. 14.

however is a certain feature of a gracious soul, that it mourns over its unthankfulness ; and convinced of its own impotence, looks to the fountain of all grace, that by its internal operation it may be made ‘unfeignedly thankful.’ And whenever this unfeigned thankfulness in any degree presides in our hearts, it always produces a desire of ‘shewing forth His praise, not only with ‘our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves, ‘to His service, and by walking before Him in ‘holiness and righteousness all our days, through ‘Jesus Christ our Lord.’ But, alas, how many persons are there, who in the house of God thus verbally devote themselves to His service, as being under everlasting obligations of love and gratitude ; and yet go into the world, and there desecrate their time and talents, their bodies and souls, to the Devil, the world, and the flesh ! Those, whose professions are sincere, continually labor to give up themselves to His service more and more ; and consider themselves as a devoted thing, which it would be sacrilege to alienate from its lawful Proprietor to any purpose dishonorable to Him. O how many there are among us, plead for reserves, and try to satisfy themselves who with a partial surrender of their hearts, and a limited devotion of their lives ; and thereby prove their insensibility of His mercy ! How much more easy is it to give all our goods to feed the poor, and even our bodies to be burned, than

to give up our hearts and lives to God ! How proper is the supplement, which our church has added to our thanksgivings !

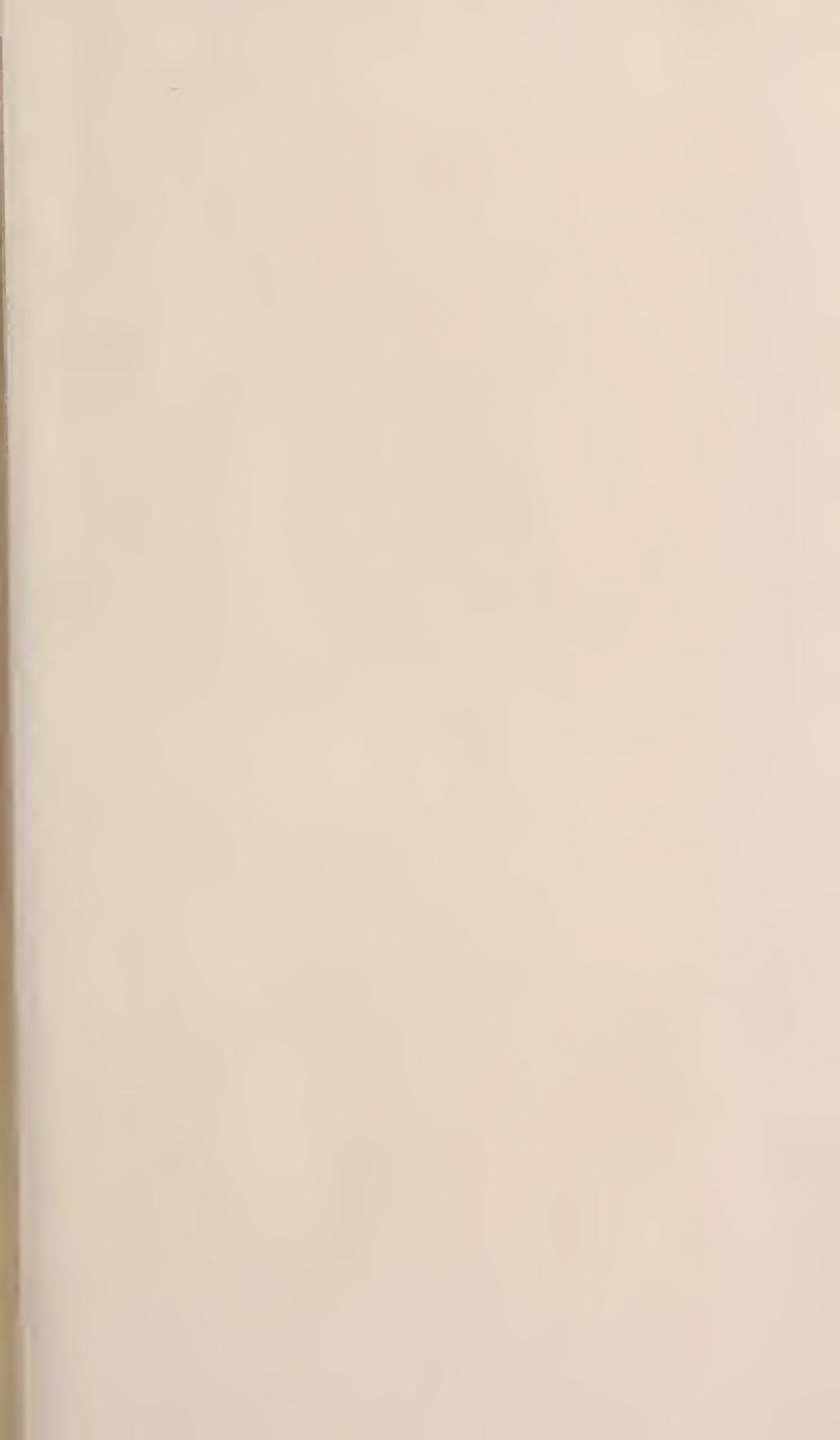
We present our praises and thanksgivings ‘ through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ In His name only can they be accepted. His merit must always be combined with them ; His intercession recommend them ; or otherwise, they will prove offensive to the Lord of hosts. And it is for His sake only that we expect a gracious answer to those supplications, which we offer for that spirit of gratitude, which so far as it prevails, assimilates sinners on earth to saints in heaven. ‘ To HIM THEREFORE WITH THE FATHER AND THE HOLY GHOST BE ALL HONOR AND GLORY WORLD WITHOUT END. *Amen.*’

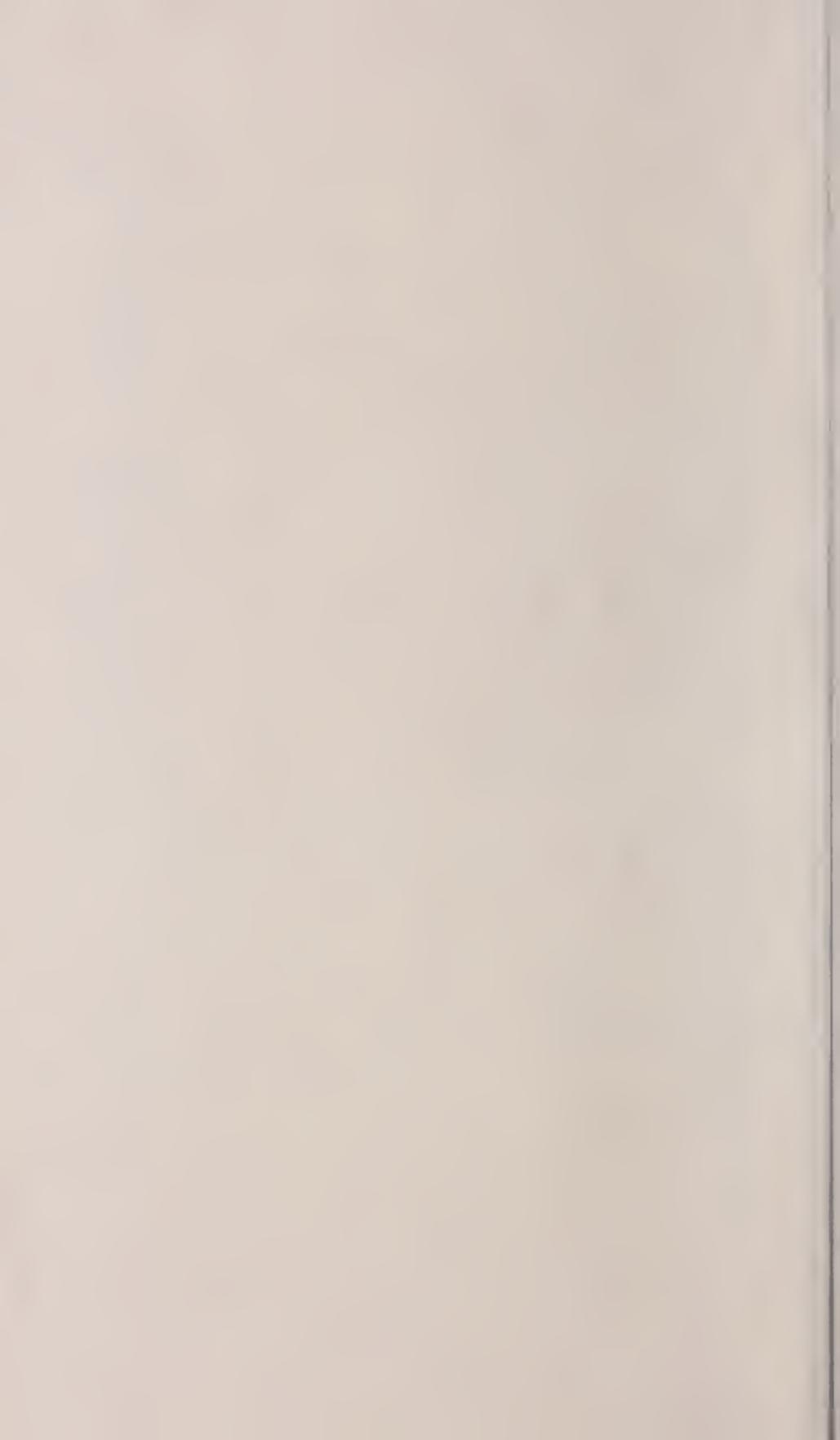


THE CONCLUSION.

THE propriety, spirituality, and multifarious excellency of our church-liturgy having been honestly, though rudely, sketched in the preceding pages ; it is hoped that every reader and hearer belonging to her communion, will survey the ground on which he stands, and scrutinize the

sincerity, or insincerity of his Christian profession as in the Divine presence. Confession of sins, penitential supplications, praises and thanksgivings, are things of a most solemn and awful nature ; and should never be addressed to the throne of Omniscience, but with the guileless mind of Nathanael. Destitute of this essential qualification, they harden instead of meliorating the heart ; and excite the indignation of that Holy Being, who hath proclaimed His requisition of truth in the inward parts. But if, in the use of our devotional forms, we make it the object of our strict attention, that the sentiments and sensibilities of our souls harmonize with all the declarations of our lips ; we shall know by experience the blessedness of Gospel-religion ; and shall daily grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Happy they, who can say, without any degree of mental reservation, ‘ That it may please Thee to give us true
 ‘ repentance ; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances ; and to endue us with the
 ‘ grace of Thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives
 ‘ according to Thy holy word ; we beseech Thee
 ‘ to hear us good Lord !’





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